



May 8, 2020
4:30 p.m.

NEWS RELEASE

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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Martin County, NC **Coronavirus COVID-19 Response – Advisory #10** **County Facilities to Re-Open Monday, May 11th with Limited Access**

WILLIAMSTON, NC – On May 5, 2020 NC Governor Roy Cooper announced the gradual, phased relaxing of his stay-at-home order, effective at 5:00 p.m. on Friday, May 8, 2020. With Executive Order No. 138, Governor Cooper has instituted Phase 1 of his 3-phase plan to re-open the state from the COVID-19 restrictions. Subsequently, Martin County will open its offices to the public with limited access beginning Monday, May 11, 2020.

“COVID-19 is still a serious threat to our state, and Phase 1 is designed to be a limited easing of restrictions that can boost parts of our economy while keeping important safety rules in place,” said Governor Cooper.

With Phase 1, the stay-at-home order remains in place, and gatherings are still limited to no more than 10 people.

Certain businesses remain closed as the state continues battling COVID-19, including bars, personal care businesses, entertainment venues, and gyms. Restaurants may only continue to serve customers for drive-through, take-out and delivery.

All workers at retail and other businesses are recommended to wear cloth face coverings. Teleworking is still encouraged for businesses that can practice it.

On May 8, 2020, the Martin County Board of Commissioners held a Special Called Meeting to discuss re-opening the Martin County offices on a limited basis. After substantial discussion, the Board of Commissioners voted 3 to 2 to re-open the Martin County offices on a limited basis, effective Monday, May 11, 2020 at 8:00 a.m.

Deputies from the Martin County Sheriff’s Office will control access at the entry doors of the Martin County Governmental Center to ensure proper social distancing and to assist citizens in reaching their destination.

“We will have orange cones in the Courtyard and Department of Social Services entrance spaced 6 feet apart for your convenience and safety as you enter the Courthouse,” said Sheriff Tim

Manning. “There will be a limited number of people that will be allowed inside each office area. Please be patient and follow the guidelines, as we are trying to keep you as safe as possible.”

MTW District Health Director Wes Gray urges caution as facilities re-open. He said, “As North Carolina begins to ease stay-at-home restrictions, it is important to maintain current social distancing practices as much as possible and to continue following important hygiene guidelines, including handwashing, not touching your face or mouth, and covering your cough or sneeze. It is also important to stay at home if you feel sick and avoid close contact with people who are sick. Please contact your provider if you have any symptoms of COVID-19, including fever, cough, or shortness of breath. It is also important to wear a facemask in public if social distancing measures are hard to maintain. As we move to reopen, it will be more important than ever to take these necessary measures to prevent the spread of the COVID-19 virus.”

County Manager David Bone added, “Citizens should visit the Governmental Center only on an as-needed basis.”

Since March 26, 2020 most Martin County facilities have been open to the public by appointment only, and the Martin County Senior Centers have been completely closed to the public. Since March 27th, the Martin County License Plate Agency has been open for dealers only. The Martin County Landfill and Martin County Airport have remained open and will continue to be open to the public.

The Martin County License Plate Agency will also be open to the public, effective May 11th, but the state has not announced when the Martin County Driver’s License Office will re-open. Martin County Senior Centers will remain closed to the public at this time, but the Meals on Wheels program will continue, as it has for the duration of the COVID-19 pandemic.

Most NC District and Superior Court cases are to be postponed until at least June 1, 2020 in response to COVID-19. The Martin County Clerk of Superior Court office will be open. For specific questions about individual cases, visit www.nccourts.gov or call the Martin County Clerk of Superior Court at 252-809-5100.

As per Center for Disease Control (CDC) advice, citizens are advised to stay at home if they are sick, or if they have a sick family member in their home. Citizens who have questions or concerns or who are showing signs of symptoms of the virus are strongly encouraged to call their primary physician or MTW District Health at 252-793-3023 for information and/or further instructions.

Governor Cooper encouraged the public to follow the three W’s:

- Wear a face covering,
- Wash your hands, and
- Wait six feet apart.

When visiting the Governmental Center, citizens are encouraged to wear masks. The Center for Disease Control (CDC) recommends wearing cloth face coverings in public settings, especially in areas of significant community-based transmission. Cloth face coverings should:

- Fit snugly but comfortably against the side of the face,
- Be secured with ties or ear loops,
- Include multiple layers of fabric,
- Allow for breathing without restriction, and
- Be able to be laundered and machine dried without damage or change to shape.

Hand-washing stations remain outside county facilities, and citizens are asked to wash their hands before entering. Hand sanitizer is available inside the buildings.

As previously mentioned, deputies from the Martin County Sheriff's Office will control access at the entry doors of the Martin County Governmental Center to ensure proper social distancing and to assist citizens in reaching their destination. Citizens are encouraged to follow proper social distancing recommendations.

Citizens are strongly encouraged to conduct county business online, by phone, by mail and through drop boxes. Taxes may be paid online at www.martincountyncgov.com or by mail. Water payments can be paid via mail or through a drop box located in the parking lot of the Martin County Governmental Center near the flagpoles. Completed Department of Social Services (DSS) applications may be placed in the drop box located near the entry door (near the "Social Services" sign) at 305 E. Main Street, at the back of the governmental center / courthouse. Many common NCDMV services, such as driver license renewal and vehicle registration renewal can be performed any time and any place by visiting <https://www.ncdot.gov/dmv>.

As of May 5, 2020, the Martin-Tyrrell-Washington (MTW) District Health Department reported 25 total confirmed cases of Coronavirus (COVID-19) in Martin County. Of these cases, 11 individuals have recovered, and there are 13 active cases. One person's death in Martin County has been attributed to COVID-19. The MTW District Health Department will continue to closely monitor confirmed cases in Martin County.

Many people with COVID-19 may not be included in these reports of laboratory confirmed cases – including the following groups:

- People who do not feel sick,
- People who had symptoms but did not seek care / testing and who self-quarantined, and
- People who sought care but may have been recommended by their provider to self-quarantine or they did not meet current CDC guidelines for testing.

Citizens are asked to continue educating themselves about the latest guidelines available from local, state and federal health care authorities concerning the Novel Coronavirus (COVID-19). Visit www.mtwdistricthealth.org for the latest information on COVID-19 (coronavirus).

Citizens are also encouraged to continue supporting local restaurants and businesses, while maintaining social distancing. Citizens are also asked to check on seniors who may need supplies but who may wish to stay at home.

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