



STATE OF MONTANA CORONAVIRUS FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS

State Emergency Operations Center
Joint Information Center (JIC)

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Coronavirus FAQs

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Information on Inquiries

- Link to Governor’s [Directive](#)
- State Business Inquiry Hotline: **1-800-755-6672**
- State General COVID-19 Hotline: **1-888-333-0461**
- Tourism Informational Hotline: **1-800-847-4868**
- Website, details and maps: COVID19INFO@MT.GOV
- Follow Montana Dept. of Disaster & Emergency Services on social media:
 - [Facebook: Montana DES](#)
 - [Instagram: Montanades406](#)
 - [Twitter: Montana DES](#)
 - Hashtags: #COVID19MT #FlattenTheCurve #slowthespread #HomeTownHeroes #PublicHealthHeroes #TeamMontana #MTstrong #TogetherMT #StayHomeMontana #406Feet

General Questions on Directive

Before reviewing this document, please first read the actual order. Most questions can most likely be answered by reading the entire order.

What is the intent of the Directive?

- The intent of this Directive is to ensure that the maximum number of people self-isolate in their places of residence to the maximum extent feasible, while enabling essential services to continue, to slow the spread of COVID-19 to the greatest extent possible.
- These measures are designed to end the epidemic as early as possible, and to protect the well-being of Montanans by returning to the course of business and everyday life as soon as is practicable and safe.
- When people need to leave their places of residence, whether to perform essential activities, or to otherwise facilitate authorized activities necessary for continuity of social and commercial life, they should at all times and as much as reasonably possible comply with social distancing requirements. *(see below for requirements)*

What's the difference between stay at home and shelter in place orders?

- They are essentially used interchangeably; both directives accomplish the same thing. Every person who stays at home and avoids large crowds, the better our chances to fight this virus and protect our frontline health care workers and emergency responders.

What exactly does this order require?

- This order states that starting at midnight 12:01 am March 28, Montanans should stay home. There are exceptions for essential travel and for essential businesses.
- The order has been extended through April 24, 2020. It could be further extended if warranted.
- Non-essential social and recreational gatherings of individuals outside of a home or place of residence are prohibited immediately, regardless of size, if a distance of at least six feet between individuals cannot be maintained.
- All persons may leave their homes or place of residence only for essential activities or to operate essential businesses and operations.

Do you have the authority to make a stay at home directive?

- Yes. Montana law specifically authorizes these kinds of measures in response to an outbreak of communicable disease. They're very clearly spelled out in each of our Executive Directives and come both from the authority to respond to emergencies and the public health authority of the state.
- This Directive, along with any prior Directive that implements and references the public health authorities of the Department of Public Health and Human Services (DPHHS) provided in Title 50, constitutes a "public health . . . order[]" within the meaning of § 50-1-103(2), MCA, and is enforceable by the Attorney General, DPHHS, a county attorney, or other local authorities under the direction of a county attorney. Local public health agencies are directed to assist in the administration of this Directive, consistent with § 50-1-202(2)(a), MCA.
- This also isn't the first time that self-isolation measures have saved lives in Montana. We saw similar orders over 100 years ago during the Spanish Influenza pandemic.

How will this Directive be enforced?

- First and foremost, people don't want to get sick and don't want to get others sick. Montanans understand that. The Governor is confident that most Montanans will take this order seriously and understand their role in cutting off the chain of transmission to save lives and minimize long term impacts to our economy. This is a public health order that can be legally enforced at local or state levels.
- If you believe that someone is violating the directive, report it to your local county health department or local law enforcement.

What are the Social Distancing Requirements for Essential Businesses and Operations?

- Essential businesses and operations and those businesses engaged in minimum basic operations must take proactive measures to ensure compliance with social distancing requirements, including where possible:
 - Designate six-foot distances. Designating with signage, tape, or by other means six-foot spacing for employees and customers in line to maintain appropriate distance;
 - Hand sanitizer and sanitizing products. Having hand sanitizer and sanitizing products readily available for employees and customers;
 - Separate operating hours for vulnerable populations. Implementing separate operating hours for elderly and vulnerable customers; and
 - Online and remote access. Posting online whether a facility is open and how best to reach the facility and continue services by phone or remotely.

What is meant by 'Minimum Basic Operations' for essential businesses and operations?

- For the purposes of this Directive, Minimum Basic Operations include the following, provided that employees comply with Social Distancing Requirements, to the extent possible, while carrying out such operations:
 - The minimum necessary activities to maintain the value of the business's inventory, preserve the condition of the business's physical plant and equipment, ensure security, process payroll and employee benefits, or for related functions.
 - The minimum necessary activities to facilitate employees of the business being able to continue to work remotely from their residences.

Travel and Road Closures

Is travel allowed? What about for out of state visitors?

- All travel should be limited to essential travel and travel for essential activities. People riding on public transit must comply with social distancing to the greatest extent feasible. When individuals need to leave their homes or residences, they should maintain social distancing of at least six feet from any person who is not a member of their immediate household, to the greatest extent possible.

- Out of state visitors are not restricted at this time, though everyone in Montana is subject to this order and required to minimize risk of exposure and transmission by limiting travel and activities outside of their homes.

Are road closures in place anywhere in Montana?

- Road closures (associated with the stay-at-home Directive) are not in effect at this time
- See information on road closures at: <https://www.mdt.mt.gov/travinfo/alerts.shtml>

What is considered 'Essential Travel?'

- Essential Travel includes travel for any of the following purposes:
 - Any travel related to the provision of or access to Essential Activities, Essential Businesses and Operations, or Minimum Basic Operations.
 - Travel to care for elderly, minors, dependents, persons with disabilities, or other vulnerable persons.
 - Travel to or from educational institutions for purposes of receiving materials for distance learning, for receiving meals, and any other related services.
 - Travel to return to a place of residence from outside the jurisdiction.
 - Travel required by law enforcement or court order, including to transport children pursuant to a custody agreement.
 - Travel required for non-residents to return to their place of residence outside the State. Individuals are strongly encouraged to verify that their transportation out of the State remains available and functional prior to commencing such travel.

Quarantine for Travelers Arriving in Montana

Do I have to quarantine if I come into the state? What if I'm working?

- Yes, visitors from out-of-state are required to self-quarantine for 14 days or for the duration of their visit- whichever is shorter. Individuals coming to the state for work-related travel are exempt from this requirement.

Do people staying at a vacation rental need to self-quarantine?

- Yes, any visitor from another state or country traveling to Montana for non-work-related purposes, must self-quarantine for 14-days or the duration of their stay.

Additional Information

- Travel from another state or country is a common source of COVID19 infection in Montana.
- Everyone who travels to Montana from another state or country must self-quarantine for 14-days or the duration of their stay, whichever is shorter.
- Any person who has already arrived in Montana from another state or country for a non-work related purpose before the date of this Directive must immediately self-

quarantine for the remainder of a 14-day period beginning on the date of their arrival in Montana, or until their departure from Montana—whichever is sooner.

- Exclusions to this directive include public safety, public health, healthcare works, travelers passing through on their way to another destination, and travelers visiting for work purposes.
- If you are self-quarantining you cannot leave for groceries, public outdoor recreation, to go to work or any other activity. You must remain at your place of quarantine for the duration of the quarantine period. Exceptions will only be made in the event of a medical emergency, fire, natural disaster or other act of God preventing the ongoing healthful habitation of a residence.
- The Montana Department of Commerce will advise persons listing hotels, rental properties, or other short-term rentals in Montana—including but not limited to listings on such services as Airbnb, VRBO, HomeAway, and related services—to include notice of the mandatory quarantine for travelers from another state or country.
- Directive is mandatory, not optional. It can be enforced by DPHHS, the Attorney General, county attorney or other local authorities at the direction of a county attorney.
- Montana Department of Commerce has at tourism informational line: 1-800-847-4868

Am I Considered an Essential Business/Operation?

How was the list of essential businesses and operations created?

- On March 19, 2020, the U.S. Department of Homeland Security, Cybersecurity & Infrastructure Security Agency (CISA), issued a [Memorandum on Identification of Essential Critical Infrastructure Workers During COVID-19 Response](#). This provided the basis for the list of essential businesses and operations, in addition to guidance from states with similar Directives/Orders in place.

How do businesses know if they're essential? What does a business do if they are ordered to close but think they are essential?

- There is a thorough list provided in the [Directive](#). Businesses should read this first as it clearly covers all essential businesses. If businesses do not fall into any of the categories listed and believe they are essential, or are unsure if they fall into the categories listed, they can contact: **1-800-755-6672** or COVID19INFO@MT.GOV.

I am a nurse/pharmacist/dentist/vet – am I essential staff/business?

- Yes, individuals may leave their residence to work for or obtain services through Health Care and Public Health Operations. This includes, but is not limited to:
 - hospitals; clinics; dental offices; pharmacies; public health entities (and those that compile, model, analyze and communicate public health information); pharmaceutical, pharmacy, medical device and equipment, and biotechnology companies (including operations, research and development, manufacture, and

supply chain); organizations collecting blood, platelets, plasma, and other necessary materials; licensed medical cannabis dispensaries and licensed cannabis cultivation centers; reproductive health care providers; eye care centers, including those that sell glasses and contact lenses; home Health Care services providers; mental health and substance use providers; other Health Care facilities and suppliers and providers of any related and/or ancillary Health Care services; and entities that transport and dispose of medical materials and remains.

- Also includes manufacturers, technicians, logistics, and warehouse operators and distributors of medical equipment, personal protective equipment (PPE), medical gases, pharmaceuticals, blood and blood products, vaccines, testing materials, laboratory supplies, cleaning, sanitizing, disinfecting or sterilization supplies, and tissue and paper towel products.
- Veterinary care and all Health Care services provided to animals are considered essential.

I own/work at a gym/salon/barber shop/tattoo parlor/pet groomer – am I essential staff/business?

- No, these are not considered essential businesses/operations as it is too difficult to maintain social distancing requirements.

I work at a shelter/long-term care facility/treatment center/socials services OR my friend/family requires these services – can I leave to work/seek treatment/take someone for treatment?

- Yes, these are all considered ‘Human Services Operations.’ Individuals may leave their residence to work for or obtain services at any Human Services Operations, including any provider funded by DPHHS, or Medicaid, that is providing services to the public and including state-operated, institutional, or community-based settings providing human services to the public.
- Human Services Operations includes, but is not limited to: long-term care facilities; residential settings and shelters for adults, seniors, children, and/or people with developmental disabilities, intellectual disabilities, substance use disorders, and/or mental illness; transitional facilities; home-based settings to provide services to individuals with physical, intellectual, and/or developmental disabilities, seniors, adults, and children; field offices that provide and help to determine eligibility for basic needs including food, cash assistance, medical coverage, child care, vocational services, rehabilitation services; developmental centers; adoption agencies; businesses that provide food, shelter, and social services, and other necessities of life for economically disadvantaged individuals, individuals with physical, intellectual, and/or developmental disabilities, or otherwise needy individuals.

I work in the construction industry. Am I considered an essential business?

- Yes, you are considered to provide ‘essential infrastructure.’ Individuals may leave their residence to provide any services or perform any work necessary to offer, provision, operate, maintain and repair essential infrastructure. The term ‘construction,’ for this purpose, includes:
 - construction required in response to this public health emergency, hospital construction, construction of long-term care facilities, public works construction, and housing construction); building management and maintenance; airport operations; aircraft fueling services; operation and maintenance of utilities, including water, sewer, and gas; electrical (including power generation, distribution, and production of raw materials); distribution centers; oil and biofuel refining; roads, highways, railroads, and public transportation; cybersecurity operations; flood control; operation of dams, locks, ditches, canals, diversions, and levies; solid waste and recycling collection and removal; and internet, video, and telecommunications systems (including the provision of essential global, national, and local infrastructure for computing services, business infrastructure, communications, and web-based services).
- Essential Infrastructure shall be construed broadly to avoid any impacts to essential infrastructure, broadly defined.

Will golf courses be able to stay open?

- The Governor's Directive allows for the operation and maintenance of golf courses to support local outdoor recreation opportunities.
- Golf courses should take measures to implement social distancing requirements, should close social gathering spaces and retail offerings and should clean restrooms in accordance with CDC guidelines.

I am/own a landscaping business. Is this considered an essential business?

- The state has revised guidance on landscapers (being an ‘essential business’) in light of new Federal exemptions.
- Landscapers are now exempt from the Governor’s Directive. They must maintain a social distance of six feet between all employees and customers, and practice sanitation according to CDC guidelines. (*Information updated 4/1*)

I am a farmer/rancher. Am I considered an essential business?

- Yes, food, beverage and agriculture are considered essential, including cultivation, marketing, production, and wholesale or retail distribution of animals and goods for consumption.
- Individuals may leave their residence to provide any services or perform any work necessary to offer, provision, operate, maintain and repair essential infrastructure - which includes food production, distribution, storage and sale (e.g. those that sell livestock, crops, etc.).

- Businesses that provide equipment, transportation, seed, feed, fertilizer, or other products or services critical to food, agriculture and livestock production may remain open.

I work/own an auto or bike shop. Will I be able to remain open?

- Yes, businesses needed for transportation are considered essential. This includes auto supply, auto repair, and related facilities and bicycle shops and related facilities.

I am a tradesman/woman (plumber, electrician, exterminator, cleaner/janitor, security). Am I considered essential?

- Yes, you are considered to be a ‘critical trade.’
- Building and Construction Tradesmen and Tradeswomen, and other trades including but not limited to plumbers, electricians, exterminators, cleaning and janitorial staff for commercial and governmental properties, security staff, operating engineers, HVAC, painting, moving and relocation services, and other service providers who provide services that are necessary to maintaining the safety, sanitation, and essential operation of residences, essential activities, and essential businesses/operations.

I work at a post office/shipping/delivery service. Am I considered essential?

- Yes, you are considered to be a ‘critical trade.’ This includes post offices and other businesses that provide shipping and delivery services, and businesses that ship or deliver groceries, food, alcoholic and non-alcoholic beverages, goods or services to end users or through commercial channels.

Are airlines, buses, taxis and ride-shares able to provide services still?

- Yes, airlines, taxis, transportation network providers (such as Uber and Lyft), vehicle rental services, paratransit, and other private, public, and commercial transportation and logistics providers necessary for essential activities and other purposes authorized in the Directive are allowed to operate.

I work in the mining/energy/petroleum/forest products industry. Am I considered an essential business?

- Yes, the following is allowed to operate: manufacturing companies, distributors, and supply chain companies producing and supplying essential products and services in and for industries such as pharmaceutical, technology, biotechnology, Health Care, chemicals and sanitization, waste pickup and disposal, agriculture, food and beverage, transportation, energy, steel and steel products, petroleum and fuel, forest products, mining, construction, national defense, communications, as well as products used by other Essential Businesses and Operations.

I am a first responder/EMT/dispatcher/court personnel/law enforcement/corrections/child protection/fire/military/local Tribal or state government. Am I considered an essential business?

- Yes, you are considered to provide an essential Governmental Function.
- All first responders, emergency management personnel, emergency dispatchers, court personnel, law enforcement and corrections personnel, hazardous materials responders, child protection and child welfare personnel, fire protection personnel, wildland fire fighters, housing and shelter personnel, military, government employees involved in training the above functions, and other government employees are categorically exempt from this Directive.
- State government employees are categorically exempt from this Directive.
- Local governments are permitted to designate which functions and employees are essential and exempt for the purposes of this Directive, apart from those positions and functions named above.
- Nothing in this Directive shall be interpreted or applied in a way that interferes with or supersedes tribal sovereignty.

I am a fishing guide/outfitter. Can we operate under the Directive?

- No, guiding is not considered an ‘essential business’ under the Directive and it is too difficult to maintain appropriate social distancing requirements while guiding.

I own a fly fishing shop. Can I remain open? Can I continue to serve customers through a curbside or delivery sales model? (see response below)

I operate a retail establishment. Can I continue serving customers through a curbside pickup or delivery sales model?

- No, retail businesses that do not fall into another exempted category are not permitted to continue operation, other than to fulfill online orders that will be shipped to customers (e-commerce). In that case, you must have no greater than 10 employees in your establishment and you must maintain at least 6 feet of separation between each employee, as well as follow sanitation guidelines.

Can I Leave My House? What Businesses Will Remain Open

I need groceries/supplies/subscriptions. Can I leave my house to get them?

Individuals may leave their home or residence only to perform essential activities. Essential activities still require maintaining a distance of six feet from others at all times. Relating to your question, essential activities include leaving your residence for:

- ‘Necessary supplies and services’. To obtain necessary services or supplies for themselves and their family or household members, or to deliver those services or supplies to others, such as, by way of example only and without limitation, groceries and food, household consumer products, supplies they need to work from home, and products necessary to maintain the safety, sanitation, and essential operation of residences.

I need exercise. Can I leave my house to recreate/fish/camp/exercise?

Individuals may leave their home or residence only to perform essential activities. Essential activities still require maintaining a distance of six feet from others at all times. Relating to your question, essential activities include leaving your residence for:

- Yes, you can engage in outdoor activity, provided that individuals comply with social distancing (6’ from others), such as, by way of example and without limitation, walking, hiking, running, or biking. Individuals may go to public parks and open outdoor recreation areas, including public lands in Montana provided they remain open to recreation.
- Montanans are discouraged from outdoor recreation activities that pose enhanced risks of injury or could otherwise stress the ability of local first responders to address the COVID-19 emergency (*e.g.*, backcountry skiing in a manner inconsistent with avalanche recommendations or in closed terrain).
- If you are quarantining you cannot leave for groceries, public outdoor recreation (including hunting/fishing), to go to work or any other activity. You must remain at your place of quarantine for the duration of the quarantine period. Exceptions will only be made in the event of a medical emergency, fire, natural disaster or other act of God preventing the ongoing healthful habitation of a residence.

Additional considerations (related to recreation/fishing and boating): Guidelines for Services at State Parks, Fishing Access Sites and Wildlife Management Areas:

- At this time, Montana State Parks, Fishing Access Sites and Wildlife Management Areas remain open to day-use. Social distancing applies, and respect for the resources is critical to keeping public lands in Montana open. Because travel exacerbates the spread of the COVID-19 pandemic, the public should use public lands in their communities, and non-local travel to sites is strongly discouraged.
- Until further notice:
 - *Sites remain open for day use.
 - *Visitor Centers and Park Offices remain closed to the public.
 - *No overnight use permitted.
 - *Playgrounds will close on Saturday, March 28, 2020.
 - *Group use areas will close on Saturday, March 28, 2020.
 - *No new special use permits will be issued

*Public programs and special events remain cancelled.

- The public can anticipate few bathroom facilities at state park/fishing access sites as we are limited on staff and supplies to keep them cleaned.
- Fishing and hunting licenses must be purchased online (offices closed). For more information, see [FWP website](#).
- Watercraft inspection stations are mandatory in Montana and will continue to operate at this time. For more information: [CleanDrainDry.MT.GOV](#)
- Federally managed parks and public lands (e.g. USFS, BLM, BOR) also closing some public access/lands due to lack of staffing and supplies (e.g. bathrooms, etc.). Please check in with those agencies for specific closures.
- The Out-of-State Travelers Directive applies to those coming to Montana to hunt and/or fish (14 day self-quarantine required).

My kid/wife/husband/friend/pet needs a prescription/medical attention/emergency dental procedure. Can I/we/they leave the house to get them?

- Yes, for ‘health and safety’ and purposes, this is considered an essential activity. To engage in activities or perform tasks essential to their health and safety, or to the health and safety of their family or household members (including, but not limited to, pets), such as, by way of example only and without limitation, seeking emergency services, obtaining medical supplies or medication, or visiting a health care professional.
- Yes, to ‘take care of others.’ To care for a family member, friend, or pet in another household, and to transport family members, friends, or pets as allowed by this Directive.

Will grocery stores/gas stations/pharmacies remain open?

- Yes, stores that sell groceries and medicine will remain open. This includes but is not limited to: grocery stores, pharmacies, farm and produce stands, supermarkets, convenience stores, and other establishments engaged in the retail sale of groceries, canned food, dry goods, frozen foods, fresh fruits and vegetables, pet supplies, fresh meats, fish, and poultry, alcoholic and non-alcoholic beverages, and any other household consumer products (such as cleaning and personal care products).
 - This also includes stores that sell non-grocery products that are necessary to maintain the safety, sanitation, and essential operation of residences and Essential Businesses and Operations.
- Licensed medical cannabis dispensaries and licensed cannabis cultivation centers may remain open.

Can I still get pet food/supplies?

- Yes, businesses that provide food, shelter, and other necessities of life for animals, including veterinary and animal health services, animal shelters, rescues, kennels, and adoption facilities may remain open.

Will the hardware store remain open?

- Yes, hardware stores and businesses that sell electrical, plumbing, and heating material are considered essential.

Will my bank/real estate office/accountant remain open?

- Yes, businesses that provide financial and real estate services are considered essential.
- This includes: banks, consumer lenders, including but not limited, to pawnbrokers, accountants, consumer installment lenders and sales finance lenders, credit unions, appraisers, realtors or others providing real estate services, title companies, financial markets, trading and futures exchanges, affiliates of financial institutions, entities that issue bonds, related financial institutions, and institutions selling financial products.
- Professional services, such as legal services, accounting services, insurance services, information technology services, real estate services (including appraisal and title services) are also included in essential services.

Will the laundromat remain open?

- Yes, laundromats, dry cleaners, industrial laundry services, and laundry service providers may remain open.

Will restaurants remain open?

- Restaurants may remain open, but only for consumption off-premises.
- Restaurants and other facilities that prepare and serve food, but only for consumption off-premises, through such means as in-house delivery, third-party delivery, drive-through, curbside pick-up, and carry-out.

Can schools still provide food services (for consumption off-site)?

- Schools and other entities that typically provide food services to students or members of the public may continue to do so under the Directive on the condition that the food is provided to students or members of the public on a pick-up and takeaway basis only.
- Schools and other entities that provide food services under this exemption shall not permit the food to be eaten at the site where it is provided, or at any other gathering site due to the virus's propensity to physically impact surfaces and personal property.

Will hotels remain open?

- Yes, hotels and motels, to the extent used for lodging and delivery or carry-out food services will be able to stay open.

Will funeral services be available during this time?

- Yes, funeral, mortuary, cremation, burial, cemetery, and related services will still be able to operate. Funeral services should endeavor to practice social distancing requirements.

Can we still have church/religious services/gatherings?

- Organizations that provide charitable and social services are considered an essential business when 'providing food, shelter, and social services, and other necessities of life for economically disadvantaged or otherwise needy individuals, individuals who need assistance as a result of this emergency, and people with disabilities' per the Governor's Directive. This would not include regular church services or gatherings where social distancing would be too difficult to maintain.

Specific Populations (Daycares, Homelessness and Social Services)

Are homeless people covered by this order? Are social services still available?

- Individuals experiencing homelessness are exempt from this Directive, but are strongly urged to obtain shelter, and governmental and other entities are strongly urged to make such shelter available as soon as possible and to the maximum extent practicable and to use in their operation COVID-19 risk mitigation practices recommended by the U.S. Centers for Disease Control (CDC) and the Montana Department of Public Health and Human Services (DPHHS).
- Organizations that provide charitable and social services are considered 'essential.' Businesses and religious and secular nonprofit organizations, including food banks, when providing food, shelter, and social services, and other necessities of life for economically disadvantaged or otherwise needy individuals, individuals who need assistance as a result of this emergency, and people with disabilities.
- In addition, residential facilities and shelters for adults, seniors, children, and/or people with developmental disabilities, intellectual disabilities, substance use disorders, and/or mental illness are considered essential.
- Reach out to shelters, food banks and other social services in your local community for specific available resources and operations updates.

Does this order close daycares?

- Daycare facilities serving the caregivers of the following critical response personnel may remain open:
 - Medical staff, first responders, emergency management personnel, emergency dispatchers, court personnel, law enforcement and corrections personnel, hazardous materials responders, child protection and child welfare personnel, fire protection personnel, wildland fire fighters, housing and shelter personnel, military, and government employees involved in training the above functions.

Why did you decide to close barber shops and salons? Why not do it earlier?

- Many of these businesses cannot operate while adhering to social distancing guidelines.

- As COVID-19 cases continue to grow, it is necessary to close all non-essential businesses and operations. I know many workers in the barber and cosmetology industry are self-employed and I'm pleased that the federal stimulus package allows self-employed citizens to access UI benefits during this challenging time.

Unemployment and Assistance

What can I do when I cannot access my claim on MontanaWorks.gov, and I cannot get through to the Claims Center?

- There have been an unprecedented number of claims for unemployment insurance filed in just the last few days. Wait times may be longer than usual, and you may encounter difficulties accessing your claim online. DLI is adding resources as quickly as possible to address COVID-19 related issues in a continuing effort to provide the best possible customer service to the people of Montana. Please do not call the state COVID-19 telephone hotline with your unemployment questions.
- COVID-19 unemployment claims will be backdated if you were unable to file for unemployment benefits due to system outages, or an inability to get through on the phone line. Your claim will be backdated to the first day you tried to file on MontanaWorks.gov or call the UI Claims Processing Center.

*Additional information on unemployment

- The COVID-19 emergency is now impacting the work and personal lives of Montanans throughout our state. The Montana Department of Labor & Industry is closely following the changing dynamics and policies at the state and federal level.
- For employees who have been affected by COVID-19, you may be eligible for Unemployment Insurance. Through our UI Emergency Rule, eligibility for UI has expanded.
- The CARES Act that is going through Congress right now will also likely affect eligibility, benefit amount, and the duration of benefits.
- To apply for Unemployment Insurance, please visit [MontanaWorks.gov](https://montanaworks.gov).
- As you've seen, claims are at unprecedented levels, and the site is getting a lot of traffic. We have implemented changes and applied resources to keep the site functioning. We appreciate your patience.
- Employers who are reducing hours or laying off staff need to let those employees know that they may be eligible for UI. An unpaid temporary closure of an employer's operations functions as a lay-off from work. Please encourage them to file at [MontanaWorks.gov](https://montanaworks.gov).
- If they haven't already, employers should also sign up for SIDES by visiting uieservices.mt.gov or calling (406) 444-3834. By participating in SIDES, the Department of Labor & Industry can communicate with employers electronically, which speeds up the process of remitting benefits to your employees.
- Under the emergency rules that went into effect on March 17, 2020, employers accounts will not be charged due to individual COVID-19 UI claims.

- Montana employers and employees that have been impacted by COVID-19 are encouraged to visit the <http://dli.mt.gov/employer-covid-19> for more workplace resources and answers to frequently asked questions.
- Unemployment compensation is a federal- state partnership. During this emergency, federal law governs, while state programs deliver the benefits. To do that, the states must await final passage and guidance, then operationalize those changes via technology, changed business processes, and shifting staff resources to support delivery of critical benefits to Montanans. We will be updating this information daily at: <http://dli.mt.gov/employer-covid-19>
- The proposed Stimulus Package has three components that will be administered by the Montana Department of Labor & Industry:
 - Pandemic Unemployment Assistance – this is a benefit designed for self-employed, independent contractors, those people who are generally not otherwise covered by UI, and who are unable to work due to the COVID emergency.
 - How to prepare to apply for benefits: Gather proof of income documents together – recent tax return, 1099s, whatever documents show past earnings.
 - Be patient – The Department of Labor & Industry will be working to program systems to accept PUA claims.
 - This is new federal/state program and federal guidance is pending.
 - Emergency Increase in Unemployment Benefits – this is an extra \$600 payment per week for up for four months. Information will be forthcoming.
 - Extended Benefits for those who have exhausted their claim for an additional 13 weeks. Information will be forthcoming.

Foreclosures, Evictions and Rentals

*Directive Issued 3/31/20

Does the Foreclosure/Eviction Directive apply to commercial properties?

- No.

I'm not able to pay my rent due to a decrease or loss of income related to the COVID-19 emergency. What should I do?

- The Directive specifies that tenants are not relieved of their obligation to pay rent. In his press conference, the Governor strongly encouraged those tenants who can to pay on time and in full. Please contact your landlord to work out a solution if you are not able to pay rent or pay rent in full. Tenants are strongly encouraged to utilize financial resources that may be forthcoming, such as unemployment benefits or stimulus check, to stay current on rent obligations.

Is assistance available for landlords to continue paying their own mortgages while tenants aren't paying rent?

- The Directive specifies that tenants are not relieved of their obligation to pay rent. In his press conference, the Governor strongly encouraged those tenants who can to pay on time and in full.
- At this time, there are no state dollars available to help residential landlords pay their mortgages. We recommend that you immediately contact your mortgage servicer to find out if loan forbearance is an option, or if your lender has a program in place to help get through this unprecedented situation.
- Under SEC. 4023 of the CARES Act, owners of multifamily properties with federally backed loans can request a forbearance on residential mortgage loan payments.

I can't continue to pay my own bills if my rental income is not coming in. How do you expect landlords to weather this?

- We recognize that while some landlords may have resources to absorb the loss of payments for a longer period of time, others may not. Given the current emergency condition requiring social distancing and quarantining to reduce spread of the coronavirus, preventing the loss of homes is critical.
- In crafting this directive, thoughtful consideration was given to recognize and minimize the potential negative impacts of such protections on landlords and other parties to rental agreements and mortgages. Therefore, the directive is currently effective through April 10 but with the ability to extend if warranted by this rapidly changing public health emergency. In addition, the state continues to explore all policy options to support tenants and landlords.

My tenant hasn't paid rent in three months and I must evict them. Does this directive prevent me from continuing that process?

- Yes. The directive does prevent actions for termination of a tenancy, possession, unlawful holdover, or rent involving a residential tenancy. In addition, no writ, judgment, or order requiring a tenant or authorized guest to surrender or vacate the premises shall be enforced. The Governor has requested the courts of the state to stay all currently pending actions.

My landlord gave me an eviction notice last week/yesterday – does this directive change that?

- Yes. The Governor's directive requests the courts to stay all currently pending actions except for health and safety violations.

My landlord doesn't care about this directive and has evicted me anyway, what should I do?

- We recommend contacting the Montana Legal Services Association.

Does this directive apply to vacant or abandoned rental units or homes?

- No. The directive does not apply to eviction actions taken or made after the tenant (including tenant family members) is no longer in possession and no longer occupies the dwelling unit personally as their home. Nor does the directive apply to any foreclosure action made after the borrower (or other debtor including family members) is no longer in possession and no longer occupies the residential property personally as their primary home.

Can my landlord increase my rent under this directive?

- Under this directive, no landlord may increase the amount of rent payable under the terms of a rental agreement, except previously agreed increases or reasonable increases reflecting the size of the unit, number of tenants or guests, or services provided by the landlord.

Guide on mortgage relief:

<https://www.consumerfinance.gov/about-us/blog/guide-coronavirus-mortgage-relief-options/>