



**FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE**

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## **Mayor Issues Declaration of Local Disaster for COVID-19**

**DENTON, TX, March 13, 2020 (5:30 p.m.)** – On Friday, March 13, Mayor Chris Watts signed a declaration of local disaster for public health emergency to minimize the potential impact of COVID-19 (Coronavirus) in the City of Denton. Mayor Watts also issued an order prohibiting mass gatherings of 250 people or more in the City of Denton, effective from 5 p.m. Friday, March 13 until 5 p.m. Friday, March 20.

The declaration of disaster for public health emergency will last for the next seven days unless otherwise extended by the Denton City Council.

With a disaster declaration and this order in effect, the City of Denton is able to:

- Gain access to short-term funding opportunities.
- Activate the emergency management plan.
- Postpone non-essential Municipal Court proceedings.
- Suspend all utility shutoffs for residential customers unable to pay.
- Provide the City Manager authority to expend up to \$50,000 in funding to the United Way of Denton County to assist individuals and families in the City of Denton, who have experienced income or job loss due to COVID-19, in eviction avoidance.

The City of Denton strongly urges organizations that serve high-risk populations, as defined by the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC), to cancel gatherings of more than 20 people. Residents are urged not to attend non-essential gatherings to help slow the spread of COVID-19.

The City of Denton continues to closely monitor the developing situation with COVID-19.

See the **attached** declaration and order for more information. Visit [www.cityofdenton.com/coronavirus](http://www.cityofdenton.com/coronavirus) and [www.dentoncounty.gov/coronavirus](http://www.dentoncounty.gov/coronavirus) for additional updates.

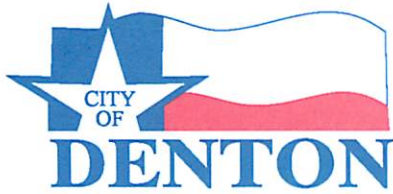
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## DECLARATION OF LOCAL DISASTER FOR PUBLIC HEALTH EMERGENCY

WHEREAS, beginning in December 2019, a novel coronavirus, now designated SARS-CoV2 which causes the disease COVID-19, has spread throughout the world and has now been declared a global pandemic by the World Health Organization; and

WHEREAS, symptoms of COVID-19 include fever, coughing, and shortness of breath, and in some cases the virus has caused death; and

WHEREAS, the known cases of COVID-19 diagnosed in the State of Texas is currently increasing daily with 13 positive or presumed positive cases across North Texas and several persons under observation in Denton County following presumed exposure; and

WHEREAS, extraordinary measures must be taken to contain COVID-19 and prevent its spread throughout the City of Denton and Denton County, including the limitation of community gatherings of over two hundred fifty (250) people and potentially requiring individuals, groups of individuals, or property to be subject to additional measures that prevent or control the spread of disease; and

WHEREAS, the State Office of Court Administration, in consultation with the Supreme Court, Court of Criminal Appeals, and Regional Presiding Judges has provided guidance recommending postponement of all non-essential court proceedings, minimizing staff, and taking all other appropriate measures to prevent the spread of disease;

NOW, THEREFORE, BE IT PROCLAIMED BY THE MAYOR OF THE CITY OF DENTON:

1. That a local state of disaster for public health emergency is hereby declared for the City of Denton, a Texas home-rule municipal corporation, pursuant to Section 418.108(a) of the Texas Government Code and Section 9-21 of the City of Denton Code of Ordinances.
2. Pursuant to Texas Government Code Section 418.108(b) and Section 9-27 of the City of Denton Code of Ordinances, the state of disaster for public health emergency shall continue for a period of not more than seven (7) days from the date of this declaration unless continued or renewed by the Denton City Council.
3. Pursuant to Texas Government Code Section 418.108(c) and Section 9-25 of the City of Denton Code of Ordinances, this declaration of a local state of disaster for public health emergency shall be given prompt and general publicity and shall be filed promptly with the City Secretary.
4. Pursuant to Section 418.108(d) of the Texas Government Code, this declaration of a local state of disaster activates the City of Denton emergency management plan and grants the Mayor the powers set forth in Section 9-22 of the City of Denton Code of Ordinances; including the power to temporarily close City buildings, facilities, and certain uses thereof; to temporarily postpone all

non-essential municipal court proceedings; to temporarily suspend all City utility shut-offs to residential customers affected by COVID-19; and to prohibit all public and private gatherings wherein two hundred fifty (250) people or more are expected, as well as those gatherings of twenty (20) or more people where high-risk individuals, as defined by the United States Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) are in attendance.

5. Pursuant to Health and Safety Code Section 122.006, the City may adopt rules to protect the health of persons in the City and provide for the establishment of quarantine stations, emergency hospitals, and other hospitals.

6. That this proclamation shall take effect immediately from and after its issuance.

DECLARED this the 13<sup>th</sup> day of March, 2020.



Honorable Chris Watts  
City of Denton Mayor



**ORDER OF THE MAYOR OF THE CITY OF DENTON**  
DATE ISSUED: MARCH 13, 2020

Summary: The virus that causes 2019 Coronavirus Disease (COVID-19) is easily transmitted through person to person contact, especially in group settings, and it is essential that the spread of the virus be slowed to protect the ability of public and private health care providers to handle the influx of new patients and safeguard public health and safety. Because of the risk of the rapid spread of the virus, the need to protect the most vulnerable members of the community, this Order closes certain City buildings and non-essential services or uses. This order prohibits community gatherings of two hundred fifty (250) persons or more within the City of Denton beginning at 5:00 p.m. on March 13, 2020, and continuing seven days through 5:00 p.m. on March 20, 2020, as defined below. The City of Denton strongly recommends following the social distancing protocols attached to this Order. Additionally, the City of Denton urges high-risk individuals, as defined by the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC), to cancel, reschedule, or not attend events that will have or will likely have 20 or more people.

**PURUSANT TO THE MAYORAL PROCLAMATION OF MARCH 13, 2020 AND THE AUTHORITY IN SECTION 9-22 OF THE DENTON CODE OF ORDINANCES AND SECTION 416.108 OF THE TEXAS GOVERNMENT CODE, CITY OF DENTON MAYOR CHRIS WATTS HEREBY ORDERS:**

1. Effective as of 5:00 p.m. on Friday, March 13, 2020, and continuing until 5:00 p.m. on March 20, 2020, public or private Community Gatherings (as defined in Section 4 below) are prohibited anywhere in the City of Denton.
2. The City of Denton strongly urges organizations that serve high-risk populations, as defined by the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC), to cancel gatherings of more than 20 people. These recommendations are based on the social distancing practices promulgated by the CDC as well as the "Implementation of Mitigation Strategies for Communities with Local COVID-19 Transmission" issued by the CDC. The City of Denton urges people not to attend non-essential gatherings during the duration of this Order in order to help slow down the spread of the COVID-19 virus.
3. All non-essential court proceedings in the Municipal Court No. 1 of the City of Denton are postponed. All such proceedings will be rescheduled following the term of this Order. No fine, penalty, or punishment shall issue against a party because of the postponement ordered herein. Municipal Court No. 1 shall continue to hear all proceedings deemed essential by the state Office of Court Administration, including search and arrest warrant requests, arraignments, criminal magistration proceedings, and requests for temporary restraining orders.
4. Definitions:
  - a. For purposes of this Order, a "Community Gathering" is any indoor or outdoor event or convening, subject to the exceptions and clarifications below, that brings together or is likely to bring together three hundred (300) or more persons at the same time in a single room or

other single confined or enclosed space, such as an auditorium, theater, stadium (indoor or outdoor), arena or event center, meeting hall, conference center, large cafeteria, gymnasium, or any other confined space.

- b. For purposes of clarity, a “Community Gathering” does not include the following so long as visitors are generally not within arm’s length of one another for extended periods:
  - i. spaces where 250 or more persons may be in transit or waiting for transit, such as airports, bus stations, or terminals;
  - ii. office space or residential buildings;
  - iii. grocery stores, shopping malls, or other retail establishments where large numbers of people are present but it is unusual for them to be within arm’s length of one another for extended periods; and
  - iv. hospitals and medical facilities.
  
- c. Specifically excluded from the definition of “Community Gathering” is the following:
  - i. gathering of people in multiple, separate enclosed spaces in a single building, such as a multiplex movie theater, school, church, or office tower, so long as 250 people are not present in any single space at the same time; and
  - ii. the use of enclosed spaces where 250 or more people may be present at different times during the day, so long as 250 or more people are not present in the space at the same time.

5. It is further ordered that all City of Denton utility shut offs for residential customers are suspended, even for nonpayment, during the pendency of this Order upon proof of income or job loss directly resulting from COVID-19.

6. The City Manager is given authority to expend up to \$50,000.00 as funding to the United Way of Denton County to assist individuals and families living in the City of Denton, who have experienced income or job loss directly resulting from COVID-19, in eviction avoidance.

7. This Order shall be effective until 5:00 p.m. on Friday, March 20, 2020, or until it is either rescinded, superseded, or amended pursuant to applicable law.

8. Copies of this Order shall be promptly provided to the City Secretary for filing and posting on the City’s website and in other conspicuous places.

**IT IS SO ORDERED**



**Mayor Chris Watts**  
**City of Denton**