

Questions regarding social distancing, business closures and stay-at-home orders:

We continue to receive questions and complaints about compliance regarding social distancing guidelines from the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC), as well as non-life sustaining business closures and stay-at-home orders from the Governor's Office. The most recent guidelines issued by the Governor's Office are posted here on our page. However, in the same way that the COVID-19 crisis continues to evolve, so do the guidelines to address it. Please stay up to date and informed.

Our department continues to receive inquiries from residents questioning if it would be permissible to engage in certain activities that are otherwise prohibited by the stay-at-home order. We do not have the authority at the local level to circumvent or waive any of the guidelines contained in the Governor's order. Allowable individual activities, and allowable essential travel guidelines are contained in the order, so please check before you venture out.

As requests for business waivers continue to be submitted and granted by the Pennsylvania Department of Community and Economic Development, the growing list of businesses impacted by the Governor's order is changing daily, including hundreds of waiver applications that can be in the pipeline pending approval at any given time.

Regarding non-compliance by individuals or businesses, we are in regular communication with the District Attorney's Office, the Pennsylvania State Police, and those agencies that are responsible for enforcing the Governor's orders, based on current statutes and enforcement protocols. All complaints are addressed and handled on a case-by-case basis. Any subsequent enforcement action depends on a variety of factors, including the severity of the potential threat to the public health and safety of the community. Enforcement can include warning(s) or arrest, and as this crisis evolves, so can the protocols regarding enforcement. Incidents involving actual or suspected cases of COVID-19, or violation of quarantine orders, are handled in cooperation with the Department of Health.

Most importantly, we are strongly urging voluntary compliance. Most people are taking this public health threat seriously, and are complying with social distancing guidelines and stay-at-home orders to keep their families, friends and loved ones safe. Others are completely ignoring or mocking these preventative measures, and are selfishly placing others at risk. Many of them share responsibility for the rapid spread of the virus and a surge in cases that have already begun to overwhelm our health care system. This is also placing our health care workers and first responders at risk, and the flood of COVID-19 infected patients are making it more difficult for people with other serious or life threatening conditions to be treated. Likewise, investigations and potential arrests for non-compliance will begin to overwhelm police agencies and the entire criminal justice system. Other crimes and offenses don't stop during a pandemic, and we are already struggling with ways to keep our staff healthy, and to ensure that essential police services continue. Despite that, please continue to report suspected violations as we work toward achieving compliance.

Unlike snow storms, active shooters, or other catastrophic events, this enemy is invisible. Perhaps that's why some can't recognize it and continue to ignore it. Unfortunately, it's very real, just look at the numbers and the dire projections. This crisis is unprecedented, and it will take unprecedented measures to overcome it. The short and long term effects on public health, and the overall impact on the economy are unknown, as is the eventual outcome of this pandemic. For those of us who are

complying with the CDC guidelines and Governor's orders, life as we now know it has become the new normal.

Governments, health care workers and first responders around the globe are imploring the public to comply with stay-at-home orders and social distancing guidelines, and to practice good hygiene, so that we can protect and save lives, and return to the old normal in the not-too-distant future.

Please be safe and stay healthy.

Chief Joseph G. Elias