



To the Citizens of Brown County:

It has been over one week since the first confirmed case of COVID-19 in our community. Since that time, there have been two additional cases confirmed within Brown County. The following are the statistics and the current state of our efforts to test for the presence of this virus:

3 positive  
25 negative  
13 pending  
41 total

These test results from Brown County would seem to indicate that only a few persons are affected. However, we recognize that the tests may not accurately reflect how far the virus has spread within our community. Our medical community has a limited number of test kits available. We simply are not able to test everyone who may be exhibiting signs of the infection. Absent the ability to test everyone, it simply cannot be known with any degree of certainty how many cases presently exist in our community. With this in mind, we urge you not to underestimate the potential for exposure in public places.

Before the first confirmed case, we took action to prevent large public gatherings by closing all public facilities. After learning of the first confirmed case, we issued an emergency declaration prohibiting non-religious social gatherings in excess of 50 people. The following day, the Governor of Texas issued an executive order closing restaurant dining rooms and bars and limiting social gatherings to 10 or less. These restrictions remain in place for our community.

Many have asked us to take further action. Many others have insisted that further limitations would be improper. We have closely monitored the “stay at home” and “shelter in place” orders that have been issued in other communities. Most of these executive orders carve out a list of exemptions for businesses defined as “essential.” Common exemptions are healthcare, grocery stores, convenience stores, hardware stores, transportation, electricians, plumbers, and other similar services all needed to keep our homes, hospitals and food supply safe and operational. The number of businesses or trades that can legitimately be defined as “essential” is substantial. In fact, the list of possible exemptions is so great, that we do not believe such an order would materially impact the spread of COVID-19. In other words, we do not want to issue an order that appears to be restrictive, but in reality, the exceptions swallow the rule.

For the foregoing reasons, today we issue a limited stay at home order. The order issued contains largely common sense directives. Those infected, those known to be exposed, and those exhibiting any of the known signs of the infections are ordered to stay home. Additionally, all businesses shall adopt measures to prevent the spread of this infection, including the use of social distancing and proper sanitization of workspaces. Further, businesses are ordered to restrict all unnecessary workplace meetings and to transact business remotely where feasible.

With the exception of certain entertainment and non-essential personal services, no business is ordered to close. Individuals that are not exhibiting signs of infection are not prohibited from

leaving their home, but travel is limited to work-related travel and to obtaining your essential needs. Additionally, traveling is permitted to reach outdoor recreation so long as proper social distancing is observed.

Prior to issuing today's directive, we have consulted with our medical community. As of today's date, we are advised that our healthcare workers are burdened but not overwhelmed. The medical community is concerned but cautiously optimistic that the spread of the virus can be curtailed without wide-scale shutdowns. Please understand that this is a day-by-day evaluation. Tomorrow is a new day, and when our medical community expresses that their resources cannot withstand the current trend, further directives may be required. If today's orders do not achieve the goal of reducing the spread of this virus, future restrictions will likely substantially impact businesses and restrict travel outside the home. This will inevitably have a profound impact on many families. We ask for your compliance to avoid this action.

Please know that we are providing the public with facts and data as fast as possible while still maintaining the integrity and accuracy of the information released. Also, please understand that there are limitations on what can be released due to healthcare privacy laws. Rest assured, however, that we will report all confirmed cases within hours of a positive diagnosis. In the meantime, please stay safe and healthy.

Respectfully Submitted:

/s/ Dr. Paul Lilly, County Judge

/s/ Stephen E. Haynes, Mayor of Brownwood

/s/ Robert Mangrum, Mayor of Early

/s/ Eric Bishop, Mayor of Bangs