

Gov. Evers: Directs DHS to prohibit mass gatherings of 50 people or more

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MADISON — Gov. Tony Evers today directed Department of Health Services (DHS) Secretary-designee Andrea Palm to issue an agency order prohibiting mass gatherings of 50 people or more statewide to mitigate the spread of COVID-19. A copy of Secretary-designee Palm's order can be found [here](#). This order is effective on Tues., March 17, 2020 at 12:01 a.m. and will remain in effect for the duration of the public health emergency declared by [Executive Order #72](#) or until a superseding order is issued.

This order includes any gatherings at locations such as public or private schools, theaters, museums, stadiums, conference rooms, meeting halls, taverns, health and fitness centers, and places of worship. Critical infrastructure and services such as grocery stores, food pantries, childcare centers, pharmacies, and hospitals are exempt from this order.

Restaurants and bars are required to operate at less than 50 percent capacity or have fewer than 50 people, whichever is less.

"While it was a difficult decision knowing the impacts on communities, families, workers, and businesses across our state, I believe limiting gatherings to less than 50 people is another critical step we can take in slowing and reducing the spread of COVID-19," said Gov. Evers. "Keeping folks safe and healthy has to be our top priority during this crisis." On Thurs., March 12, 2020, the governor signed an executive order that directs DHS to take all necessary and appropriate measures to prevent and respond to incidences of COVID-19. It allows DHS to purchase, store, or distribute appropriate medications, regardless of insurance or other health coverage, as needed to respond to the emergency. It also authorizes state funds to support local health departments with costs related to isolation and quarantine, as well as the use of the Wisconsin National Guard.

Decisions about the implementation of other community measures will be made by state and local officials based on CDC and DHS guidance, as well as the scope of the outbreak. People should follow simple steps to prevent illness and avoid exposure to this virus including:

- Frequent and thorough hand washing with soap and water;
- Covering coughs and sneezes;
- Avoiding touching your face;
- Staying home when sick.

This is a rapidly evolving situation and we encourage you and the public to frequently monitor the [DHS website for updates](#), and to follow @DHSWI on [Facebook](#) and [Twitter](#), or dhs.wi on [Instagram](#). Additional information can be found on the [CDC website](#).

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