Gov. Edwards: Louisiana will Move to Phase One Statewide on May 15, COVID-19 Stay at Home Order will be Lifted for Louisianans

May 11, 2020

Those who are high risk should continue to stay at home, all Louisianans should wear masks when in public, practice good hygiene and social distancing.

Louisiana will move to Phase One under the White House COVID-19 guidance this Friday, May 15, which removes the Stay at Home order for Louisianans and allows additional businesses to open under strict occupancy, protection and social distancing guidelines, Gov. John Bel Edwards announced Monday. High risk individuals should continue to stay at home, except for essential activities, like getting food or medical care.

Gov. Edwards outlined the first phase of the Roadmap to a Resilient Louisiana, which adopts every major recommendation of the White House plan in Phase One. The Governor also highlighted data that shows that the Stay at Home order improved Louisiana's overall situation in relation to new COVID-19 cases and hospitalizations.

Louisiana meets the statewide threshold criteria from the White House related to declining COVID-like symptoms, new cases and hospitalizations. In addition, testing and contact tracing are ramping up, which further supports the decision to go to Phase One.

- Click here (/assets/docs/covid/Roadmap-to-Resilient-Louisiana-FINAL.pdf) to see the data presented at the Governor's May 11 media briefing.

"Because of the Stay at Home order, Louisianans were able to dramatically improve our trajectory, reduce the number of new cases, keep our health care system from being overrun and save lives. It is because of this hard work that I, in consultation with public health experts and business and industry leaders, feel confident that all across the state we can move forward with entering into Phase One. Because we meet the White House statewide threshold criteria, starting on Friday, additional businesses may open with reasonable limitations to ensure safety for their employees and their customers," Gov. Edwards said. "Louisianans who are at high risk of dying from COVID-19, including the elderly, residents of long-term care facilities and those with poor control of certain illnesses, should continue to stay at home and only leave their homes only for essential reasons, like seeking medical care, going to an essential job or getting food."

"Right now, the data shows improvement, and we also now have a much more robust testing and contract tracing program underway, which will allow us to better identify cases and isolate those who may have been infected. However, we are not out of the woods and if we see a dramatic spike in cases, we may have to increase restrictions. Our lives will not go back to normal for some time," Gov. Edwards said. "I know this has been a trying time for our people, our churches and our businesses, and I am truly grateful for the continued adherence to mitigation measures designed to slowing the spread of COVID-19 and saving lives. Louisianans are a remarkably strong and resilient people, and by working together, we will continue to protect each other and our state."

Gov. Edwards will issue an updated proclamation, the Roadmap to a Resilient Louisiana: Phase One, on Thursday, May 14 that removes the Stay at Home order for Louisianans, encouraging people who are at a higher risk of becoming ill from COVID-19 to continue to Stay at Home. However, all individuals are still Safer at Home and should limit their exposure to the novel coronavirus when in public by wearing a facial covering like a cloth mask, practicing good hygiene, including frequent handwashing, and maintaining at least six feet of social distance from people who are not in their households.

The Governor's order will detail categories of businesses that can be open and those which must remain closed. All non-essential Phase One businesses and churches will be limited to 25 percent of their total occupancy, which meets the White House Guidance for Phase One that calls for "strict" social distancing measures. All Phase One businesses and churches must have their employees who deal with the public in face coverings or cloth masks and enforce social distancing.

The 25 percent occupancy rate is based on the advice of public health officials who recommend that people generally have 110 square feet around them. This occupancy capacity includes customers and employees.

The State Fire Marshal and the Louisiana Department of Health will continue issuing guidance to different types of businesses about Phase One in the coming days, in order to ensure that businesses and churches can safely operate to the maximum level allowed in Phase One. Business owners and faith leaders can register at OpenSafely.la.gov to receive this guidance, which will also be placed online.

With the exception of gaming establishments, no church leader or business owner is required to register or to get approval of their opening plans in advance. Registering for the Open Safely site is not required to reopen, but it is encouraged as it will allow businesses and churches to get the latest information quickly.

Phase One guidance will allow essential businesses, as defined by CISA (https://www.cisa.gov/publication/guidance-essential-critical-infrastructure-workforce), to remain open. Non-essential businesses (sometimes called "gray area" businesses) and places of worship may remain open at 25 percent of their occupancy. All business owners should read the order to understand which category their business falls into.

New types of businesses that may open beginning on May 15, with 25 percent occupancy limits, sanitation guidelines and spacing for physical distancing include:

- Gyms and fitness centers
- Barber shops and hair and nail salons
- Casinos and Video Poker
- Theaters
- Racetracks (not open to spectators)
- Museums, zoos, aquariums (no tactile exhibits)
- Bars and breweries with LDH food permits

The following businesses remain closed: massage establishments and spas, tattoo parlors, carnivals, amusement parks, water parks, trampoline parks, arcades, fairs, bars and breweries without LDH food permits, pool halls, contact sports, children's play centers, playgrounds, theme parks, adult entertainment venues, and other similar businesses.

All business owners should review the updated order, which will be formally issued on Thursday, to understand if their business can be open as of May 15.

State buildings will begin to be open to the public on May 15 at 25 percent occupancy and state agencies are directed to continue to bring more state employees back to work in person, with proper distancing and protections in place. In line with the White House Phase One guidance, all employers that can are encouraged to continue to allow their employees to work remotely where possible, and to plan to space out their employees, close communal spaces, require face coverings like masks and increase sanitation protocols when employees do return to the office.

INFORMATIONAL RESOURCES:

- Business and faith leaders should register at OpenSafely.la.gov (https://opensafely.la.gov/)to receive guidance and updates from the State Fire Marshal's office and the Louisiana Department of Health.
- For a guide of businesses that can be open at any given time, visit https://gov.louisiana.gov/can-this-business-open/ (/can-this-business-open/)
- Members of the public can continue to get information from the Governor's office by visiting Coronavirus.la.gov and by texting LACOVID to 67283.
- Members of the public can continue to get information from the Department of Health by visiting ldh.la.gov/coronavirus (http://ldh.la.gov/coronavirus/)
- People with general questions about COVID-19 in Louisiana can call 211. (http://ldh.la.gov/coronavirus/)

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