

Macon County COVID-19 Lodging Facility Regulations FAQ Sheet

Macon County has imposed regulations due to the COVID-19 Pandemic that affect the operation of lodging facilities. Each municipality in Macon County has also enacted similar regulations. Attached are a few FAQs concerning the regulation for lodging facilities located in Macon County but outside the municipal city limits of the Towns of Highlands or Franklin.

Question: Lodging facilities were ordered closed on Friday March 27, 2020 at 5:00 PM. Does my lodging facility have to completely close or are there other options for me to remain in business?

Answer: Yes. There are several exemptions that are included in the regulation such as work-related exemptions, homeless shelter exemptions, and emergency facility exemptions.

Question: Why were these regulations imposed?

Answer: The regulations were imposed to attempt to reduce the possibility of someone travelling from an area of significant COVID-19 spread to Macon County solely for the purpose of finding relief from such area and unintentionally bringing illness to Macon County that contributes to a hardship on our healthcare system.

Question: Who made this decision to regulate lodging?

Answer: The regulations were imposed by the Macon County Emergency Management Coordinator after review and consensus by the Macon County Public Health Director, the Macon County Sheriff, the Macon County Manager, the Chairman of the Macon County Board of Commissioners, and the Macon County Attorney. The regulations were also reviewed by the Macon County Attorney.

Question: How long will these regulations remain in place?

Answer: The regulations will remain in place until the next regular meeting of the Macon County Board of Commissioners on April 14, 2020 or until such time as they are determined to be made more or less restrictive based on information available from a rapidly evolving Pandemic situation.

Question: What is the penalty for violation?

Answer: The penalty for violation could constitute a violation of the Macon County Emergency Management Ordinance which is a class 2 misdemeanor. Our primary intent is to focus on education and assistance and not penalties. Enforcement will be by the Macon County Sheriff's Department.

Question: Someone is already staying in my lodging facility and does not meet the exemptions in the regulations? Do they need to leave at 5:00 PM March 27?

Answer: No. Current residents at these lodging facilities are permitted to stay, but any future leisure travel reservations that do not meet the exemptions are not allowed.

Question: I have someone that needs to make a reservation and will be in town briefly for business purposes. Is that allowed?

Answer: Yes. That would be a work-related exemption.

Question: If a family in our area experiences a house fire or similar emergency that requires a temporary stay in a lodging facility, is that allowed.

Answer: Yes

Question: Who determines if a guest reservation is allowed?

Answer: We are asking the cooperation of each lodging facility to use their best judgment in following the regulations. The **Macon County Emergency Management office (828-349-2067)** can provide assistance as needed.

Question: What documentation do I need as a lodging owner/manager to meet the exemptions?

Answer: Use your best judgment. There is no required standard documentation. Employee ID, letter from a company, etc. would work, but use your best judgment. If you are already familiar with the guest, you don't really need anything else.

Question: We have hikers travelling into our area from the Appalachian Trail. Do they meet the exemptions?

Answer: The exemptions are for work-related, homeless, or emergency reasons. Each situation will be different, but a hiker probably does not meet those exemptions.