

COVID-19 - Industry Update 5: March 17, 2020

Greetings to Travel Partners,

The Wilmington and Beaches CVB continues to monitor COVID-19 (novel Coronavirus) updates from New Hanover County, as well as Visit North Carolina and other state agencies that are taking the lead on preparation and information distribution. As the health crisis continues to escalate, the CVB is aware of the acute impact this is having on our industry and the more than 6,470 employees who make a living in New Hanover County's travel and tourism industry.

Please be on the lookout for surveys and other communications from the CVB that will help us gather information. Your feedback is very important and will help us to respond to the needs of our industry and the people affected by this health crisis.

As always, the Wilmington and Beaches CVB thanks you for your support and for keeping the us informed. Hopefully the preventive measures we take now will prove to be effective in flattening the curve of the pandemic. We respect the importance of this matter and will continue to share updates to our partners on an on-going basis as the situation changes.

Below are some updates from the CVB and state agencies, along with helpful links.

Wilmington and Beaches CVB Update:

The CVB Response Steps to Date:

***Developing Partner Extranet COVID-19 page to share research and information. The Extranet will become the CVB's main partner communication tool during this crisis. In the coming days, we will send a separate communication reminding partners how to access the Partner Extranet.**

*Developing industry surveys for Lodging and Restaurant sectors, to distribute this week.

*Shifting message to focus on outdoor activity.

*Pausing event marketing and others, as needed, until deemed safe by officials to attend mass gatherings.

*Ongoing COVID-19 Industry Updates via email to travel partners and stakeholders.

*Tracking event/meeting cancelations and tourism business closings; update listings.

*Responding to visitor and partner queries.

Ways You Can Assist the CVB:

*Inform CVB if your business closes to the public, along with estimated length of time.

*Inform CVB of meeting/event cancelations due to COVID-19.

*Inform CVB the percentage of lodging cancelations that cite COVID-19 concerns.

*Share with CVB ways that your business is adapting to reduce the impacts of Coronavirus. This might include additional precautionary measures, curb-side takeaway or delivery, staff training, etc. We will compile these ideas into a list of "best practices" to share at a later date. Please send your Coronavirus Best Practices to Hannah Almeter, Communications/PR Specialist: halmeter@wilmingtonandbeaches.com.

Visitor Information Center Update:

- *Beginning March 17, the CVB office is open to staff only as a social-distancing precautionary measure. Thank you for understanding.
- *Visitor guides are available in the kiosk outside; a QR code is posted on the door.
- *Seasonal visitor centers scheduled to open on April 1 may be postponed, pending the County's COVID-19 directives.

State of North Carolina Update:

RESTAURANTS: Earlier today in an effort to prevent the spread of COVID-19, N.C. Governor Roy Cooper announced that **DINE-IN SERVICE at all restaurants and bars in North Carolina must close effective at 5:00 p.m. today** (Tues., March 17). Delivery, take-out, and curbside pickup are still allowed, as well as the continuation of alcohol sales. An executive order is expected later today.

EVENTS: On March 14, the governor signed an Executive Order prohibiting mass gatherings of more than 100 people: <https://files.nc.gov/governor/documents/files/EO117-COVID-19-Prohibiting-Mass-Gathering-and-K12-School-Closure.pdf>

NC Department of Health & Human Services Interim Guidance for Gatherings limits gatherings to 50 or more people: <https://files.nc.gov/ncdhhs/documents/files/covid-19/Interim-Guidance-for-Organizations-that-Gather-Less-Than-50-People-Together-031620.pdf>

PUBLIC HEALTH HOTLINE: The NC Dept. of Health and Human Services Public Health Call Line dedicated to COVID-19 (open 24 hours a day; 7 days a week) that is manned by public health professionals: 1-866-462-3821. N.C. Dept. of Health and Human Services COVID-19 updates: www.ncdhhs.gov/divisions/public-health/coronavirus-disease-2019-covid-19-response-north-carolina

SMALL BUSINESSES: N.C. Governor Cooper requests Small Business Administration Disaster Declaration Aid (March 16, 2020): <https://www.ncdhhs.gov/news/press-releases/governor-cooper-requests-small-business-administration-disaster-declaration-aid>

VISIT NC: Visit North Carolina COVID-19 communication dated March 16, 2020 (see attachment).

New Hanover County Update:

As of 10am on March 17, there were no confirmed cases of COVID-19 in New Hanover County. However, this status is expected to change as the virus spreads.

EVENTS: On March 16 as a precautionary measure to reduce the risk of spread, New Hanover County called for the cancelation or postponement of events of 50 or more people (10 or more people for high-risk persons). This is in line with the Centers for Disease Control recommendation for the next 8 weeks: <https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/community/large-events/mass-gatherings-ready-for-covid-19.html>

NHC PUBLIC HEALTH HOTLINE: On March 17 New Hanover County opened a Public Health Coronavirus Call Center for residents who wish to speak with a public health nurse about their COVID-19 questions: 910-798-6800 (Mon.-Fri. 7:30am-6pm).

ATTRACTIONS: Several attractions and tours in New Hanover County have voluntarily closed temporarily. The CVB is updating its website as we receive updates, however, there may be some that we have not yet heard from. Please check specific attraction and lodging websites and social media pages, or directly contact attractions and lodging properties to confirm status.

More New Hanover County updates:

<https://health.nhcgov.com/your-environment/public-health/coronavirus/>

Other Helpful Links:

NCRLA: NC Restaurant & Lodging Association's online Coronavirus Resource Center For Hospitality Businesses, you will find helpful resources that are specific to the Lodging and Restaurant industries, as well as practice tutorials for employers:

<https://www.ncrla.org/coronavirus/>.

Small Business Administration: <https://www.sba.gov/page/coronavirus-covid-19-small-business-guidance-loan-resources>

Center for Disease Control (CDC): <https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-nCoV/index.html>

More links will be added to future Updates.

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Be well, keep safe and stay tuned,