

COVID-19 Government Relations Update for Columbus Chamber Members
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“Governor Issues Stay at Home Order”

The Governor yesterday issued an [executive order requiring Ohioans to “Stay at Home” \(herein “Order”\)](#). Beginning at 11:59pm today, Monday, March 23, individuals must stay at home, with limited exceptions for essential activities such as shopping for groceries, necessary supplies, and prescriptions. Of particular importance to Chamber members is an exemption from the Order for “essential business” and “minimum basic business operations”.

Regardless of whether your line of business was deemed essential, all businesses may continue to operate with employees working remotely from their home. In addition, all businesses may conduct the minimum necessary on-site activities to continue operations, such as processing payroll and collecting mail.

Only industries listed below and in the Order as “essential” are permitted to operate and require employees to continue working on-site. These businesses are required to take additional safety precautions. Requirements are detailed in Section 18 and include: update sick leave policies, reinforce health and safety etiquette, enhance environmental cleaning, actively encourage sick employees to stay home, and more. Specific social distancing requirements include designation of six-foot distances with signage, tape or other means; providing hand sanitizing products to workers; if open to the public, implementing separate operating hours for vulnerable populations, and posting online whether open and how people can reach the business with remote services. Qualifying businesses should immediately communicate to employees that they are working in an essential business and must continue to report to work.

The Chamber worked with the Governor’s office to craft the order in a manner that limits further economic harm to the small business community. [See our letter here](#). Categories exempted by the Order include healthcare and public health operations, human services operations, essential infrastructure, essential government functions, and essential business.

Essential infrastructure includes food production, construction, operation and maintenance of utilities, building management and maintenance, distribution centers, cybersecurity operations, communications and web-based services.

Following is a non-exhaustive list of “essential businesses” represented amongst the Chamber’s membership base. Please review the full text of the Order in consultation with your legal counsel to ensure compliance:

- All workers identified in [this memo by CISA](#).
- Grocery stores, pharmacies, convenience stores, and other entities engaged in the

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- retail sale of food, pet supplies, prepared food, alcohol, and household consumer products. Restaurants may continue to offer carryout only.
- Food and beverage manufacturing, production, processing, and cultivation.
 - Businesses and non-profits that provide charitable and social services that support the necessities of life for economically disadvantaged individuals and people with disabilities. Businesses that provide home-based care services are also permitted to remain operational.
 - Hardware stores, gas stations, auto-repair, construction equipment dealers, and related entities needed to facilitate transportation.
 - Transportation, logistics, shipping and delivery services.
 - Educational institutions for purposes of continuing distance learning, performing R&D, and other essential functions.
 - Laundry services and hotel and motels used for lodging.
 - Businesses that enable work from home.
 - Critical trades such as plumbers and electricians, as well as commercial cleaning businesses, moving and relocation services.
 - Insurance, financial institutions and related businesses such as appraisal and title companies, as well as professional services such as law firms and accountants.
 - Most manufacturing, distribution, and supply chain companies producing and supplying essential products.

Local health departments and local law enforcement are empowered by the Order to enforce it. Enforcement will primarily be complaint-driven, and businesses that do not comply with the Order may be subject to inspection and forced shutdown.

This Order expires at 11:59pm on April 6, at which time the Governor will reassess.

Do not hesitate to contact the Chamber with questions.