



# Georgetown County, South Carolina

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## **NEWS RELEASE – COVID-19 #2**

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**FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE**

## **Georgetown County declares State of Emergency, closes recreation facilities**

GEORGETOWN COUNTY — Georgetown County government will declare a State of Emergency at 5 p.m. today as it works to protect residents and employees from the threat of COVID-19. The highly contagious virus has been declared a pandemic by the World Health Organization and poses a significant threat to those in the county as it continues to spread across the nation.

Along with the declaration, Georgetown County Emergency Management will elevate its readiness level to OPGON 2, which indicates enhanced awareness surrounding a situation that is likely to affect the county. Under OPGON 2, the county begins implementing emergency operations plans. The county's Emergency Operations Center will not be activated due to the nature of the threat and in favor of social distancing. Key team members will instead work together remotely, and a virtual Joint Information Center will be activated beginning at 9 a.m. Tuesday, March 17.

The declaration of a State of Emergency will allow the county to implement a number of changes to protect the public and its staff. More are likely to take place later in the week, but as of today the change that will most impact the public is the temporary closing of all county parks and recreation facilities to the public. With the closing of all S.C. schools and the state's limitation on social gatherings, county officials determined the closing of parks and recreation facilities was necessary to encourage social distancing and help limit the spread of COVID-19. Additionally, all county-run adult and youth sports programs are suspended until further notice.

Likewise, any rentals at county parks and recreation facilities will be cancelled for at least the next two weeks and fees refunded.

Notices of the closures will be posted at parks and recreation facilities today, and anyone found in violation will be put on trespass notice and may be subject to law enforcement action.

Other changes being put into effect are as follows:

- All county board and commission meetings, with the exception of a Capital Project Sales Tax (CPST) Commission meeting scheduled for tomorrow, March 17, at 6 p.m.,

are cancelled until further notice. The CPST meeting will be conducted by phone. Media will be invited to participate via phone as well. County Council meetings will continue as scheduled, but may also be conducted virtually. The county will also strongly recommend that all state-appointed boards and commissions within the county cancel meetings until further notice.

- Georgetown County Summary Courts have cancelled all court sessions until further notice. Parties will be notified by mail of their rescheduled dates. Those needing to make payments for any of the county's magistrate offices may do so at the drop box location at Central Traffic Court, 333 Cleland Street. No cash and no personal checks are accepted – money orders or cashier's checks only. Please include a copy of the ticket or case number with payment. Payments may also be made via the Georgetown County website, [www.gtcounty.org](http://www.gtcounty.org).
- Georgetown County will be enacting liberal leave policies for all employees, not only to ensure sick employees stay home, but to assist employees with children while schools are out of session. Some departments will begin implementing policies to allow some or all employees to telework where possible. As these changes occur, the county will do all it can to continue providing services to residents, while accommodating the needs of staff during this difficult time. Steps are also being taken to ensure continuity of operations in case some staff members become ill.
- Hiring for all nonessential county positions has been temporarily frozen until further notice.
- All nonessential travel outside the county has been cancelled for county employees.
- Though libraries remain open, all meetings and events scheduled in library meeting rooms will be cancelled. Library staff plans to increase online programs for patrons.
- For the time being, all other county operations and facilities are maintaining regular operating hours. The county continues to ask residents who are sick not to enter county buildings. Anyone who is visibly sick will be asked to leave.

As of the time of this release, there are no confirmed cases of COVID-19 in Georgetown County. Cases have been confirmed in Horry and Charleston counties.

All individuals are encouraged to continue practicing the basic precautionary measures recommended by SCDHEC and the CDC, including:

- Washing hands frequently;
- Coughing and sneezing into a barrier, such as your elbow or a tissue;
- Avoiding touching of the eyes, nose and mouth;
- Avoiding contact with those who are sick; and
- Staying at home if you are sick.

Anyone with questions regarding COVID-19, please visit

<https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-nCoV/> or <https://scdhec.gov/health/infectious-diseases/viruses/coronavirus-disease-2019-covid-19> or call the SCDHEC Care Line at 1-855-472-3432.

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