

## **Sevier County Officials Require Face Coverings in Public Beginning July 10**

SEVIERVILLE, Tennessee (July 7, 2020)—To help mitigate the spread of COVID-19 and to keep local businesses operating, all Sevier County (Tennessee) residents, employees, and visitors are required to wear face coverings in public beginning at 12:01 a.m. on Friday, July 10, per Sevier County Mayor Larry Waters's Executive Order 23. The order is set to expire on Monday, August 3.

Tennessee Governor Bill Lee issued Executive Order 54 on Friday, July 3, 2020, permitting certain county mayors, including Sevier County's, to issue local face covering requirements. Mayor Waters issued Executive Order 23 after consultation with government leaders across the county, including Sevierville Mayor Robbie Fox, Pigeon Forge Mayor David Wear, Gatlinburg Mayor Mike Werner, Pittman Center Mayor Jerry Huskey, county commissioners, city managers of each city, emergency and law enforcement officials, tourism and economic officials, and state and regional health officials.

“After discussion with local, regional, and state officials and leaders, we have determined that ordering a face covering mandate is in the best interest of Sevier County,” Waters said. “We are doing this for the health and safety of our residents, employees, and visitors. We are also doing it to prevent another interruption or shutdown of businesses, and so our schools can open this fall.”

“We understand that this measure may be an inconvenience, but it is necessary as we continue to seek a balance between a healthy community and commerce. Requiring the wearing of face coverings helps mitigate the possibility of the state placing further restrictions or closures on our local businesses.”

The county-wide executive order requests businesses to post signage at public entrances informing patrons of the face covering requirement.

Per Executive Order 23, the Tennessee Department of Health is required to monitor the COVID-19 outbreak in Sevier County and provide detailed weekly updates to Mayor Waters. If the county mayor, along with the mayors and officials from the respective cities within Sevier County, deem the order ineffective in slowing the spread of COVID-19 as demonstrated by data provided by the Tennessee Department of Health, this order can be rescinded earlier than Aug. 3.

The order lists 13 instances, listed below, in which the face covering order does not apply.

- Within one's residence or motor vehicles (unless transporting others for hire, carpooling, etc.), hotel and motel rooms while rented to and solely occupied by guests registered to the room, overnight rentals while rented to and solely occupied by guests registered to the rental;
- By a child twelve (12) years of age or younger;
- By someone who has trouble breathing due to an underlying health condition or another bona fide medical or health-related reason for not wearing a face covering;
- By someone who is incapacitated or otherwise unable to remove the face covering without assistance;
- By someone with conditions or disabilities that prevent them from wearing a face covering;
- While actively eating or drinking;
- While outdoors. Persons outdoors are encouraged to follow Tennessee Pledge and maintain social distancing;

- While participating in indoor athletic events or indoor exercising, as permitted by the Tennessee Pledge and orders from the Governor, while maintaining proper social distancing where possible;
- While working at location of employment under conditions where appropriate social distancing or protection from others (others is defined as outside of the person's household) is substantially maintained;
- In situations in which wearing a face covering poses a safety or security risk;
- While in a house of worship unless required by that house of worship, but wearing a face covering in such locations is strongly encouraged (for more information on worship, we encourage churches to follow the Tennessee Pledge);
- The Sevier County School System is exempt from this order as it will formulate its own reopening guidelines.
- Private businesses may implement stricter guidelines (for example, requiring face coverings outdoors on private property, etc.).

Sevier County Executive Order 23 intends to increase the wearing of face coverings to protect the health of residents, visitors, and employees and to ensure the state does not take further measures to disrupt local businesses and the economy. The County Mayor requests first-time offenders of this order be given a warning and educated on the purpose of such order.

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