

Stay at Home Order Guidance Issued

Governor Walz on Friday issued four new Executive Orders, 20-21, 20-22, 20-23, and 20-24. The orders are intended to provide additional flexibility for health care workers, commercial drivers, local governments and constitutional officers. All Executive Orders are posted on Metro Cities' COVID-19 website page as they become available. [Executive Order 20-22](#) allows the State Auditor to work with local governments to adjust reporting deadlines for various financial reports, so that municipalities have greater flexibility and are not having to divert resources that may be necessary to respond to critical local needs during the COVID-19 peacetime emergency. Metro Cities will provide additional information on these and other orders as it is available.

The MN Department of Employment and Economic Development (DEED) has [issued guidance](#) on eligibility for critical sector worker exemptions, following Governor Walz's "Stay at Home" Executive Order 20-20. The order directs Minnesotans to limit movements outside of their homes from March 27 at 11:59 p.m. to April 10 at 5:00 p.m. The order provides an exemption for critical sector workers who cannot perform their duties from home.

Certain city officials including law enforcement and public safety, public works, state building officials/inspectors, water supply, elections, and housing are specifically exempted in the order. The order also exempts "workers performing all other governmental functions which are necessary to ensure the health, safety, and welfare of the public, to preserve the essential elements of the financial system of government, and to continue priority services as determined by a political subdivision of the State. All political subdivisions of the State will determine the minimum personnel necessary to maintain these governmental operations."

The Governor's order also included guidance from the U.S. Department of Homeland Security's Cybersecurity and Infrastructure Security Agency (CISA). DEED is referring employees to refer to the [CISA guidance](#) as well as [Executive Order 20-20](#) for further guidance. An employee can also determine eligibility for at Critical Sector worker exemption by searching by their [4-digit NAICS industry code](#). If an industry description is marked as YES in the Critical Industry column, then a worker in that industry qualifies for a Critical Sector worker exemption.

Please see Metro Cities' website, www.MetroCitiesmn.org, and specifically the COVID-19 web page, for further information and resources. The website page is updated regularly, so please check it frequently.

Legislature Passes COVID-19 Funding Bill

On Thursday, the House and Senate passed legislation HF 4531 to provide \$330.6 million in COVID-19 related funding. The bill also contains several policy provisions. The legislation passed the House on 99-4, and the Senate 67-0. The House and Senate adopted temporary rules prior to allow legislators to vote remotely in the chambers.

\$200 million of the bill's funding will be put into a specially created fund to implement the Governor's COVID related Executive Orders. Any funds available after May 11, 2020 will be returned to the state's general fund. The bill establishes a 10-member Legislative COVID-19 Response Commission that has oversight over the \$200 million. The commission includes 10

legislators, five from each body, with three majority members and two minority members each. The Commission will have the authority to review specific expenditures over \$1 million and has 24 hours to review expenditures; if it does nothing, the funds can be spent. If three members of the Senate and three members of the House offer a negative recommendation of a specific item, the money cannot be spent.

The remaining \$130 million in the bill is appropriated to various specific expenditures including housing, small business, veterans, and social welfare supports. Below are provisions in the bill of interest to Metro Cities:

Small Business and Economic Development Supports

The bill includes \$40 million for DEED to support small businesses. A \$10 million appropriation supports the small business loan guarantee program. \$30 million funds the small business emergency loan program through \$10 million transfer from the Minnesota Investment Fund and \$20 million from the [Minnesota 21st Century Fund](#). The bill also authorizes the local revolving loan fund expansion authority issued earlier via Executive Order. Cities may now, through June 30, 2020, use those funds to issue loans to retail stores, service providers, and hospitality businesses, in addition to existing permitted uses.

Housing and Food Supports

The bill includes \$26.5 million in emergency assistance for homeless populations. That and other housing and food support funding items are broken out below:

- \$9 million to the Food Shelf Program, \$3 million which is for regional food banks
- \$15.2 million for additional shelter space, vouchers for hotel or motel room
- \$5 million is for purchasing hygiene sanitation, and cleaning supplies
- \$6.331 million for hiring staff to protect health and wellness of program recipients
- \$5.5 million for a housing support rate increase of 15%

Transportation Related Sections

The bill appropriates \$2.4million to the Department of Public Safety for the hiring of temporary staff to issue drivers' license and identification cards so that a turn-around time of 45 days is met. The bill also extends the expiration date of drivers' licenses that expire during a peacetime health emergency to the last day of the second consecutive month following the month in which a peacetime health emergency period has ended.

The bill allows the Bureau of Criminal Apprehension to delay submission of fingerprints needed to complete a criminal background check of an essential worker. This includes those who work in transportation, water and wastewater infrastructure and community-based government functions. Workers will have 30 days after the emergency has ended to submit their fingerprints.

The bill does not include other items such as accelerated LGA payments, delayed reporting to the State Auditor, changes to open meeting laws, a property tax deadline extension, or emergency funding for cities. The bill does provide for an extension of property tax petitions, from April 30 to May 30.

Should the state authorize emergency funds in the future, cities are urged to document costs related to local COVID-19 responses.

Following passage of the bill, the Legislature adjourned until April 14th, or until such time as needed, as authorized by resolution.

The bill language and spreadsheet can be found here. [HF4531](#) / [SF4451](#)

League of MN Cities and National League of Cities Offer Webinars

The League of Minnesota Cities conducted several webinars this week, some of which were reported on in Metro Cities' March 25th newsletter. The LMC's Friday webinar included a Q&A panel discussion featuring all speakers from the series. All webinars are posted on the League's website. The topics include:

- Monday, March 23: Open Meeting Law & Technology
- Tuesday, March 24: Continuing to Meet Legal Obligations
- Wednesday, March 25: Human Resources Issues
- Thursday, March 26: Legislative Update
- Friday, March 27: COVID-19 Questions and Answers

Click [here](#) to view the recorded presentations.

The National League of Cities has also offered COVID-19 webinars for city officials and staff. On March 24, the NLC hosted a presentation on current federal efforts to respond to the pandemic with a focus on resources for local governments. Since that webinar, Congress has now passed a \$2.2 trillion stimulus package. Many concerns raised in the webinar remain in the final legislation. Click [here](#) for a recording of this webinar and see below for further information on the federal stimulus bill. Check the [NLC COVID-19 page](#) for updates at the national level. Metro Cities will be working with our members, the LMC and other city organizations to address funding needs for metropolitan cities in the federal legislation as funds are distributed to Minnesota.

Other NLC webinars this week included presentations on strategic crisis communication and understanding the expanded leave policies included in the federal response to COVID-19. Hud Englehart, who also wrote a [piece](#) on strategic communication in the NLC's 'CitiesSpeak' blog, spoke about effectively communicating in the midst of the COVID-19 crisis. David Ritter from Barnes & Thornburg LLP answered questions from local government officials across the country on what the expanded leave policies implemented by the federal government mean for cities. Much of that discussion echoed the LMC webinar on Human Resources issues.

Links for the Crisis Communication and COVID-19 Leave webinars will be added to this piece, and Metro Cities' COVID web page, as they become available.

City Responsibilities for Building Inspections and 60-Day Rule Remain – FEEDBACK REQUESTED

Municipal responsibilities on land use applications, under [M.S. 15.99](#), remain subject to the 60-day rule and any extension requires legislative action. Additionally, initial city review within 15 days to determine application completeness, is still required. **Metro Cities is seeking city feedback on local concerns with meeting the current 60-day rule** – city ability to process applications during COVID-19 workplace restrictions, current pace of applications, workload at various staffing levels. Please send comments to charlie@metrocitiesmn.org.

Federal Stimulus Bill

Congress this week authorized a \$2 trillion relief and stimulus bill, the third federal bill related to COVID relief. There are specific items of interest to cities, including:

- REAL ID deadline extended to October 1, 2021.
- \$150 billion in relief funding aid to states and territories. Each state would receive at least \$1.25 billion but the bill language does not state any of the funds have to go directly to cities. The League of Minnesota Cities is working with the National League of Cities on a fourth federal bill. Metro Cities will be working with the League and other city organizations on local government needs, as funds in this bill are distributed to states.
- \$5 billion for Community Development Block Grants, which can be used for rental assistance. Minnesota will also receive \$11 million in non-entitlement money.
- \$850 million for Byrne-Justice Assistance Grant Program for state and local police departments. The funds could be used for personal protection equipment and overtime pay.

For more information on the housing items in the bill, see the [March 25 Metro Cities News](#).

Read [Provisions Related to Unemployment Compensation in the Senate-Passed CARES Act](#).

Census 2020 Outreach Updates – Stay at Home Outreach Strategies

The state census team at the State Demographic Center has issued new outreach guidance for the 2020 Census. Following the stay at home order issued by Governor Walz this week, the census team recognizes that many partners are already making new plans for no-contact, remote census engagement.

Suggested tactics include:

- Organize people to write letters to the editors of targeted media outlets. Key messages: the census is still happening; it's safe and easy to respond online, by phone, or on paper; and a complete count is now more important than ever. Stress that data from the 2020 Census will help establish funding levels for the next decade for services that many are relying on right now, such as healthcare, first responders, unemployment insurance, and small business loans. Find information to help volunteers write letters on the [We Count Minnesota](#) site.
- Review current self-response data. This [interactive map](#) from the Census Bureau is updated daily. Drill down to identify low-response areas where your outreach is needed most. You can view self-response rates by state, county, tribal area, city, or even census tract.
- Recruit local officials to record testimonials. Who in your community would be an effective messenger? Encourage them to share their videos on social media and include the hashtags #WeCountMN #2020Census #StayHomeMN
- Schedule volunteers for remote phone-banking for the census. Provide talking points to help callers address common questions and steer people to online or telephone response options. The State Demographic Center hopes to secure the services of a virtual phone-bank which will allow volunteers to efficiently contact over 1 million Minnesotans in the next 6 weeks – and the calls can be made from the comfort volunteers' homes. The census team aims to be able to schedule local volunteers to contact people in their area or the community of interest.
- Plan an email campaign (especially on Census Day, April 1) using an existing contact list. [Email templates can be found on the We Count MN site.](#)
- Persuade social media influencers to post/Tweet about the 2020 Census. Identify community leaders who are active and engaging on social media; have one-on-one

conversations with them, to highlight how the census affects issues that matter to them. Give them a tour of the [We Count Minnesota](#) site and/or the [Census Bureau](#) website to identify meaningful digital assets that they can share with their followers. Ask them to use these hashtags: #WeCountMN #2020Census #StayHomeMN

- Gather phone numbers for a texting campaign. The census can easily be completed online by someone with a smartphone; text your contacts a reminder that includes this link to the census website: my2020census.gov. If your organization needs help texting your list of contacts, email [David Wakely](mailto:David.Wakely) to learn about Community Motivator, a free texting tool available to our census partners.

Additional questions and concerns about how a local team can most effectively redirect its resources should be directed to Andrew Virden, the director of census operations and outreach, at 651-201-2507 or andrew.virden@state.mn.us.

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Metro Cities (Association of Metropolitan Municipalities)
145 University Ave W, St. Paul, MN 55103-2044
Phone 651-215-4000 · Fax 651-281-1299 · www.MetroCitiesMN.org