



COVID-19 Operating Plan for the Municipal Court for the City of Burnet, Texas

Recognizing the need to ensure the health and safety of litigants, attorneys, visitors, court staff, judges, and other individuals entering the buildings housing the courts, the Municipal Court of Burnet will implement the following protective measures:

General

1. All court staff will comply with the Emergency Orders issued by the Supreme Court of Texas and Court of Criminal Appeals, including conducting in-person proceedings according to the guidance issued by the Office of Court Administration regarding social distancing, maximum group size, and other restrictions and precautions.
2. All judges will use all reasonable efforts to conduct proceedings remotely.
3. The presiding judge of the municipal court will maintain regular communication with the local health authority and mayor and adjust this operating plan as necessary with conditions in the city.
4. The Municipal judge will begin setting non-essential in-person proceedings no sooner than June 17, 2020.

Judge and Court Staff Health

1. The Municipal judge and court staff who can perform the essential functions of their job remotely will telework when possible.
2. Judge and Court Staff Monitoring Requirements: The court will obtain an infrared thermometer to check temperatures of the judge and court staff, which will be checked daily for those who are in the court building.
3. Judges or court staff who feel feverish or have measured temperatures equal to or greater than 100.4°F, or with new or worsening signs or symptoms of COVID-19 such as cough, shortness of breath or difficulty breathing, chills, repeated shaking with chills, muscle pain, headache, sore throat, loss of taste or smell, diarrhea, or having known close contact with a person who is confirmed to have COVID-19 will not be permitted to enter the building and should seek medical advice.
4. Judges and court staff will be required to wear face coverings, practice social distancing, and practice appropriate hygiene recommendations at all time.
5. Protective Measures: Masks, disinfectant wipes and hand sanitizer will be provided to staff and judges.

Scheduling

1. The following court schedules are established to reduce occupancy in the court building:
 - Cases shall be conducted remotely if possible. (Virtual Court.)

- In-person cases shall be scheduled no closer than 15 minutes apart.
- Individuals will be asked to wait outside the court building until summoned by the bailiff.
- Persons having business before the court shall be brought into the courtroom by the bailiff and seating will be 6 feet apart.
- While in session the court shall be open to the public subject to the temporary imposed COVID-19 protections, including the limit of no more than eight people in the courtroom at any time.

Virtual Court

- Remote hearings shall be conducted in accordance with the Virtual Court Guidelines, included herewith.
- Per Texas Office of Court Administration guidelines, in order to ensure that the public has reasonable notice of where to observe court proceedings conducted via Zoom video conferencing, the court shall have Youtube channels available for viewing hearings. There is no requirement to keep the proceeding on YouTube after the completion of the hearing; and, the recordation of the hearing may be deleted immediately. Recording is not permitted and anyone doing so may be subject to contempt by the court.

Vulnerable Populations

1. Individuals who are over age 65 and individuals with serious underlying health conditions, such as high blood pressure, chronic lung disease, diabetes, obesity, asthma, and those whose immune systems are compromised such as by chemotherapy for cancer or other conditions requiring such therapy are vulnerable populations.
2. Each judge will include information on orders setting hearings, dockets notices, and in other communications notifying individuals who are in vulnerable populations of the ability to contact the court to identify themselves as a vulnerable individual and receive accommodations. A notice with this information will be posted on the courts' websites and in conspicuous locations around the court building (a copy of which is attached).
3. Vulnerable populations who are scheduled for court will be accommodated by electronic means.

Social Distancing

1. All persons not from the same household who are permitted in the court building will be required to maintain adequate social distancing of at least 6 feet.
2. Public common areas have been closed to the public; single capacity restrooms will remain open.
3. The maximum number of persons permitted in the gallery of each courtroom has been determined to be 8 persons (including court staff). The maximum capacity of the courtroom will be monitored and enforced by court staff.

4. In each courtroom, the counsel tables, witness stand, judge's bench, and clerk, court reporter, and bailiff seating have been arranged in such a way so that there is social distancing of at least 6 feet between each space.

Hygiene

1. Hand sanitizer dispensers have been placed at the entrances to the building and inside of bathrooms.
2. Tissues have been placed near the door of the courtroom, at counsel tables, at the witness stand, on the judges' benches, and in the hallways.
3. The Department of State Health Service's "Stop the Spread of Germs Flyer" has been posted in the court building.

Screening

1. When individuals attempt to enter the court building, the bailiff or city staff will ask the individuals if they have any symptoms of COVID-19 such as feeling feverish, cough, shortness of breath or difficulty breathing, chills, repeated shaking with chills, muscle pain, headache, sore throat, loss of taste or smell, diarrhea; or have been in close contact with a person who is confirmed to have COVID-19. Individuals who indicate yes to any of these questions will be refused admittance to the court building.
2. When individuals attempt to enter the court building, the bailiff will use an infrared thermometer to determine the temperature of the individual. Individuals whose temperature equals or exceeds 100.4°F will be refused admittance to the court building.
3. Staff who are screening individuals entering the court building will be provided personal protective equipment, including masks and gloves.

Face Coverings

1. All individuals entering the court building will always be required to wear face coverings.
2. Individuals will be encouraged to bring cloth face coverings with them, but if the individual does not have a cloth face covering, a disposable face mask will be provided.

Cleaning

1. Court building cleaning staff will clean the court building at the end of each day the courtroom is used. Other areas, such as tables, counters, chairs, and door handles to which public has access shall be wiped down with disinfectant wipes by the court staff between each use.
2. Court building cleaning staff have been provided cleaning supplies shown to be effective with this coronavirus.
3. Court building cleaning staff have been trained on proper cleaning techniques and provided appropriate personal protective equipment.

Other

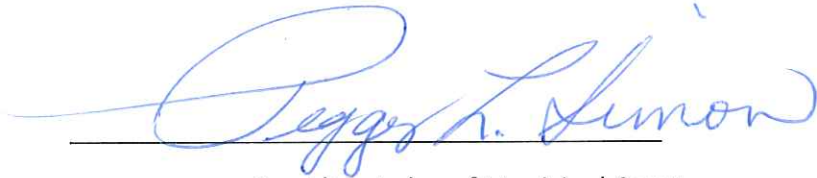
When individuals sign in for court proceedings, a container of unused pens will be provided for them. After the hearing, pens may be taken by the individual or discarded in a designated tub. No pens will be re-used.

Expiration Date

This Operation Plan shall expire on September 30, 2020, unless the City of Burnet Council's emergency order is extended or terminated by amendment.

I have conferred with all court staff, the mayor, and the City's Emergency Management Coordinator (who consults regularly with the local health authority) regarding this Operating Plan. As the Municipal judge, I will ensure that court proceedings are conducted consistent with this Operating plan.

Date: 6/8/2020



Presiding Judge of Municipal Court
Peggy Simon

Notice to Vulnerable Populations

Individuals who are over age 65 and individuals with serious underlying health conditions, such as high blood pressure, chronic lung disease, diabetes, obesity, asthma, and those whose immune systems are compromised such as by chemotherapy for cancer or other conditions requiring such therapy are vulnerable populations.

Individuals that identify themselves as a vulnerable individual, or their attorney, shall contact the Burnet Municipal Court at least 48 hours prior to the scheduled hearing and request accommodations or a continuance.

Burnet Municipal Court phone: (512) 756-2822

Virtual Court Guidelines

Burnet Court offers virtual court for contested hearings/trials in situations where the litigants and other court participants are able to participate remotely. Virtual court is also offered to individuals who wish to speak to a judge by appointment to resolve their case.

Services we are able to provide through our Virtual Court:

Pretrial Conferences/Hearings/Trials – Based on the guidance from the Office of Court Administration contested matters may be set by the court's discretion. You will receive a notice by mail or email of the time and date for the hearing.

Initial hearing request to speak to a judge – You may request a hearing to speak to the judge to request extensions, payment plans, community service, proof of compliance dismissals, probation or driver safety course requests.

Requirements

You must have an electronic device that is compatible with ZOOM. (iPhone, Android, tablets, laptops, and home computers with video capability should be compatible).

Run a test via the Zoom platform here: <https://zoom.us/test>

See here for more detail regarding system requirements and 'Getting Started' guides for "Desktop" (computer use) or "Mobile" (smartphone use):

<https://support.zoom.us/hc/en-us/categories/200101697-Getting-Started>

How to contact us / initiate a request:

To request an online court appearance with a judge, please send an email to this address court@cityofburnet.com

Please provide the following information: NAME, DOB, HOME ADDRESS, TELEPHONE NO., EMAIL ADDRESS, CASE NUMBER.

Attach any documentation that you wish to provide to the judge within the email. Please use Adobe PDF format when possible. Due to security issues, other formats may get rejected. If you have not received confirmation that your documents were received within 24 hours prior to your court session or if you have any questions, please call 512-756-2822.

Expectations

1. Ensure to set aside 30 minutes for the appointment.
2. Select a room environment that allows you to focus on discussing your case with the judge and minimize interruptions or background noise.
3. Be patient with unexpected technical issues or inactivity during the session as we work through the technical challenges of a virtual docket.
4. Have your documentation at hand to review along with the judge.

Disclaimer: In accordance with the Office of Court Administration, all court settings are open to the public. Our virtual dockets will be broadcast via a public website. Additionally, cases needing a plea will be recorded and maintained as a record by the court.