

COVID-19 Operating Plan for the Venus Municipal Court

Recognizing the need to ensure the health and safety of litigants, attorneys, visitors, court staff, judges, and other individuals entering the building housing the court, the court of the City of Venus, Texas will implement the following protective measures:

General

1. All judges and 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 to adjust this operating plan as necessary with conditions in the city.
4. Judges will begin setting non-essential in-person proceedings no sooner than June 1, 2020.

Judge and Court Staff Health

1. Judge and Court Staff Monitoring Requirements: On the day of in-person court proceedings, the judge and court staff will measure their temperatures and self-assess for COVID-19 related symptoms.
2. Judges or court staff who feel feverish or have measured temperatures equal to or greater than 100.0°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.
3. Judges and court staff will be required to wear face coverings, practice social distancing, and practice appropriate hygiene recommendations at all time when dealing with the public.
4. Protective Measures: the judge and court staff shall practice appropriate hand washing and face masks will be available to the judge and court staff.

Scheduling

1. The following court schedules are established to reduce occupancy in the court building: All proceedings, both essential and non-essential, may occur remotely (such as by teleconferencing, videoconferencing, or other means) unless litigants or other court participants are unable to successfully participate in a remote hearing for reasons beyond the court's control. In-person Dockets will be scheduled in thirty-minute

increments with a maximum of ten cases per docket. Social distancing will be maintained for all individuals not within the same household who may be in a courthouse. No more than 10 individuals, including court staff, shall be allowed in the courtroom at any one time. Others shall be encouraged to remain in their motor vehicles and shall be called by court staff as their respective case is called.

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 considered to be 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, if possible, 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 scheduling all proceedings, both essential and non-essential, to occur remotely (such as by teleconferencing, videoconferencing, telephone, or other means) unless litigants or other court participants are unable to successfully participate in a remote hearing for reasons beyond the court's control. In such an event, the Court may reschedule the respective cases until such time as may be appropriate.**

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. Each restroom has been evaluated to determine the appropriate capacity to ensure social distancing and the maximum capacity has been posted on each restroom door.**
- 3. Public common areas, including breakrooms and snack rooms, have been closed to the public.**

Gallery

- 4. The maximum number of persons permitted in the gallery of each courtroom has been determined and posted. The maximum capacity of the courtroom will be monitored and enforced by court staff.**

5. The gallery of the courtroom has been marked to identify appropriate social distancing in the seating. Seating is limited to every other row.

Well

6. 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, outside of each courtroom, and outside of any public 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 multiple locations of the court building.

Screening

1. When individuals attempt to enter the court building, Court staff will ask the individuals if they are feeling feverish; have a cough, shortness of breath, or difficulty breathing; 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, Court staff will use an Infrared thermometer to determine the temperature of the individual. Individuals whose temperature equals or exceeds 100.0°F will be refused admittance to the court building.
3. Inmates being transported from the jail to the court building will be screened for symptoms of COVID-19 and have their temperature taken prior to transport. Inmates with symptoms or a temperature equal to or above 100.0°F will not be transported to the court building.
4. Staff who are screening individuals entering the court building will be provided personal protective equipment, including a mask and gloves.

Face Coverings

1. All individuals entering the court building will be required to wear face coverings at all times.
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, if available.

Cleaning

1. Court building cleaning staff will clean the common areas of the court building so that common spaces are cleaned prior to each scheduled court docket.
2. Court building cleaning staff will clean the courtrooms between every docket hearing date and at the end of each day the courtroom is used.
3. Court building cleaning staff have been provided cleaning supplies shown to be effective with this coronavirus.
4. Court building cleaning staff have been trained on proper cleaning techniques and provided appropriate personal protective equipment.

Other

Other procedures may be implemented as the need is shown.

In developing the plan, I consulted with the local health authority and mayor, documentation of which is attached to this plan. I will ensure that the judges of courts with courtrooms in the court building covered by this Operating Plan conduct proceedings consistent with the plan.

Date: 06/10/2020



Presiding Judge of Municipal Court

Acknowledgment

State of Texas

County of Johnson

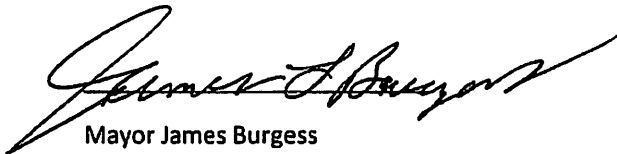
City of Venus

Venus Municipal Court

I hereby acknowledge having received a copy of the COVID-19 Operating Plan for the City of Venus Municipal Court as well as a copy of OCA'S Guidance to Courts Regarding ALL Court Proceedings. I understand that Courts have a responsibility to take steps to ensure the health and safety of those entering a court building for court proceedings.

To my knowledge the City of Venus Municipal Court staff and city officials have taken all necessary steps to ensure the health and safety according to the guidelines listed on the COVID-19 Operating Plan.

I certify under PENALTY OF PERJURY under the laws of the State of Texas that the foregoing paragraphs are true and correct.

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "James Burgess", written in a cursive style.

Mayor James Burgess