

Governor Abbott Issues Executive Order Increasing Hospital Capacity, Announces Supply Chain Strike Force For COVID-19 Response

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Governor Greg Abbott today signed an Executive Order to expand hospital bed capacity as the state responds to the COVID-19 virus. These actions will reinforce Texas' health care capabilities and provide additional space for hospitals to provide care to COVID-19 patients. Under this order, the Governor directed all licensed health care professionals and facilities to postpone all surgeries and procedures that are not immediately, medically necessary to correct a serious medical condition or to preserve the life of a patient who without immediate performance of the surgery or procedure would be at risk for serious adverse medical consequences or death, as determined by the patient's physician. This does not apply to any procedure that, if performed in accordance with the commonly accepted standard of clinical practice, would not deplete the hospital capacity or the personal protective equipment needed to cope with the COVID-19 disaster.

The Governor also suspended certain regulations as requested by the Texas Health and Human Services Commission (HHSC) to allow for increased occupancy of hospital rooms — meaning hospitals will be able to treat more than one patient in a patient room, thus increasing their ability to care for the growing number of COVID-19 patients.

Additionally, the Governor announced the creation of a temporary Supply Chain Strike Force — immediately naming Keith Miears, Senior Vice President of Worldwide Procurement at Dell Technologies, to serve as Supply Chain Director for the state of Texas. Miears will be supported by former State Representative John Zerwas, MD, who will assist with hospital relations and preparedness, Clint Harp, Vice President of Transmission Strategic Services for the Lower Colorado River Authority, who will assist with asset research and procurement, and Elaine Mendoza, Chair of the A&M Board of Regents, who will assist with statewide child care infrastructure for critical workers.

The Supply Chain Strike Force will be tasked with guiding collaboration between the public and private sectors to ensure health care facilities have the supplies and resources they need to respond to COVID-19. In addition to working with the federal government and businesses to secure necessary personal protective equipment, the team will work to ensure day-to-day resources (including food) are available for Texas' medical personnel, first responders and those who have contracted COVID-19.

"We have seen how this virus has progressed in other states and nations, and it is vital that Texas stays ahead of the curve as the situation develops here," said Governor Abbott. "Patient care capacity is essential during this time, which is why the state of Texas is taking action to increase hospital bed capacity, provide additional space for medical personnel to care for patients, and ensure that healthcare facilities have the supplies needed to respond to COVID-19. Along with this Executive Order, the Supply Chain Strike Force will play a crucial role in addressing these needs by helping to secure and expedite the distribution of resources across the state. These are unprecedented times, and Texas will continue to take robust action to protect our communities and support those serving on the front lines of the COVID-19 response."

The Governor's Executive Order takes effect immediately, and remains in effect and in full force until 11:59 p.m. on April 21, 2020, unless it is modified, amended, rescinded, or superseded by the Governor.