



PRESS RELEASE

- **Who:** *Kerr County Citizens*
- **What:** *Mask Exemption Approved*
- **When:** *Thursday, Sept. 17, 2020*
- **Where:** *Kerr County, Texas*
- **Why:** *Received Exemption from GA-29*

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

Kerr County Receives Mask Exemption

Citizens Urged to Maintain Social Distancing, Precautions

Kerr County Judge Rob Kelly has reported Thursday morning, Sept. 17, that the application he submitted for an exemption from the statewide governor's mask order has been approved.

"This exemption means that anyone within the county limits is not required to wear a face covering," Kelly said. "However, given that COVID-19 is still out there in our community, we would still encourage everyone to social distance from each other by at least 6 feet, wash your hands frequently and use all other precautionary measures at your disposal to make sure we keep the virus at bay."

Texas Governor Greg Abbott's GA-29 order, requiring the wearing of masks by everyone in the state who couldn't properly socially distance, became effective July 3, 2020. At that time, he set a parameter that would allow counties who had no more than 20 active COVID-19 cases to apply for an exemption.

Kerr County has not had more than 20 cases for slightly more than a month, reported Kerr County Emergency Management Coordinator William B. "Dub" Thomas.

The judge said he wanted to wait until he saw how the back-to-school period affected activities, as well as gatherings that possibly occurred over the Labor Day holiday weekend. On Monday, he told other county elected officials during their commissioners' court that he was pleased that he had not seen a spike after the start of school or since the holiday.

"I still encourage everyone to continue to wear masks in crowded and congested areas," the judge said. "It's just common sense."

Kelly added that he spoke with Dr. Mark Foust, superintendent of Kerrville Independent School District, and he fully supports KISD's continued requirement for masks to be worn.

"While it might not be mandatory anymore, wearing masks is still the smart thing to do in certain situations. At least now everyone has a choice," Kelly said. "Please choose the smart thing to do when in crowds and close spaces."

"If we are conscientious, careful and keep our active case count down, we can enjoy this relaxation. If we aren't and the active case count goes up to 20 again, GA-29 automatically requires that we must return to mandatory masks," Kelly said. "I can't stress enough that our fate is in your hands. Be careful and be smart!"

The exemption from the statewide mask order includes metropolitan areas, such as Kerrville.

"Local businesses still have the option whether or not they require masks to be worn in their stores by their employees, by their customers or both," Kelly said. "I would recommend we all respect the decisions of others, just as we want them to respect our own choices."

Texas counties that have exemptions in place are reviewable at <https://tdem.texas.gov/covid-19/#1595710696128-d00caad4-8c79>.

As of today, according to TDEM, some 56 counties out of the state's 254 counties – about 22 percent - have received exemptions. Of counties near Kerr, also approved for exemptions are Bandera, Mason and Real counties.

Residents are also urged to keep the mask order in mind when traveling beyond Kerr County, as most of Texas is still required to abide by the order.