

## Gov. Walz orders postponement of elective surgeries, procedures

**Wednesday, March 18:** Gov. Tim Walz signed Executive Order 20-09, ordering health care providers to postpone elective surgeries and procedures, including non-emergent elective dental procedures, to focus health care capacity and equipment on responding to COVID-19 cases and other emergencies.

This order complies with guidance issued on Tuesday, March 17, from the Centers on Disease Control and Prevention (CDC), as well as similar guidance from the Centers for Medicare and Medicaid Services issued on Wednesday, March 18, to delay elective surgeries and procedures, both to conserve health care resources and to reduce contact between patients and providers. “The greatest risk we face during the COVID-19 pandemic is overwhelming our health care systems and limiting their ability to respond to emerging cases,” said Walz. “This executive order keeps more health care resources open and prioritizes life-saving intervention for COVID-19 patients and other emergency care.”

Elective surgeries and procedure must be postponed indefinitely beginning at 5 pm on Monday, March 23. The executive order clarifies that a non-essential surgery or procedure is defined as a surgery or procedure that can be delayed without undue risk to the current or future health of a patient. Surgeries and procedures that prevent loss of life, permanent dysfunction of an organ or extremity, or risk of metastasis or progression of staging for non-COVID-19 patients should not be postponed under this order.

## Department of Commerce warns about COVID-19 scams

**Wednesday, March 18:** As the nation continues to respond to the coronavirus (COVID-19) pandemic and consumers are settling into their homes with increased social connections by e-mail, phone, mail, and social media, the Department of Commerce is urging Minnesota consumers to be on alert for potential scams created to take advantage of the fear, isolation, and uncertainty during this unprecedented time. “First and foremost, consumers should not share any financial or other sensitive information with anyone who contacts them unsolicited,” reminds commissioner Steve Kelley.

In addition, consumers should be asking the following questions about every e-mail, phone call, and piece of mail they receive because the answers could trigger potential red flags for fraud and scams:

- Is the e-mail, phone call, or mail from someone you don't know?
- Is the sender, caller, or item offering you something that seems too good to be true?
- Is the sender, caller, or item using language to incite fear or threaten you?
- Is the sender, caller, or item urging you to “Act Now” before it's too late?
- Is the sender, caller, or item requesting payment from you and promising to give you something in return?

Minnesota consumers should be cautious. If there is doubt about the sender, caller, or the idea being pitched – hang up! Delete the e-mail. Recycle the mail.

At this time, the Minnesota Department of Commerce does not have any reported cases of COVID-19 financial scams.

If you have questions or if you believe you may have been the victim of a scam or fraud, please contact the Consumer Services Center by e-mail at [consumer.protection@state.mn.us](mailto:consumer.protection@state.mn.us). Or call 651-539-1600 or 800-657-3602, but e-mail is best.

## Salons, barber shops, and tanning parlors added to closure list

**Tuesday, March 17:** Gov. Tim Walz clarified the types of businesses and places of public accommodation subject to closure per Executive Order 20-04. The executive order clarifies that the closure order applies to salons, barbershops, and other similar establishments. “As we move quickly to respond to the COVID-19 pandemic, we are constantly learning and adjusting to feedback from health experts, business owners, and workers,” said Walz. “The best way to slow the spread of COVID-19 is to implement social distancing, and this executive order provides clarification on how we can better practice these community mitigation strategies.”

Executive Order 20-04, ordering the temporary closures, is amended by the following additions (indicated by underlined text): “Gymnasiums, fitness centers, recreation centers, indoor sports facilities, indoor exercise facilities, exercise studios, tanning establishments, body art establishments, tattoo parlors, piercing parlors, businesses offering massage therapy or similar body work, spas, salons, nail salons, cosmetology salons, esthetician salons, advanced practice esthetician salons, eyelash salons, and barber shops.”

## Stearns County shutting doors; doing business by mail, online

**Thursday, March 19:** The Stearns County Board of Commissioners took action today to issue a local emergency declaration. This act allows for Stearns County to change business practices that not only protects the county's employees but also safeguards the public. The declaration allows all county departments to determine how to continue providing services while maintaining social distancing in compliance with the governor's executive orders and guidelines of the Minnesota Department of Health.

Many of the services the county provides are currently available either through the mail, via phone, or online. Drop boxes are being placed in the entrances of the county administration center in downtown St. Cloud and the service center building in Waite Park for residents to drop off paperwork for processing. Stearns County is also working to identify processes for how face-to-face services can be provided when that interaction is required.

Stearns County, in collaboration with Benton County, continues the hotline number; 320-650-6625 or 1-877-782-5683, during the hours of 8:30 a.m. to 4:30 p.m. Mondays through Fridays. This has been established for the purposes of answering the public's questions. Individuals can also call the Minnesota Department of Health hotline, which is staffed 7 a.m. to 7 p.m. seven days a week, at 651-201-3920 or 1-800-657-3903.

Stearns County Public Health is also asking every Stearns County resident to do their part to help fight the spread of COVID-19. “We are living through an event we've not had to deal with in recent memory,” said Renee Frauendienst, Stearns County Public Health division director. “The good news is, our ancestors have, and their experience and learning are guiding our response.”

Stearns County is keeping their website, [www.stearnscountymn.gov](http://www.stearnscountymn.gov), updated with guidelines, resources, and other info. Minnesota currently has 77 confirmed cases, with three of them in Stearns County.

## As of now, taxes still due on Wednesday, April 15

**Monday, March 16:** As Minnesota responds to COVID-19, the Minnesota Department of Revenue remains open and ready to help with tax-related services. Due to our top priority of health and safety of our customers and employees, the department is modifying some of the services and following guidance from the Minnesota Department of Health to help limit the spread of COVID-19.

### Has the income tax deadline changed?

No. At this time, federal and Minnesota individual income tax returns are due Wednesday, April 15. We continue to monitor actions by the IRS and will update this info as necessary.

### What if COVID-19 impacts my ability to file or pay?

Under Minnesota statute, taxpayers have the ability to request an abatement of any penalty or interest imposed for failing to timely file a return or failing to timely pay a tax for good cause. If you are unable to file and pay on time because of COVID-19 illness or related situation, contact the department.

### Who can I contact with questions?

If you have questions, call us at 651-556-3000 or 1-800-657-3666, or use our email form at [www.revenue.state.mn.us/contact-us](http://www.revenue.state.mn.us/contact-us).

## State approves \$200 million for COVID-19 response

**Tuesday, March 17:** Gov. Tim Walz today signed Ch. 70 S.F. 4334 into law, allocating \$200 million toward an emergency and long-term grant program to respond to the needs of health care and long-term care facilities during the COVID-19 pandemic.

“Our health care facilities are Minnesota's first line of defense against COVID-19,” Walz said. “I am proud of this urgent, bipartisan action to support our state's health care infrastructure during this unprecedented public health event.”

The bill appropriates \$50 million to the state's public health response contingency account and \$150 million to create a health care response fund which would be used to distribute grants. Any funds still in the account on Feb. 1, 2021, will be returned to the state's general fund.

The Minnesota Department of Health announced today – Tuesday, March 17 – that the number of COVID-19 cases in Minnesota has risen to 60, including cases of community transmission with no known travel link.