

COVID-19 Operating Plan for the City of El Paso Municipal Court City Judiciary

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 courts of **the El Paso Municipal Court** will implement the following protective measures:

General

1. All judges 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. Court proceedings may continue to be offered remotely.

Judge and Court Staff Health

1. Judge and Court Staff Monitoring Requirements: face coverings are mandatory unless the Judge allows removal ; temperatures are taken upon arrival; hand sanitizers have been installed.
2. Judges or court staff who feel feverish or have measured temperatures equal to or greater than 99.6°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. Protective Measures: *Plexiglass has been installed between the Judge's and Deputy's bench and public contact in all courtrooms*
4. Protective Measures: face coverings are mandatory for staff; face coverings must be worn by the public unless the Judge allows their removal, temperatures are taken upon arrival; hand sanitizers have been installed; ; headsets for phones for cashiers are required, social distancing enforced; limited walking around the facility; lunch at work station; work stations and counter area are sanitized

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 2-3 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. *Housekeeping maintains a cleaning log in each restroom.*
3. Public common areas, including breakrooms and snackrooms, have been closed to the public.

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 2-3 feet between each space.

Hygiene

1. Hand sanitizer dispensers have been placed at the entrances to the building, outside of elevators on each floor, outside of each courtroom, and outside 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.

Screening

1. When individuals attempt to enter the court building, security guards and bailiffs 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, security guards and bailiffs 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. *New metal detection machines have been purchased and installed. These machines automatically register a person's temperature.*
4. Staff who are screening individuals entering the court building will be provided personal protective equipment: face masks .

Face Coverings

1. All individuals entering the court building will be required to wear face coverings, **unless the Judge allows for their removal in the courtroom.**
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.
3. Individuals who will be required to be in the court building for over 1 hour will be provided surgical masks and required to wear them while in the court building **if the supply is available.**

Cleaning

1. Court building cleaning staff will clean the common areas of the court building so that common spaces are cleaned at least every hour.
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.*
4. *Fogging is performed on a weekly basis. All courtrooms as well as work areas are fogged for deep sanitizing.*


Other

1. *Prosecutors/ inspectors/ officers already utilize testifying virtually.*
2. *Plexiglass dividers installed at service counter between customers and between court staff.*
3. *Bullet proof glass is already installed at each location.*
4. *Interpreters are now dialing in to conduct virtual interpretation.*
5. *Chairs / benches will be blocked in courtrooms and in the lobby to ensure social distancing is observed.*

6. *Night drops have been installed at all locations, additional email groups have been posted on the Court's website to allow for public contact with court staff and submission of documents; Alivechat has been in operation since 2018;*
7. *All defendant notices contain notification of virtual hearings in addition to the ability of video arraignments (this option has been in place many years)*
8. *Locations are closed to the public when necessary- widespread notice is issued. Example: from Oct 26, 2020 – Dec 14 all locations were closed to the public*

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: 8/2/2021



Daniel Robledo, Presiding Judge of Municipal Court

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