

The Supreme Council

MOTHER COUNCIL OF THE WORLD
OF THE
THIRTY-THIRD AND LAST DEGREE

Michael L. Wiggins, 33°
Sovereign Grand Inspector General
In Texas

ORIENT OF TEXAS

Emergency Directives For Distribution

UPDATED – 19 May 2020

As the Governor started the Open Texas program on May 1, much has changed regarding businesses that are allowed to operate and the types of activities that can be undertaken since COVID-19 restrictions began in March; however, **social gatherings are highly discouraged or prohibited**. In addition, health recommendations concerning COVID-19 from the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC), directives from the State of Texas, various counties across the State, and the Grand Master of Masons in Texas have also been changing. In response, I am extending or modifying the current COVID-19 directives as follows.

Scottish Rite Stated Meetings: In an abundance of caution and in the best interest of our members' health and safety, **I am extending the directive to cancel all in-person Scottish Rite meetings of any kind through June 30, 2020**. This directive applies to all Scottish Rite activities including Clubs, Degree Teams, Committees, Social Groups, etc. This information should be communicated to your membership immediately.

Reunions Postponed or Canceled: All Reunions and reunion-related activities to be held in the Orient of Texas are **postponed or canceled through July 30, 2020**. This includes group recruitment activities, degree practices, and degree conferrals.

Scottish Rite Buildings: Our Scottish Rite Buildings may remain open subject to any local, county, state, or federal emergency declarations regarding COVID-19 public gatherings or activities related to Scottish Rite business; however, our buildings are to remain **closed to the general public** in response to recommendations of the CDC for public gatherings through June 30, 2020. Each Valley should closely monitor local directives from the State and County in which you operate as the governmental orders are varied with different expiration dates across the State.

- **Masonic Related Organizations:** Scottish Rite buildings may be opened for limited use by appendant bodies subject to proclamations or directives by the Grand Master or Presiding State Officer for that body AND governmental orders. All activities are limited to one general meeting/gathering area (lodge room for example) and restroom facilities. Catering or meal service is prohibited. Each visiting body is subject to governmental directives; is responsible for any citations or fines issued by a governmental authority; has the duty to see that all required and suggested health screening, sanitary, and social distancing measures are appropriately taken; and accepts all liability for the health and safety of its attendees.

- **Third Parties:** Actions by the Governor allow certain limited venue-type activities such as weddings and wedding receptions under various restrictions including facility limitations up to 25 percent of the meeting space occupancy. At this time, I am reluctant to allow this type of use prior to June 30, 2020; however, there may be certain situations where appropriate, subject to the Governor's orders and the associated restrictions. Each Valley or building owner (through the Personal Representative and General Secretary) is allowed to determine if these activities are appropriate for their facility. If so, they may resume third-party events as of June 1, 2020 at their discretion. Each third-party event must satisfy all the health and safety guidance issued by the State and CDC and accept all liability for its event including any citations or fines issued by a governmental authority. Each building owner should closely monitor local directives from the State and County in which you operate as the governmental orders are varied with different expiration dates across the State.

Social Media - Virtual Meetings: While web-based platforms like Zoom, Skype, MS Teams, WebEx, and other such virtual meeting programs are useful for social gatherings, they are not appropriate for holding stated meetings, conducting business activities, or discussing esoteric topics due to the difficulty in providing internet security and preventing the rebroadcasting, recording, or posting of such meetings. Therefore, all "virtual" gatherings hosted by your Valley, committees, Clubs, or groups are prohibited except for social gatherings or educational programs **where no esoteric work is used or discussed** consistent with Grand Master's Decision No. 2 that limits esoteric discussions. Further, educational meetings should be limited to verified active Texas Freemasons with participation through restricted access that must be monitored by a moderator with no recording of the proceedings. Such meetings, if held, must have the written permission of the Valley's Personal Representative.