



## **CORONAVIRUS COVID-19 TRENDS AS OF SUNDAY, MARCH 15, 2020 @ 7:30 pm**

Dear Chamber Partners and Friends,

In light of Governor Henry D. McMaster's announcement today regarding canceling public gatherings of greater than 100 people, we have decided to postpone the Georgetown County Women's Hall of Fame program which was set for Tuesday, March 17. We feel the need to do our part to reduce exposure to COVID-19 (Coronavirus) where possible.

While the spread of COVID-19 is serious, we ask that you talk with your employees and ask them to remain calm, especially when interacting with customers. We can all do simple things to help reduce the spread of COVID-19 including:

- Wash your hands frequently and thoroughly
- Cough/sneeze into a tissue and properly dispose of the tissue or cough/sneeze into your elbow
- Sanitize frequently touched surfaces and objects
- Avoid touching your face
- Avoid shaking hands
- Encourage sick employees and/or those who may have a sick family member in their homes to stay at home
- Avoid coming into contact with those who are sick
- Assess the risk of business travel

The Georgetown County Chamber of Commerce is tracking emerging trends around COVID-19 with a focus on those that may impact businesses, employees, the community, and the economy. We are working to curate helpful information for the business community. We will update you as new information becomes available.

Anyone with questions regarding COVID-19, please get your information from official sources such as:

- **Tidelands Health:** <https://www.tidelandshealth.org/>
- **SC Department of Environmental Control:** <https://scdhec.gov/health/infectious-diseases/viruses/coronavirus-disease-2019-covid-19>
- **SCDHEC Care Line** at 1-855-472-3432.
- **Center for Disease Control:** <https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-nCoV/>

## UPDATES AS OF TODAY (Sunday, March 15, 7:30 pm)

### Highlights from Governor McMaster's Sunday afternoon news conference:

- Public schools will be closed for the month of March starting Monday, March 16, including PreK-12, universities, colleges, and technical schools. (NOTE: Gov. McMaster asked for private schools and day care centers to follow suit, but this will be determined by each individual organization.)
  - All school activities – including athletic contests and practices – are suspended.
  - The S.C. Department of Education (SCDE) obtained a waiver from the U.S. Dept. of Agriculture to let summer feeding options be used during the closure for students who rely on school breakfast and lunch, including grab and go options. Two meals can be picked up at schools or from buses. Please refer to your local school district for information.
  - SCDE is encouraging school districts to use buses to drop off instructional materials along bus routes if students can't pick them up from schools. Please refer to your local school district for information.
  - SCDE is seeking additional licensers so more students can use Virtual SC (online school) and it is working with South Carolina ETV to reschedule ETV programming that is delivered to schools so it can be available at home.
  - SCDE is seeking a waiver from the US Department of Education to suspend federally required student testing.
  - SCDE is looking to equip 3,000 buses with wi-fi to accommodate remote areas of the state needing internet access. Please refer to your local school district for information.
  - Continue to check for **school updates** at:
    - **Georgetown County School District (GCSD) [GCSD website](#) and [Facebook page](#)**
    - **Horry County School District ([HCSD website](#)) and [Facebook page](#)**
    - **Horry-Georgetown Technical College ([HGTC website](#)) and [Facebook page](#)**
    - **Coastal Carolina University ([CCU website](#)) and [Facebook page](#)**
- **Utility companies** have been asked to not disconnect service for non-payment during the state of emergency.
- **State agencies** are encouraged to allow employees who are at the greatest risk to work from home. Private businesses are encouraged to do the same.
- **Municipal Elections are suspended** until after May 1, but local election offices will remain open to allow candidates to file for office.
- **Non-essential travel** for state employees is suspended.
- **Crowds over 100** people are discouraged at this time.
- Gov. McMaster requested the general public to **refrain from purchasing masks** as these are not needed in the general population and it creates a scarcity for health care providers who need them.
- **28 cases of COVID-19** have been reported in the state, per **S.C. Department of Health and Environmental Control**. Cases by county: 14 in Kershaw; 3 in Beaufort; 3 in Horry; 2 in Anderson; 2 in Lancaster; 1 in Charleston; 1 in Spartanburg; 1 in Lexington; 1 in Greenville.

- State response and what you can do, from State Epidemiologist Dr. Linda Bell: “Our top priorities remain preventing the spread of the disease and protecting the public health,” Bell said. “This includes working to control spread and measures that best protect all individuals. We encourage the public to maintain their daily routines of protecting against illness by practicing good hygiene and handwashing, and individuals with signs of illness are asked to take seriously the recommendation to stay home from school and work and not attend public gatherings.”
- To view Gov. McMaster’s news conference in its entirety, click [HERE](#).

**Unemployment benefits may be available.** If your work is affected by COVID-19, you can apply for Unemployment Insurance. This process and these benefits are the same as applying for benefits if you lose your job through no fault of your own. Click [HERE](#) for information. If you need assistance applying for benefits, claims representatives are available at 1-866-831-1724 from 8 a.m. to 4 p.m. weekdays.

**Health Insurance Response to COVID-19.** The South Carolina Department of Insurance is actively engaged with our health insurance industry to ensure appropriate protections are being implemented in response to the spread of the Coronavirus. The Department has compiled the following information from health insurance issuers providing coverage in South Carolina. Please click [HERE](#) to access information.

**Federal Reserve** has cut its key interest rates to 0 – 0.25%. Click [HERE](#) for information.

**As a reminder:**

- On Friday, Governor McMaster said that all state government offices shall remain open for operation during their normal business hours.
  - Visitation at state and local correctional facilities in all 46 counties shall be suspended immediately.
  - DHEC shall immediately restrict visitation to nursing homes and assisted living facilities with the exception of end of life situations.
  - State price gouging laws shall go into effect immediately.
  - The State Emergency Management Plan shall be activated.
  - The Governor has asked the SC General Assembly to pass a bill appropriating \$45 million to DHEC to coordinate the state’s public health response to Coronavirus. This is in addition to the \$8 million approved by US Congress.
- Governor McMaster has asked for federal assistance for small businesses through the **Direct Small Business Administration (SBA) Loan program**. The SBA will work directly with state Governors to provide targeted, low-interest loans to small businesses and non-profits in designated states and territories that have been severely impacted by the Coronavirus (COVID-19). The SBA’s Economic Injury Disaster Loan program provides small businesses with working capital loans of up to \$2 million that can provide vital economic support to small businesses to help overcome the temporary loss of revenue they are experiencing. Find more information on the SBA’s Economic Injury Disaster Loans at: [SBA.gov/Disaster](https://www.sba.gov/Disaster). No listing of states/territories approved for the loans is available at this time.

- As of the time of the news release from **Georgetown County Government** (Friday, March 13, 6 pm), there are no confirmed cases of COVID-19 in Georgetown County. The county is not at this time closing any of its public facilities or canceling events. Check the [County's website](#) and [Facebook page](#) for updates. You may also refer to the [Georgetown County Emergency Management Facebook page](#) for information.
- **City of Georgetown** will not issue city permits for gatherings of groups or events of over 250 that require city permits. Check the [City's website](#) and [Facebook page](#) for updates.
- In order to ensure that Americans do not lose their **broadband or telephone connectivity** as a result of these exceptional circumstances, Federal Communications Commission Chairman Ajit Pai specifically asked broadband and telephone service providers to take the **Keep Americans Connected Pledge**. For a list of companies participating, click [HERE](#).
  - The Keep Americans Connected Pledge reads as follows: Given the coronavirus pandemic and its impact on American society, pledges for the next 60 days to: (1) not terminate service to any residential or small business customers because of their inability to pay their bills due to the disruptions caused by the coronavirus pandemic; (2) waive any late fees that any residential or small business customers incur because of their economic circumstances related to the coronavirus pandemic; and (3) open its Wi-Fi hotspots to any American who needs them.
- Residents should keep in mind that this is a situation that could change rapidly and are advised to monitor alerts and advisories from official sources.

## **HOW CAN I HELP?**

During this unprecedented time, the Georgetown County Chamber of Commerce encourages the local community to continue to **support your neighbors and friends**. Our small businesses are the lifeline of our economy. Let's all work together to help their continued viability.

1. If you are reluctant to go out, shop by phone or online with local businesses. Some local retailers have online shopping available; many retailers are willing to help you via phone as well.
2. If you do not need anything specific at the moment but still want to support local, buy gift cards to spend later or to give away.
3. For restaurants, order takeout or delivery and tip the same amount as you would dining in.
4. When dining in a restaurant - or any place where a tip is appropriate, give a little more than you usually would. Help support those whose incomes may be directly impacted by fewer customers and guests.
5. You can buy gift cards for many local restaurants, too. Use them now or save them for later—but make the purchase now.
6. Play a round or two or three of golf. The fresh air will do you good and you'll be supporting the local economy.

7. Plan a staycation. SC's Hammock Coast offers vacation rentals for your family. And our beautiful beaches are just what you need to help you unwind.
8. And remember to support your local nonprofit community many of whom are supporting our neighbors who are most vulnerable to economic changes and health concerns posed by Covid-19.

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We encourage you to take health and safety precautions for yourself and others in our community. Our community health as a whole depends on our working together.

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If your business has launched an effort of which the Georgetown County Chamber should be aware, please <mailto:bstedman@visitgeorge.com>.

Your Georgetown County Chamber of Commerce is here to support you as other business needs arise. Please do not hesitate to contact us at (843) 546-8436 or via [email](#). For Chamber updates, visit our website [VisitGeorge.com](http://VisitGeorge.com) or follow us on [Facebook](#).

Best always,



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