



FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

March 18, 2020

## **A letter from Mission Mayor O'Caña on Coronavirus response**

Dear Mission citizens:

This letter comes at a time in our history that is quite unprecedented. The outbreak of the novel coronavirus has changed our way of life in ways that we have never experienced before. The City of Mission has been monitoring the outbreak and its progression very closely. As our nation grapples with this extraordinary public health risk, I want to share with you how the City of Mission is working nonstop to protect the health and safety of our community and our staff.

We are working with our partner agencies, including the Texas Department of State Health Services, the Hidalgo County Health Department and the Centers for Disease Control to follow their guidance as the situation evolves. Mission is continually interacting with our county agencies and preparing response strategies in the event they are needed. There are currently no known cases of COVID-19 in the City of Mission or in Hidalgo County, but it's important to remain diligent and proactive to minimize the risk to all those who live and work in our community.

I declared a Public Health Emergency March 13, 2020 because it gives the city its best ability to respond to the COVID-19 virus. The declaration does two things; first, it makes the city eligible for federal relief funding as it becomes available; second, it provides authority for mayoral regulations that can be put into place rapidly to address the situation as needed. This is not cause for alarm, but a signal that our city continues to monitor the situation and respond in a prudent, effective and efficient manner in constant coordination with our partners in Hidalgo County. We are acting with an abundance of caution and the City of Mission is currently operating under a Level 2 of emergency preparedness. Our goal is to prevent and, if necessary, control the spread of the disease.

This emergency declaration prohibits gatherings of more than 50 people in one space, whether in a public or private space. The local health authority has determined that such measures will not only control the spread of the disease, it will also keep our health care resources from becoming overwhelmed.

We strongly encourage that citizens stay home as much as possible – especially if they feel sick – and as always, please practice good hygiene. Wash your hands for 20 seconds with soap and water, use hand sanitizer and do not touch your face. Together as a community we will get through this in our All America City. Let's help each other out by being cautious and calm. Buy only what you need and be considerate of your neighbors.

Furthermore, I want to reassure you that critical city services such as police and fire protection, water and sanitation services will not be disrupted.

As a reminder, any positive case of coronavirus will only be confirmed through the Hidalgo County Health Department. Be sure to follow the City of Mission Facebook page or visit <https://missiontexas.us/> for all updates.

In an attempt to flatten the curve to contain the spread of COVID-19, the City of Mission is taking the following steps and precautions over the next several weeks:

#### Citywide Impacts in Effect:

- Mission utility billing lobby has been closed to the public; Drive-thru and drop box available for water payments
- Mission city sponsored events have been canceled or postponed
- Parks and Recreation programming and classes are suspended.
- Mission City Council meetings will be limited to less than 50 people, including employees
- Water disconnections have been discontinued
- Run/Walk events have been canceled at all City locations
- Speer Memorial Library has altered operations to protect the public

These measures shall be in place until further notice. I also want to reassure you that we are doing everything in our power to coordinate the best response to the COVID-19 virus. The city's leadership team is meeting daily and implementing guidelines set forth by the Texas Department of State Health Services and the Hidalgo County Health Department.

Thank you for your cooperation during this challenging time. I hope that you take this opportunity to spend quality time with your loved ones. I have the utmost faith that our City of Mission will come out of this healthy and strong.

Sincerely,

Mayor Dr. Armando O'Caña