

## **Response to Medical Staff, Reeves County Hospital District and Pecos Valley Rural Health Clinic Regarding Reeves County Mask Order**

As Reeves County Judge, and Emergency Management Director on behalf of the Commissioners Court, please be assured that the health and safety of our residents is our highest concern. The threat of illness posed by the SARS-Cov-2 pandemic is real and requires our every reasonable effort to reduce the threat presented by this disease. As emphasized by the CDC guidelines and instructed by Governor Abbott executive order, this includes continuation of facial coverings in public, social distancing, personal hygiene, and avoiding large gatherings.

As a governmental entity, we have only those powers that are extended to us by the Texas Constitution and by the Texas Legislature. During declarations of public health disasters, we have certain powers under the Texas Government Code, but even these extraordinary powers are limited in many regards. As a consequence, I have made very significant efforts to review and follow the guidelines and directives proved by the Office of Governor Abbott and the Texas Emergency Management (TDEM).

I stress that Governor Abbott's Executive Order GA-29 is still in effect, which requires individuals to wear an appropriate face mask when in public places and where social distancing is not possible. Because of widespread compliance, we have generally seen our number of positive COVID-19 cases on the decline in Reeves County, but this can only be achieved by continue with the cooperation of the residents of this county, and those traveling through our county.

My most recent Order Number 9 expired 9/15/2020. This does not mean that residents are not required to wear a mask. That obligation continues under the Governor's Order GA-29. The effect of Order No. 9 expiring is merely that the enhanced penalties on businesses under that order have now lapsed, due to the fact that our current numbers no longer support such harsh restrictions, particularly upon our business community. However, residents are STILL under a mask restriction, pursuant to the Governor's Order GA-29, and would be subject to penalty of \$250.00 for a violation of the Governor's Order.