

Atchison Co Health Officer: Churches limited to ten or less

(KAIR)--Following the vote by Republican lawmakers Wednesday, revoking Kansas Governor Kelly's directive to limit church gatherings, the Atchison County Health Officer is sending the reminder that local churches are to abide by the ten-person or less requirement.

Health Officer Lori Forge on Thursday issued a release saying that the emergency order she issued March 24 remains in place prohibiting public gatherings of ten or more

people in Atchison County, noting that there is an exception for activities that are defined as essential under the order. Church gatherings are not among those exceptions.

Saying that "now is not the time to lower our guard," Forge, in the release, says she is aware that many spiritual people reside in Atchison County, and that she understands "the significance and importance" of the Easter season, but notes that "ultimately the safety of [Atchison County] is the number one priority."

Noting that "in the state of Kansas there have been multiple clusters of COVID-19 tied

back to exposure during church functions," Forge closes the release by encouraging residents to do their part in preventing the spread of the virus, adding that "it is up to us, we are the key."

From the Associated Press Thursday:

MISSION, Kan. (AP) — A coronavirus faceoff over church services in Kansas just days before Easter weekend is pitting the state's Republican Legislature against its Democratic governor, and they both generally agree people should stay home to worship. At issue is whether the state has the constitutional authority to order it. A panel of legislative leaders on Wednesday overturned Gov. Laura Kelly's executive order banning religious and funeral services with more than 10 people amid COVID-19 outbreak. Kelly said Wednesday that the backlash was about politics, calling the vote "shockingly irresponsible." Kelly said three religious gatherings had led to COVID-19 outbreaks.



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For Immediate Release:

On March 24, 2020, I issued an EMERGENCY ORDER OF LOCAL HEALTH OFFICER in my capacity as Local Health Officer for Atchison County. That order remains in effect.

I am aware that Governor Kelly's executive order 2020-18, which prohibited mass gatherings, has been revoked by the Kansas Legislative Coordinating Council.

Under Atchison County's EMERGENCY ORDER, we want to remind the Citizens of Atchison county that there is still an order in place locally prohibiting public gatherings of ten or more people. There is an exception in the EMERGENCY ORDER for activities that are defined as essential under the order.

There have been 2 confirmed cases of COVID-19 in Atchison County. Both individuals have recovered and never required hospitalization. Yesterday's update from Lee Norman M.D., Secretary of the Kansas Department of Health and Environment, showed that Kansas experienced our highest number of new cases reported in a single day, as well as the highest number of deaths from COVID-19 in a day. Now is not the time to lower our guard.

I am aware that Atchison is a county comprised of many spiritual people and for many that would normally involve church activities. I understand the significance and importance of this time for so many but ultimately the safety of this county is the number one priority. It is important to note that in the state of Kansas there have been multiple clusters of COVID-19 tied back to exposure during church functions.

These are very challenging times for everyone. I know that every citizen has sacrificed something to help slow the spread of COVID-19, and for that I am very thankful. Please continue to do your part. It's up to us, we are the key.

Lori Forge
Health Officer
Atchison County