

Beaver County Office on Aging COVID-19 Task Force Newsletter Volume 5, April 29, 2020

The Pennsylvania Public Utility Commission Has Safety Recommendations

The Pennsylvania Public Utility Commission wants everyone to stay safe during spring storms.

During a storm:

- Call your utility hotline to report outages. Do not assume that the utility knows about your outage or that others have already called.
- Do not call 911 to report power outages—call your utility.
- Do not touch or approach any fallen power lines, and do not try to remove trees or limbs from power lines.
- Stay away from objects or puddles in contact with a downed power line, and do not attempt to move a downed power line.
- If you see a downed power line, call your utility and/or 911.

After a storm:

- Use flashlights or battery-powered lanterns for emergency lighting. Do not use candles to prevent a fire hazard.
- Turn off lights and electrical appliances, except the refrigerator and freezer, to avoid possible damage from power surges.
- Leave one lamp switched on to alert you when power is restored. Wait a few minutes before turning on other items.
- Do not run a generator inside a home or garage or near windows or vents. Do not connect it directly to your home's electrical system.

Absentee and Mail in Ballots Will Be Available for PA June Primary Election

Pennsylvania's primary election has been rescheduled for June 2, 2020, and voters have the option to vote either by absentee or mail-in ballot rather than going to their polling place on Election Day. These ballot applications will be accepted through May 26, 2020.

To make an application for either ballot, you may do it online at [VotesPA.com](https://www.votespa.com), or call the Beaver County Bureau of Elections at 724-770-4440, and they will mail an application.

Pandemic Unemployment Assistance

The Coronavirus, Aid, Relief and Economic Security (CARES) Act creates a new, temporary federal program called Pandemic Unemployment Assistance (PUA). PUA provides up to 30 weeks of unemployment compensation to individuals not eligible for regular unemployment compensation or extended benefits, including those who have exhausted all rights to such benefits.

Individuals covered under PUA include the self employed (independent contractors, gig economy workers and workers for certain religious entities), those seeking part-time employment, individual lacking sufficient work history, and those who otherwise do not qualify for regular unemployment compensation or extended benefits.

Visit: <https://www.uc.pa.gov/unemployment-benefits/file/Pages/Filing-for-PUA.aspx>

REAL ID Deadline Extended Until October 1, 2021

The Department of Homeland Security has extended enforcement of REAL ID from October 1, 2020, to October 1, 2021, in response to COVID-19 and the national emergency declaration. REAL ID is a federal law that affects how states issue driver's licenses and ID cards if they are going to be acceptable for federal purposes, such as boarding a domestic commercial flight, or entering a military installation for federal facility that requires ID.

As of October 21, 2021, Pennsylvanians will need a REAL ID compliant license, identification card or another form of federally-acceptable identification such as a valid passport or military ID to board domestic commercial airline flights, enter a military base or enter a federal facility that requires ID at the door. REAL ID is optional for Pennsylvania residents. You may have a REAL ID driver's license or identification card or a standard driver's license or identification card. You do not need a REAL ID to drive, vote, access hospitals, visit the post office, access federal courts, apply or receive federal benefits such as Social Security and veterans benefits.

Federal regulations require that PennDOT must verify original versions or certified copies of the following documents for a customer before issuing a REAL ID:

- Proof of identity: Original or certified copy of a birth certificate filed with the state office of vital records with a raised/embossed seal—issued by an authorized government agency—or valid, unexpired U.S. Passport or Passport card.
- Proof of Social Security number: Social Security card.
- Two proofs of current, physical Pennsylvania address (if applicable): Examples current, unexpired PA license or ID, PA vehicle registration, auto insurance card or utility bill with the same name and address.
- Proof of all legal name changes: Certified marriage certificate, court order, or divorce decree issued by your county's family court.

PennDOT does not have a process by which customers can pre-scan and upload REAL-ID documents from home. In order to get a REAL ID, you must bring your documents to one of the PA Driver Licensing Centers for verification in person. For the safety of customers' identities, PennDOT will never ask for nor accept any identity documents over the internet for any reason. Any website claiming to provide this service is not affiliated with PennDOT. As such, customers should not submit any images of personal documents to such websites as they will not be transmitted to PennDOT and could be used for fraudulent purposes. Through the DMV website, customers may apply for pre-verification if their documents are already on file with PennDOT; however, this process will not ask you to scan and upload documents. For more information, visit: <https://www.dmv.pa.gov/realid/Pages/default.aspx>

Practice Good Oral Hygiene

To help stay motivated and healthy, stick to your morning routine. A recent study showed only 60 percent of work from home employees brushed their teeth before work. Letting your oral hygiene suffer could increase your risk of cavities and gum disease.

From United Concordia

Pennsylvania Health Law Project Has a COVID-19 Resource Section on its Website/Toll-Free Hotline Open

The Pennsylvania Health Law Project (PHLP) has a COVID-19 resource section on its website. It includes updates, frequently asked questions and other resources. Visit: <https://www.phlp.org/en/covid-19>.

The PHLP staff is working remotely through the COVID situation to make sure individuals with Medical Assistance (MA) or Children's Health Insurance Program (CHIP) coverage have services and have ability to secure insurance coverage for the uninsured. The toll-free hotline, 1-800-274-3258, is open every Monday, Wednesday and Friday from 8 a.m. to 8 p.m. To reach online, email: staff@phlp.org.

Red, Yellow, Green—When will Pennsylvania Reopen?

Pennsylvania has set a target goal of reopening an area of the state when fewer than 50 new confirmed COVID-19 cases per 100,000 population has been reported to the Pennsylvania Department of Health in the previous 14 days. An area with 800,000 would need to have fewer than 400 new confirmed cases in the previous 14 days to meet the target. The target data goal is not the only thing to be met before reopening a region.

Also, the state must ensure there is:

- Enough testing available for individuals with symptoms and target populations such as those at high risk, health care personnel and first responders
- Robust case investigation and contact tracing.
- Identification of an area's high risk settings including correctional institutions, personal care homes, skilled nursing facilities, and other congregate care settings, and assurance that facilities have adequate safeguards in place such as staff training, employee screening, visitor procedures and screening and adequate supplies of personal protective equipment to support continued operation.

Red Phase

Work and Congregate Setting Restrictions: life sustaining businesses only; congregate care and prison restrictions in place; schools (for in-person instruction) and most child care facilities closed.

Social Restrictions: stay at home orders in place; large gatherings prohibited; restaurants and bars limited to carry-out and delivery only; only travel for life-sustaining purposes encouraged.

Yellow Phase

Work and Congregate Setting Restrictions: telework must continue where feasible; businesses with in-person operations must follow business and building safety orders; child care open with worker and building safety orders; congregate care and prison restrictions in place; schools remain closed for in-person instruction.

Social Restrictions: stay at home restrictions lifted in favor of aggressive mitigation; large gatherings of more than 25 prohibited; in-person retail allowable, curbside and delivery preferable; indoor recreation, health and wellness facilities (such as gyms, spas), and all entertainment (such as casinos, theaters) remain closed; restaurants and bars limited to carry-out and delivery only; all businesses must follow CDC and DOH guidance for social distancing and cleaning; monitor public health indicators, adjust orders and restrictions as necessary.

Green Phase

Work and Congregate Setting Restrictions: All businesses must follow CDC and PA Department of Health guidelines

Social Restrictions: aggressive mitigation orders lifted; all individuals must follow CDC and PA Department of Health guidelines; monitor public health indicators, adjust orders and restrictions as necessary.

From www.governor.pa.gov

Mental Health Support is Available Amid Strain of COVID-19 Pandemic

Governor Tom Wolf has made mental health access a priority during his tenure, in January introducing [Reach Out PA: Your Mental Health Matters](#), an initiative to remove barriers to mental health care and reduce stigma. The governor highlighted that the need for accessible mental health services is greater than ever.

It's not unusual for people to feel anxious, alone and frightened, and for some, those feelings may be surfacing for the first time during this pandemic, and it is important for people to know where to turn for mental health needs

Where lack of access to food is also a major stress point, Pennsylvanians can apply for SNAP and other helpful programs online at www.compass.state.pa.us or for immediate food assistance, Feeding Pennsylvania at www.feedingpa.org and Hunger-Free Pennsylvania at www.hungerfreepa.org are hubs of information for where people can get assistance in their communities. Also, Pennsylvanians who have found themselves food insecure as a result of COVID-19 can apply [here](#) or state and federal food assistance programs.

Available online resources: Pennsylvania's comprehensive mental health resources, [Mental Health in PA](#); [Mental Health America](#) for general information and COVID-19-specific resources; [Get Help Now](#) for substance use disorder and alcohol treatment.

Helpful phone numbers: National Suicide Prevention Lifeline: 1-800-273-TALK (8255); The Crisis Text Line: Text "PA" to 741-741; Veteran Crisis Line: 1-800-273-TALK (8255); Disaster Distress Helpline: 1-800-985-5990; Get Help Now for substance use disorder and alcohol treatment: 1-800-662-HELP (4357)

Older Adult Protective Services

If you feel an older adult is being abused, neglected, or exploited, call Older Adult Protective Services at 724-775-1786. The hotline is open 24 hours a day.

Ombudsman Service is Available

The Beaver County Office on Aging Ombudsmen are working full time, at home, and are available to accept calls and handle any complaints or questions related to nursing facility and personal care home resident rights and problem resolution. We will return your call by the end of the next business day. Ombudsman calls are considered and treated with highest confidentiality.

To contact the Ombudsman program you may: email Ombudsman@BCOA.US; call the Ombudsman direct phone line 724-480-8589; or call the Office on Aging main phone 724-847-2262, identify your call as an Ombudsman issue, with no details, as these calls are highly confidential and leave your name and phone number only.
