



UPDATE COVID-19 3/21/2020

COVID -19 UPDATE #1

March 21, 2020

In response to updated guidelines from the CDC to avoid discretionary travel and follow [The President's Coronavirus Guidelines for America](#), the Graham County Local Emergency Planning Committee, which is chaired by Commissioner Dale E. Wiggins has made the decision to restrict visitor access to Graham County beginning on Monday, March 23, 2020. This follows the State of Emergency that the Board of County Commissioner placed in effect on Friday, March 20, 2020. **This action will take place in two phases.**

While there are currently no individuals who have tested positive for COVID-19 in Graham County, officials weighed the potential benefits for community health along with the tremendous impacts these restrictions have on our community. These restrictions may be inconvenient, disappointing and have financial impacts, however, they were made in the interest of public safety to limit the spread of COVID-19.

- **PHASE 1:** Beginning at **12:00 PM Noon on Monday, March 23, 2020**, all hotels, motels, resorts, inns, Air- BnB, Homestay, VRBO, guest houses, campgrounds, RV Parks, Vacation Cabin rentals and any other short term rentals in Graham County will be closed, EXCEPT for persons needing accommodation with a legitimate work-related stay. Business owners, contractors and emergency service workers who expect to have employees needing to make reservations for a stay in Graham County will need to provide a work related identification badge from their employer along with a letter from the employer stating the purpose of the work to be performed in the County. If employers, emergency service workers or contractors have multiple employees needing to stay in the accommodation, one letter with the names of the employees will be sufficient, however, all employees will need to show the accommodation owner proper work identification. If the employer does not have proper identification for their employees, then they will need to contact the County Manager's office at becky.garland@grahamcounty.org until further notice to provide additional documentation (i.e. contracts for work or other documentation to prove the business purpose).
- **PHASE 2:** Beginning on Friday, March 27, 2020, checkpoints will be established at entry points to Graham County and no visitors will be allowed access. Permanent residents, non-resident property owners and non-resident employees of Graham County businesses, and non-resident vendors will be allowed access to Graham County. Vendors and business traffic will be allowed by permit. Staff is working to activate an online permitting system and will provide further guidance no later than Monday, March 23, 2020 at 5 pm. In addition, timing of the road closures will likewise be provided no later than 5:00 pm on Monday, March 23, 2020.

Exception: Due to the detour of traffic from the Nantahala Gorge closure, traffic coming from Cherokee County and from Swain County due to the closure of US 74 through Nantahala Gorge will continue to be allowed to travel through the county. This traffic, however, will not be permitted to stop.

To avoid contact with check point personnel, business travelers issued a permit, should display your permit on your dashboard so it is clearly visible for checkpoint personnel.

Any questions regarding the closure of accommodations can be sent to public@grahamcounty.org. There will also be a hotline in place by no later than 5:00 pm on Monday, March 23, 2020.

General COVID-19 Information

There are currently 184 individuals who have tested positive for COVID-19 in North Carolina as of 11 am on March 21, 2020; 4 of which have been confirmed in neighboring Cherokee County. Currently, no individuals in Graham County have tested positive for COVID-19.

[The President's Coronavirus Guidelines for America, 15 Days to Slow the Spread](#)



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Last week, the federal government announced [guidelines](#) and a plan to slow the spread of COVID-19. *In addition, Governor Cooper declared a State of Emergency for North Carolina to slow the spread in North Carolina. Graham County will adhere to the guidance from CDC and North Carolina Department of Health & Human Services (NCDHHS). All Graham County community members should adhere to the guidelines that were issued and available at www.coronavirus.gov.