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[Home](#) → [Media Center](#) → [Public Releases](#) → STATE POLICE ENFORCEMENT PRACTICES REGARDING GOVERNOR'S EXECUTIVE ORDER

STATE POLICE ENFORCEMENT PRACTICES REGARDING GOVERNOR'S EXECUTIVE ORDER

April 2, 2020 by Katharine England

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We are experiencing a life-threatening, unprecedented health crisis in our state and country and the actions that we take today will determine the severity of this pandemic. As a society we all need to work together to get through this challenging time. Without significant changes in our social interactions and travel habits, we can anticipate things will get worse before they get better, particularly for those persons in high-risk groups such as the elderly or those with underlying medical conditions. The steps and guidelines outlined in the Governor's Executive Order are an attempt to minimize the destruction that the Corona Virus (COVID-19) will leave in its path. We all know that things are going to get worse before they get better, but they **WILL GET BETTER!** If we fail to heed the cautions of experts and do not take the proper safeguards, the devastation from this disease will extend deeper and wider than if we manage to slow the spread by staying at home. We can't stop this virus yet, but we can slow it down to a manageable rate thereby saving dozens if not hundreds of lives right here in Maine. One of those lives could be your own, or that of a loved one.

The Maine State Police is asking for voluntary compliance with this Executive Order by staying at home unless you have an essential need to go out. There are several allowable reasons to leave your home such as; going to get groceries or take-out from a restaurant, getting needed supplies at a hardware store or pharmacy for yourself or others, going to a doctor's appointment, etc. Those who are employed by essential businesses can still travel for work. You may also go out for a hike or go for a walk to get some fresh air while maintaining proper physical distancing.

Our Troopers will be visible on normal patrol and will be responding to emergency calls for service just like we would at any other time. We will assume that people we encounter are following the orders and have an essential need for travel. We will smile and wave as we see them out walking to get some fresh air. In order to maintain order and public safety during this State of Civil Emergency we will continue to respond to complaints and investigate crime, enforcing all laws to include the Governor's Executive Order. Our Troopers will exercise discretion and compassion as we always do, considering the totality of the circumstances in deciding the most reasonable and appropriate enforcement action. With our goal being voluntary compliance, we hope and believe that communication and education regarding legal, safe practices outlined in the Executive Order will suffice. Issuing summonses or making physical arrests would be our last course of action and reserved for only the most egregious violators. Our hope is that the public will abide by the Executive Order and not put our officers in the position of having to enforce the law.

The Maine State Police will not be randomly stopping people simply to verify compliance. However, there will be times when our Troopers will be in contact with members of the public during normal law enforcement operations and may ask questions to ensure compliance with the Governor's Executive Order.

Please do your part to stay apart. It will help flatten the curve to a level where medical heroes can safely take care of all of Maine's citizens. There is no better way to fight this public safety challenge. It is the right thing for all of us to do together.

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April 2, 2020

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Additional Resources that may be helpful:

The Department of Economic and Community Development has been designated as the lead for many of these interpretation questions – particularly for businesses. Their website with FAQs and an email address for questions is [here \(https://www.maine.gov/decd/\)](https://www.maine.gov/decd/).

The language in the Executive Order can be found [here \(https://www.maine.gov/governor/mills/news/governor-mills-issues-stay-healthy-home-mandate-2020-03-31\)](https://www.maine.gov/governor/mills/news/governor-mills-issues-stay-healthy-home-mandate-2020-03-31).

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Categories

[Major Crimes \(/dps/msp/taxonomy/term/2\)](#)
(39)

[News Release \(/dps/msp/taxonomy/term/3\)](#)
(260)

[Training \(/dps/msp/taxonomy/term/65\)](#)
(6)

[Troop A \(/dps/msp/taxonomy/term/34\)](#)
(24)

[Troop B \(/dps/msp/taxonomy/term/1\)](#)
(15)

[Troop C \(/dps/msp/taxonomy/term/14\)](#)
(9)

[Troop D \(/dps/msp/taxonomy/term/15\)](#)
(37)

[Troop E \(/dps/msp/taxonomy/term/16\)](#)
(14)

[Troop F \(/dps/msp/taxonomy/term/17\)](#)
(28)

[Troop G \(/dps/msp/taxonomy/term/18\)](#)
(40)

[Troop J \(/dps/msp/taxonomy/term/19\)](#)
(63)

[Troop News \(/dps/msp/taxonomy/term/20\)](#)
(41)

[Weekly Report \(/dps/msp/taxonomy/term/21\)](#)
(70)

Archives

[April 2020 \(/dps/msp/archive/202004\)](#)
(2)

[March 2020 \(/dps/msp/archive/202003\)](#)
(44)

[February 2020 \(/dps/msp/archive/202002\)](#)
(42)