

San Bernardino County to send Gov. Gavin Newsom letter asking to reopen businesses

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San Bernardino County officials say they're [ready to safely reopen more businesses](#) closed during the [novel coronavirus crisis](#) — even if they don't meet the state's criteria.

Starting Friday, May 8, some retailers and manufacturers were allowed to reopen, with safety measures in place, during the first part of the [state's second stage](#) in reopening after several weeks of closures and restrictions meant to slow the spread of COVID-19. The second part will allow more businesses to open.

Counties can move more quickly through the phases if they meet certain criteria, which county officials say would be difficult for larger counties.

So on Monday, May 11, the county will send Gov. Gavin Newsom a letter asking for permission to move forward on its [plan to reopen those later-phase businesses](#), Board of Supervisors Chairman Curt Hagman said during a Friday news conference.



“We’ve been working very hard with the business community over the last several weeks to come up with a reopening plan ... using best practices seen throughout the nation and throughout the industries to keep the customers safe as well as the employees safe,” Hagman said.

During the first part of the second phase, retail businesses are allowed to reopen for curbside pick up only. Manufacturers and warehouses that support those businesses can also reopen.

The second part would allow for other businesses to reopen, including:

- Destination retail, including shopping malls and swap meets
- Offices, with physical distancing. Working from home is still encouraged.
- Seated dining at restaurants, but with physical distancing
- Personal services not requiring close proximity to patrons, such as car washes and pet grooming
- Schools and childcare facilities
- Outdoor museums and open gallery spaces

On Thursday, May 7, the board of supervisors approved its reopening plan after the state released guidelines for the second stage. Supervisors also agreed to send Newsom two letters — one signed by local mayors asking for more local control and a second seeking permission to reopen more businesses.

“First of all, we believe every business in San Bernardino County is essential,” Hagman said. “But, we’re going to take our lower-risk businesses we have in our reopening plan, add that with the criteria of how we would open it up, which includes churches mind you, and be able to send it up to the governor with a letter asking permission to open up those lower-risk businesses and operations later on this month.”

Meeting the state’s criteria, which calls for counties to have no more than one confirmed case per 10,000 residents and no deaths for two weeks, would be difficult for larger counties, such as San Bernardino County to meet, Hagman said.

Currently, the county meets about half of the criteria laid out by the governor, Hagman said.

With the efforts of residents, the county has seen its curve of novel coronavirus cases flatten and its hospitals have the capacity to handle a spike in cases, Hagman said.

“This does not mean we let our guard down,” Hagman said. “We must make sure that we continue to follow the safety protocols.”

Businesses will need to modify operations to reduce contact, ensure social distancing and provide proper personal protective equipment and sanitation equipment for employees, preferably with outdoor break rooms and physically distant seating, according to the county.

When businesses eventually open their doors to customers, capacity should be restricted to 25%, which can increase as allowed.

Also on Thursday, supervisors approved \$30 million to support small businesses with up to 100 employees through the COVID Compliant Business Partnership Program to help with costs associated with the pandemic.

Businesses must apply for the funding and commit to complying with state and county health requirements to slow the spread of the disease, according to a county report. The county is recommending \$2,500 per business during the first round of funding.

“I think it’s a very unique way that San Bernardino County is addressing this,” Hagman said. “Instead of with a stick of compliance, we are offering the carrot. We are offering a \$2,500 check and that sign to let residents know that this establishment has done everything it can to keep its employees safe and keep us safe while we go visit them in the future.”