

# San Bernardino County residents must wear masks in public, have virtual religious services to slow coronavirus



A person with a mask walks through the nearly empty Ontario Mills mall Wednesday, March 18, 2020. San Bernardino County has now ordered its residents to cover their nose and mouths to help prevent the spread of the coronavirus. (Photo by Watchara Phomicinda, The Press-Enterprise/SCNG)

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Wearing a face covering in public is no longer recommended in [San Bernardino County](#). It's now required.

The county's Acting Health Officer on Tuesday, April 7, formally ordered everyone in the county to wear a face covering when leaving home to help slow the spread of COVID-19, the disease caused by the [novel coronavirus](#).

County public health officials are also ordering that all religious services be done electronically, including upcoming Easter celebrations. Residents are being told to stay home and not participate in driving parades or drive-up services or to pick up non-essential items such as pre-packaged Easter eggs or bags of candy or toys at drive-thru locations.

Violation of the orders is a crime punishable by up to a \$1,000 fine or imprisonment up to 90 days, or both.

Many churches and houses of worship are hosting “virtual” services, streamed online, the county said.

Single-family, home-based worshiping and activities, including Easter egg hunts among household members inside or in residential back yards is instead encouraged.

“We understand that this is an important time for Christians around the world and it is natural to want to worship and celebrate with our families,” Board of Supervisors Chairman Curt Hagman said in a statement. “Right now, however, is a critical time for our country and our community – we can still celebrate this time from the safety of our individual homes while we help flatten the curve and save lives.”

Last week, Dr. Erin Gustafson, the acting health officer, [recommended that residents start covering](#) their faces in public to reduce the spread among asymptomatic people. Face coverings can include ones that secure to the ears or back of the head and encompass the mouth and nose. Homemade cloth ear loop covers, bandanas and handkerchiefs, and neck gaiters may be used, county officials said. Surgical masks and N95 masks must be saved for health care workers and emergency responders, county health officials said.

The face coverings also are not a substitute for staying at home, social distancing and frequent hand washing, which are more effective ways to fight the spread of COVID-19, Gustafson said.

For information about the coronavirus crisis, visit [sbccovid19.com](http://sbccovid19.com). The public can also call the county’s COVID-19 hotline, 909-387-3911, from 9 a.m. to 5 p.m. Monday through Friday, or email [coronavirus@dph.sbcounty.gov](mailto:coronavirus@dph.sbcounty.gov).