



“Back in Business” - Update 1/5/2021

The City of Wharton established the “Back in Business” framework to help ease our businesses in re-opening their doors. The “Back in Business” campaign has reflected the State and Federal government announcements and changes around restrictions for business. At this time, we are reminding businesses of the importance of following the recommended guidelines for reducing the spread of COVID-19.

The State of Texas has notified Judge Spenrath of Wharton County that Wharton County and 8 neighboring counties in the same Trauma Service Area (TSA) that hospitalization rates for the TSA have exceeded 15% hospital occupancy rates, requiring all counties in the TSA to implement the following COVID-19 restrictions **effective immediately on January 6th, 2021.**

- ❖ **50% OCCUPANCY** for the following:
 - Restaurants
- ❖ **0% OCCUPANCY - TEMPORARY BUSINESS CLOSURE** for the following:
 - Bars

Q. How long will these restrictions last?

A. According to the State, “Any Trauma Service Area (TSA) that has had seven consecutive days in which the number of COVID-19 hospitalized patients as a percentage of total hospital capacity exceeds 15 percent, until such time as the Trauma Service Area has seven consecutive days in which the number of COVID-19 hospitalized patients as a percentage of total hospital capacity is 15 percent or less”.

Q. What other counties are included in the Wharton TSA?

A. Austin, Colorado, Fort Bend, Harris, Matagorda, Montgomery, Walker, and Waller

Q. Can restaurants still have indoor and outdoor dining?

A. Yes. However, restaurants had been operating at 75% occupancy rate and must now limit occupancy to 50% of the maximum.

Q. Can bars that followed State steps to serve as restaurants still be open?

A. Yes. However, bars operating as restaurants must be able to provide documentation of proper licensing by the State and can only operate at 50% occupancy at this time.

Q. Do my employees count towards the occupancy rate?

A. No. Employees do not count towards the occupancy rate unless your business is either manufacturing warehouses or an office.

Q. Are we still required to wear masks in public?

A. Yes. The Governor did not release this mandate, meaning masks are still required by law when out in public in the state of Texas, accounting for any allowable accommodations in the mandate. See [Executive Order-29](#) Here for details about allowable accommodations to the face mask mandate.

Q. Can I still require customers to use hand sanitizer or other safety measures for the health of my employees and customers?

A. Yes. Businesses should continue to practice healthy actions, such as offering hand sanitizer at entries, limiting entry points, and sanitizing frequently.

We know our community is eager to see each other again, but we ask that residents continue to practice safe hygiene at this time. The City of Wharton is dedicated to supporting its business community through this time and is eager to see Wharton ‘back in business’ as usual. For additional questions or concerns, please contact the Community Development Department at 979-532-2491 for questions and more information.

Sincerely,

Community Development Department, City of Wharton