

**Harris County Civil Courts at Law
Inclement Weather, Emergency, and
Public Health Scheduling Procedures**

EFFECTIVE 3/16/2020 AT NOON

In an effort to balance constitutionally protected due process rights during an emergency with public health and safety concerns of the citizens of Harris County, the Harris County Court at Law Judges have established the following procedures for conducting court business as a result of inclement weather, emergencies, or other public health concerns:

- (1) If the County Judge of Harris County announces that County buildings will be closed, the County Civil Courts at Law will remain closed until the County Judge announces the reopening of the buildings. Essential court matters will be re-scheduled or held at approved alternate locations. Check with your specific Court for more information on time and location.
- (2) If Houston Independent School District cancels classes, then all non-essential matters in the County Civil Courts at Law will be cancelled on the days classes are cancelled. Should the HISD closure last more than seven (7) days, the County Civil Courts at Law will communicate an alternate schedule on its website at <http://ccl.hctx.net/civil>.
- (3) An individual County Court at Law may opt out of this portion of the protocol by providing the Court Administrator with written notice of the Court's decision.
 - a. Courts that decide to proceed with scheduled court matters must contact all parties and inform them that the scheduled proceedings will continue.
 - b. If a court decides to proceed with scheduled court matters, it must also provide the Court Administrator with that information.
 - c. The Court Administrator or his designee will post court closures and schedules on <http://ccl.hctx.net/civil>.
 - d. Essential court matters will go forward as scheduled unless the parties receive notice from the assigned individual court.
- (4) If these Inclement Weather, Emergency, and Public Health Scheduling Procedure are invoked, then all non-essential court matters will be continued and re-scheduled. Essential court matters will go forward as scheduled.

- (5) During times of inclement weather emergencies or public concern, all litigants are encouraged to:
- a. submit contested motions on a submission docket where available; or
 - b. contact assigned individual court to determine if telephone or video conferencing is an available alternative to an in-person hearing.

- (6) **Jury Service:** In an effort to balance constitutionally protected due process rights during an emergency with public health and safety concerns, the Harris County District Clerk's office will be instructed to prioritize jury trials. Jury trials will be prioritized based on constitutional and statutory requirements, as well as the need for essential trials as shown in Section (6). For guidance on your case, contact specific courts for further information.

If you have received a jury summons, please go to www.hcdistrictclerk.com or call 713-755-6392 for more information regarding your particular day of service. Jury summons come from the District Clerk's office, not from the County Courts at Law.

- (7) For purposes of these Procedures, the term "essential court matters" shall be
1. Texas Health and Safety Code Chapter 81 proceedings;
 2. Texas Health and Safety Code Chapter 821 proceedings;
 3. Texas Family Code Chapter 33 proceedings; and
 4. Temporary restraining orders, temporary injunctions, and other ancillary matters.

Any questions regarding whether a matter is essential, please contact the home court.

These Procedures are subject to change if circumstances so require. Additional procedures may also be added as needed. If your case presents specific concerns, please contact your individual court. Communication with the Court and court personnel are critical at this time. All attorneys and pro se parties should ensure that their contact information is up to date with both the Harris County Civil Clerk's office and the State Bar of Texas.