

# Texas puts reopening on 'pause' as virus cases soar

June 25 2020, by Jim Vertuno and Paul J. Weber

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Gov. Greg Abbott on Thursday halted elective surgeries in Texas' biggest counties and said the state would "pause" its aggressive reopening as it deals with a surge in coronavirus cases and hospitalizations that has made

it a virus hot spot.

The suspension of elective surgeries is designed to protect hospital space in the Dallas, Houston, Austin and San Antonio areas. Statewide, the number of COVID-19 patients has more than doubled in two weeks. Texas has reported more than 11,000 new cases in the previous two days alone.

The pause on reopening does not roll back previous orders that already allowed much of the economy to reopen. But it would appear to slow down any planned expansion of occupancy levels at places including bars, restaurants, amusement parks and other venues.

"We are focused on strategies that slow the spread of this virus while also allowing Texans to continue earning a paycheck to support their families," Abbott said in a statement. "The last thing we want to do as a state is go backwards and close down businesses. This temporary pause will help our state corral the spread until we can safely enter the next phase of opening our state for business."

By reimposing a ban on elective surgeries, the Republican is returning to one of his first actions when the virus first emerged in Texas in March. He later rescinded the order during an aggressive reopening of the state in May that lifted lockdown orders ahead of most of the U.S.

Abbott this week has taken a newly urgent tone about the worsening trends and is now telling the public they should stay home. On Thursday, the number of hospitalizations climbed to nearly 4,400 patients, setting a new record for a 13th consecutive day.

Abbott has also urged Texans to wear masks in public. The governor hasn't issued a statewide mask order, but the state's cities and counties have imposed new orders on businesses to require customers and

workers to wear face coverings.

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Citation: Texas puts reopening on 'pause' as virus cases soar (2020, June 25) retrieved 16 July 2024 from <https://medicalxpress.com/news/2020-06-texas-reopening-virus-cases-soar.html>

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