

NEWS RELEASE

Arizona Supreme Court
Administrative Office of the Courts



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Arizona Supreme Court Order for Resuming Operations in Phases

PHOENIX – Chief Justice Robert Brutinel issued [Administrative Order 2020-75](#), replacing Administrative Order 2020-70 and providing Arizona’s courts and the public with direction on returning to in-court operations after limited operations in response to COVID-19. The Order includes direction for in-person proceedings, empaneling juries, limiting access to courthouses and courtrooms, implementing social distancing, and using technology to continue court operations.

Chief Justice Brutinel stated, “Arizona’s courts are beginning the process of returning to normal operations, consistent with protecting the health and safety of the public and of court employees. This process will happen gradually and courts across the State of Arizona will take all necessary and reasonable steps to ensure that our facilities are clean and safe and that appropriate distancing is observed.”

Beginning June 1, 2020, the public, staff, and all who enter Arizona’s court buildings will need to bring and wear a protective face covering. The order gives the superior court presiding judge in each county authority to take steps locally as needed and consistent with health department guidelines to ensure access to justice while reducing exposure to the spread of COVID-19. Some courts already require face masks to enter their buildings. Courts do not have funds to provide masks for the thousands of individuals who enter court buildings on a regular business day and may have to require parties denied entry to appear remotely at a proceeding or have to make other arrangements.

Protective face coverings are part of the administrative order’s measured return to in-person business in Arizona’s courts, with the greatest preparations for public, jury, litigant, and staff

health and safety. Staff and public entry to courthouses will be gradual, with remote proceedings continuing where possible. Initially, only necessary parties and jurors will attend hearings in person. When the public is not permitted to attend a public court proceeding, the court will provide video or audio access, unless the proceedings are closed, meaning not open to the public.

To address trial backlogs, the Court has suspended court rules to allow more efficient use of a reduced number of potential jurors. These measures allow courts to call fewer jurors and to reduce the reassignment of judges to hear trials while maintaining constitutional and procedural rights. The temporary suspension of these rules expires on December 31, 2020.

The order continues measures in place now, including social distancing and alternative forms of appearing for hearings. As courts return to in-person business, they will alternate staffing in buildings, require personal protective equipment in certain situations, and will require screening for illness. As a matter of public safety, particularly for those with fragile medical conditions, Arizona's courts are authorized to prohibit entry to courthouses by those who do not meet the screening requirements. The calculation of time for court proceedings to be held has been extended from prior orders and now covers the period of March 18, 2020 through August 1, 2020.

See Administrative Order 2020-75 at www.azcourts.gov/Portals/22/admorder/Orders20/2020-75.pdf. The Administrative Office of the Courts continues to maintain a COVID-19 information page online at <https://www.azcourts.gov/covid19/> and in Spanish at <https://www.azcourts.gov/covid19/Covid-19-Information-and-Updates/COVID-19-español>, with updates posted on the Arizona Supreme Court's social media outlets, noted below.

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