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Date: April 17, 2020 - For Immediate Release
Press Release

Hillsboro, TX – Today Governor Abbott released plans on a phased reopening of the Texas economy as numbers of the spread of COVID-19 seem to have stabilized. The numbers released by the Department of State Health Services (DSHS) have confirmed 10 cases of COVID-19 for Hill County. The newest confirmed case is a male in his 50s from the Itasca area. The Local Health Authority count on the cumulative number of cases of also remains at 10 for Hill County. Statewide numbers report 17,371 cases in Texas with 1,522 patients hospitalized, 428 fatalities and approximately 4,190 individuals recovered.

“While new cases of COVID-19 are continuing to be diagnosed, the numbers are holding steady, and we are encouraged to hear the plans from Governor Abbott on how we will begin to reopen Texas,” said Hill County Judge Justin Lewis. “However, it is not yet time to let down our guard. We must remain diligent in our social distancing and staying apart, so we can reopen as quickly as is safely possible. Governor Abbott has laid out a timeline to allow a phased reopening beginning soon, so we want to be ready for that.”

Governor Greg Abbott issued several new executive orders today to begin the process of loosening some of the restrictions. The first executive order established a strike force to spearhead the plan for reopening Texas. The second order is making allowances for some elective medical procedures to begin happening again. While many areas of the medical community will be allowed to begin working again, the order is increasing requirements on nursing homes and assisted living facilities to protect some of our most vulnerable citizens. Those facilities will be required to have infection control policies in place and stop the ability of staff to move from one location to another to work.

The third executive order outlined the first steps to reopening commerce activities with additional guidelines to be added later. The order will allow all retail stores to reopen with a retail-to-go operation beginning next Friday. This will allow people to make purchases and pick them up curbside at the store or have them shipped directly to them, but non-essential stores will still not be able to allow people to come into the store to shop. State Parks will be allowed to reopen from 7am to 7pm beginning Monday, April 20th, with some restrictions still in place. Visitors to the parks are required to wear face masks, and people who do not live in the same household will still be required to stay a minimum of six feet apart. Group gatherings in state parks will be limited to no more than five people. While State Parks will reopen, the Army Corp of Engineers has not yet announced a date for reopening their park facilities.

Other announcements included that all schools will not be allowed to reopen this academic year. Guidance on closing out school programs and conducting graduation programs will be provided later by the state agencies overseeing educational operations for secondary and post-secondary facilities.

“As expected, Hill County residents have worked together to limit the spread of COVID-19 in our area,” said Lewis. “I can’t express how crucial your efforts have been in getting us to this point. However, our work is not done. We must stay together and focused on keeping everyone safe and helping our businesses get back on their feet,” continued Lewis. “Thank you for what I know you will do to help Hill County recover from this time.”

For the best information available on the spread of the Coronavirus across Texas, DSHS has a dashboard website available at <https://dshs.texas.gov/coronavirus/>. People interested in monitoring updates from Hill County on the situation will find the most current information on the Hill County Emergency Management Facebook Page. The County will also provide regular updates to KHBR 1560 AM Radio and the Hillsboro Reporter.

In addition, the County has an emergency notification system. If you would like to receive phone call, text or email updates as warranted, you can register with the Hill County Emergency Notification System. Visit the Office of Emergency Management website at www.hilloem.com, scroll to the bottom of the home page and click on emergency alerts. Follow the prompts to set up your account.