

EDDIE NORTHCUTT
Presiding Judge



SERVING
Delta, Franklin
Hopkins and Rains
Counties

8th Judicial District Court
Phone (903) 438-4022 * Fax (903) 438-4092
118 Church Street, Sulphur Springs, Texas 75482

March 13, 2020

To All Court Staff, Jail Staff, Attorneys, and Bail Bondsman:

In response to the Office of Court Administration's (OCA) recommendations concerning the coronavirus and its impact, courts in Hopkins County will limit judicial proceedings to avoid gatherings of large groups of people until at least April 1st. The Courts will avoid, to the degree practicable, "non-essential" in person court proceedings. Please be ready to work with the various courts to reschedule non-essential proceedings as needed.

Essential proceedings which need court action include, but are not limited to, criminal magistration proceedings, CPS removal hearings (e.g., Judge Biard's March 23rd CPS docket is still going forward as scheduled), temporary restraining orders/temporary injunctions, juvenile detention hearings, family violence protective orders, emergency guardianship, and certain mental health proceedings. In addition, jail dockets for plea hearings and non-jury trials would also be considered essential hearings. Additionally, child custody issues in certain circumstances could be considered an essential hearing, to be determined by the presiding judge.

With respect to dockets set in the **8th Judicial District Court** for the rest of the month of March, we will work with you to reset defendants who are out on bond to a date in April or May. They will not need to appear in order to have their case(s) reset. For those in jail for which a plea agreement has been reached for the Court's consideration, we will have those individuals brought over from the jail on an as-needed basis. Currently scheduled bench trials will proceed as previously scheduled.

Judge Harrison and I are reviewing the bail situation of each defendant currently incarcerated with an eye towards personal recognizance bonds in appropriate situations. I am urging the setting of PR bonds as much as possible for new arrests of non-violent offenses in order not to over-crowd jails and reduce the risk of infection to the jails.

Please be aware that the Open Courts provision of the Constitution will generally require that the public have access to proceedings. To the degree hearings can be held via telephonic or video remote appearances, the Courts are open to such accommodations. Obviously, pre-planning will be required in order to facilitate such hearings.

Any persons with COVID-19 or flu-like symptoms, a fever, or who are coughing or sneezing should contact the court before appearing.

This is a fluid situation and additional or prolonged measures may be needed. I invite your input and please do not hesitate to contact the respective Courts with questions or concerns.

Eddie Northcutt, Judge
8th Judicial District Court
Local Administrative Judge