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**Governor Cooper Signs Order to Tighten Social Distancing Measures, Strengthen Long-Term Care Rules and Streamline Unemployment Benefits Process**

**Executive Order Sets Policies for Retail Stores, Enforces Mandatory Rules at Nursing Homes and Expedites Issuing Unemployment Benefits**

On Thursday, April 9 Governor Roy Cooper took action to address the spread of COVID-19 by issuing stronger social distancing requirements and speeding up the process to get benefits to people out of work through Executive Order No. 131.

Three key areas are addressed in Executive Order 131. The first requires retail stores that are still operating to implement new social distancing policies to make shopping safer for customers and employees. The second makes earlier COVID-19 guidelines mandatory for nursing facilities, and recommends other long-term care facilities to do the same. The third area is unemployment benefits, issuing changes that will speed up certain benefit payments to those who are out of work.

"North Carolina continues to take strong action to slow the spread of COVID-19, and today's Order will help make stores safer, protect those living and working in nursing homes, and get more unemployment benefits out quicker. Our state is resilient, and we will get through this crisis together if we all do our part," said Governor Cooper.

**POLICIES FOR SOCIAL DISTANCING IN RETAIL STORES** This Order offers clear requirements that essential businesses must implement in order to safeguard the health of customers and employees. Some of the directives include:

- Setting limits of how many people can be in a store at one time, 5 people per 1,000 square feet of retail space or 20% of fire marshal posted occupancy limits
- Marking 6 feet of distance for areas where people gather like checkout lines
- Requiring specific cleaning measures for retail stores

**The Order encourages:**

- Implementing hygiene recommendations for employees and customers, like hand sanitizer at the doors and face coverings for workers

- Establishing designated shopping times designated for high-risk groups
- Creating barriers between customers and employees at checkout to lower the risk of required interactions

The Order states these requirements will last for thirty days unless extended by further executive action.

**LOWERING RISK IN LONG TERM CARE FACILITIES** The Order sets public health and safety requirements for nursing homes during the public health emergency. The Order encourages other long-term care facilities to follow the same guidance. Some of the directives include:

- Canceling communal activities, including group meals
- Taking the temperature of employees and essential personnel when they enter the facility
- Requiring specific personal protective equipment in the facility
- Requiring close monitoring of residents for COVID-19 health indicators like body temperature

The Order states these requirements will last until this order is repealed.

**STREAMLINING UNEMPLOYMENT INSURANCE CLAIMS** The Order makes it easier for employers to file a batch of claims, called an attached claim, on behalf of their employees. By temporarily eliminating some of the hurdles for employers, benefits can get in the hands of those who need them faster.

The Order will extend 60 days beyond the date the state of emergency is lifted to allow employers to get back on their feet.

Additionally, the Department of Employment Services issued information on timing of federal benefits reaching North Carolinians today. More information is at [des.nc.gov/news](https://des.nc.gov/news).

**N.C. Dept. of Natural and Cultural Resources Launches NCLearn@Home**

While public operations at Dept. of Natural and Cultural Resources institutions remain temporarily suspended, many of their engaging programs and resources can be experienced online.

NCLearn @ Home ([www.ncdcr.gov/nclearn@home](http://www.ncdcr.gov/nclearn@home)) is a new website designed to gather online content and educational resources into one place for teachers, students, parents, and anyone needing enriching experiences, regardless of their location.

Here you'll find lesson plans, educator resources, State Library and State Archives collections, and virtual assistance from state librarians and educators, as well as offerings from our state's natural and cultural institutions.

Virtually visit the North Carolina Zoo, aquariums, a state park or state historic site through an NC360 tour.

Listen to podcasts on history, art and nature; watch concert videos from some amazing North Carolina artists; watch educational and fun Livestream presentations; virtually tour museum exhibits; or watch past concerts from the North Carolina Symphony.

From the art museum to the zoo, each part of their department has fun, educational and amazing online content to share.

"Now more than ever, during this time of uncertainty, and when we have to be more physically separated from one another, it's important that we are able to connect with art, culture, history and nature in a tangible and meaningful way," said Susi Hamilton, secretary of the N.C. Department of Natural and Cultural Resources. "Until we're able to welcome visitors back to our museums, historic sites, zoo, aquariums and other North Carolina cultural institutions, we hope that these resources will help keep North Carolinians informed, engaged and entertained."

Find DNCR's online resources at [www.ncdcr.gov/nclearn@home](http://www.ncdcr.gov/nclearn@home) or via social media with #NCLearnAtHome.

**Canned Food Shelf Life and More**

With many citizens staying home as a precaution to the COVID-19 pandemic and many shelves at local stores being bare; now would be a good time to take stock in what you have at home in your pantries and cabinets. It is also a good way to declutter and throw out of date food away.

Shelf life is the length of time that a commodity may be stored without becoming unfit for use, consumption or sale. In other words, it might refer to whether a commodity should no longer be on a pantry shelf (unfit for use), or just no longer on a supermarket shelf (unfit for sale, but not yet unfit for use). In more common terms, shelf life is asking yourself how long will a food stay safe to eat and still have the same nutrient content it had when purchased?

Storing food in the pantry usually means keeping it in cool, clean cabinets. Cabinets tend to be warmer above the range, near the dishwasher, or next to the refrigerator exhaust. These are good places to store dishes, pots, and pans, but these cabinets are too warm for keeping food safe and at top nutritional quality.

Here are some things to remember when it comes to storing foods in cans. The color, flavor, texture, and/or nutritive value may be affected after a length of time. Don't keep canned goods longer than one year. Do not keep canned fruit juices for more than nine months. Canned goods should be kept at moderately cool, but not freezing, temperatures. Canned foods stored above 70 degrees F will have a shorter shelf life. Do not store canned goods above 95 degrees F, such as in a storage shed or garage. Sometimes in the winter, canned goods may freeze. Canned goods may be frozen and thawed once but it may result in a slight breakdown of texture.

If cans are bulging, the food inside is spoiled and they should be thrown away. Cans with dents on the side seam or the rim seams mean the food was exposed to air, a good environment for harmful bacteria to grow. Do not buy or use cans that have leaks. Food in rusty cans should not be eaten since you cannot be sure the food is safe.

To find a detailed chart of the listed foods and many others, go to [aces.edu/blog/topics/emergency-handbook-home-family/food-storage-charts](https://aces.edu/blog/topics/emergency-handbook-home-family/food-storage-charts). There is also the FoodKeeper App you can use. Get it at this site: [www.foodsafety.gov/keep-food-safe/foodkeeper-app](https://www.foodsafety.gov/keep-food-safe/foodkeeper-app).

By Roshunda Terry, County Extension Director

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**HELPING HANDS COMMUNITY FOOD PANTRY**

MANY HAVE REACHED OUT ASKING HOW TO HELP US PREPARE TO SERVE THE NEEDS OF OUR COMMUNITY DURING THE CORONA-VIRUS PANDEMIC.

**ITEMS THE FOOD PANTRY NEEDS**  
**NON PERISHABLE FOOD ITEMS NEEDED:**

Meals in a can (stew, chili, soup, raviolis)	Tuna and canned meat
Bagged/Box Rice	Pop Tarts
Mac and Cheese	Spaghetti Sauce
Bags of Noodles	Instant Potatoes
Peanut butter	Canned Green Beans
TV Dinners - Meals in a Box	Canned Corn
Canned foods with pop-top lids	Canned Beans
Apple Sauce	Raman Noodles
Beanie Weenies	Cookies
Pudding Cups and Jello	Crackers
Boxes/Bags of Cereal	Granola Bars
Juice	Canned fruit

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WE ARE ASKING AS MANY WHO CAN TO DONATE 10 OR MORE OF ANY OF ITEMS LISTED  
CANNED MEALS, RAVIOLI, PEANUT BUTTER, SNACK FOOD, CEREALS, CANNED MEATS, PACKAGED LUNCH MEAT, HOT DOGS ETC.

**ITEMS CAN BE DROPPED OFF AT HARVEST MINISTRIES (1134 EAST CASWELL STREET - WADESBORO)**  
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