



FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

Contact: (828) 265-8000

Date: March 29, 2020

Playgrounds, Courts and Picnic Shelters in Watauga County to Close until Further Notice

Boone, NC – Watauga County, in conjunction with the Towns of Beech Mountain, Blowing Rock, Boone and Seven Devils, will be closing all playgrounds, courts, and picnic shelters, effective Monday, March 30th at 12:00pm until further notice. This is a preventive measure to slow the spread of the COVID-19 virus and lessen its impact on our community. As this situation evolves rapidly, Watauga County and partner municipalities will continue monitoring usage of recreation facilities to determine if further action is warranted for social distancing. The County is taking precautions to ensure the health and safety of its residents during this rapidly changing situation.

This closure also applies to school playgrounds. Childcare facilities will still operate as they are exempt from this closure.

These new guidelines will be incorporated as part of the existing Watauga County State of Emergency that is currently in effect through the course of this public health emergency.

“During this difficult time, we recognize everyone will need an outlet for physical exercise to help manage stress and support their overall physical health. Therefore, we have kept the use of trail and walking areas open for now. However, we are encouraging people to continue to avoid using any facility if they feel ill, have a fever, a cough, and to keep six feet between themselves and others,” said Deron Geouque, County Manager.

“It is becoming clear to us that there are some in our community that are not taking this risk seriously. Please, I cannot stress enough how critical it is for you to help protect all of us through your actions. Governor Cooper’s updated Executive Order clearly bans gatherings of 10 or more people starting Monday, March 30. We expect people to follow this order to help protect the entire community. Now is the time to think of others and know that this illness can be severe. We need everyone to take this responsibility seriously and we need to urge everyone at higher risk for severe illness to stay home as much as possible ,” said Jennifer Greene, Health Director.

People who are at high risk for COVID-19 should stay home to the greatest extent possible to decrease the chance of infection.

Who is at High Risk for COVID-19?

People at high risk include anyone who:

- Is 65 years of age or older
- Lives in a nursing home or long-term care facility
- Have a high-risk condition that includes:
 - Chronic lung disease or moderate to severe asthma

- Heart disease with complications
- Compromised immune system
- Severe obesity - body mass index (BMI) of 40 or higher
- Other underlying medical conditions, particularly if not well controlled, such as diabetes, renal failure or liver disease

AppHealthCare is available and on-call 24/7 to respond to public health emergencies. To reach us, call (828) 264-4995 anytime and follow the prompts. For more information, visit www.AppHealthCare.com or follow us on Facebook or Twitter.

For more information on COVID-19 (novel coronavirus), please visit the Centers for Disease Control & Prevention (CDC) website at cdc.gov/coronavirus. North Carolina resources can be found on the Division of Public Health website at ncdhhs.gov/coronavirus.

A COVID-19 toll free helpline has been set up to answer general, non-emergent questions at 1-866-462-3821. To submit questions online, go to www.ncpoisoncontrol.org and select “chat.”

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