

**FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE**

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For more information contact Carter County Mayor Russell Barnett at 423-512-1988.

## Carter County implementing restrictions on county building access in response to COVID-19 outbreak

**ELIZABETHTON** – In response to the ongoing State of Emergency in Tennessee and the continue spread of COVID-19 across our state and community, Carter County Mayor Russell Barnett is enacting the second phase of the county’s response plan for the pandemic and limiting access to county buildings to help slow the spread of the virus in the community while protecting public safety, health, and welfare.

“This is an unsettling time for our community, our state, and our nation,” Carter County Mayor Russell Barnett said. “We are in a public health emergency due to the spread of the novel coronavirus.”

“Carter County’s elected leaders and public health officials are continuously working alongside state and federal officials to monitor the spread of this virus and to respond accordingly,” Barnett added. “We are following the advice of public health experts who agree that the most effective way to ‘flatten the curve’ and slow the spread of the virus is to practice social distancing and avoid unnecessary exposure. It is important to remember that we need to be prepared, not scared.”

Beginning on Tuesday, March 24, 2020, in-person business at county buildings will be suspended except in the cases of emergency business. Citizens are encouraged to conduct any business they have with county offices through the mail, by telephone, or on-line if those services are available. Those who feel they need to conduct their business in person at a county office will be required to call that office in advance and schedule an appointment. These restrictions will remain in place until April 6, 2020. As that date approached, county officials will evaluate the current situation with the COVID-19 outbreak and determine if the restrictions need to be extended.

As part of implementing this plan of action, all entrances to the courthouse will remain locked with the exception of the handicap accessible double doors on the Main Street side of the courthouse. That entrance will be staffed by courthouse security who will be screening visitors to ensure they have emergency business or have scheduled an appointment.

“We understand this may cause an inconvenience for some of our citizens, but we believe this is the best course of action to protect not only our county employees but also our citizens as a whole,” Barnett said. “We hope that our citizens will bear with us during this trying time and

help us comply with the recommendations from medical experts in helping to slow the spread of this virus.”

Since declaring a State of Emergency for Tennessee, Governor Bill Lee has signed a series of Executive Orders clearing the way for state and local agencies to respond to the ongoing pandemic. In Executive Order 15, Lee delayed the expiration of all valid motor vehicle registrations which were set to expire between March 12, 2020 and May 18, 2020. Those registrations will now expire on June 15, 2020, which will allow time for citizens to observe social distancing without having to worry about facing a possible ticket due to an expired registration.

“We are very thankful to Governor Lee for all the steps he has taken to allow us to safely serve our citizens and provide essential services while still adhering to the recommended guidelines,” Barnett said. “It is important during this national emergency that we unite as a community, follow the advice of experts, and take responsibility for our actions to slow the spread of coronavirus.”

For more information on the coronavirus and how you can help slow the spread, please visit <https://www.tn.gov/health/cedep/ncov.html> or call the Tennessee Department of Health Hotline at 1-833-556-2476 or 1-877-857-2945. These lines are staffed from 10 a.m. until 10 p.m. CDT daily.

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