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Non-essential businesses in Virginia will be closed beginning 11:59 p.m. Tuesday, said Governor Ralph Northam in a Monday press conference, responding to the growing pandemic of SARS-COV-2, the virus responsible for [COVID-19](#).

“Executive Order Fifty-Three orders the closure of certain non-essential businesses, bans all gatherings of more than 10 people, and closes all K-12 schools for the remainder of the academic year,” says a [news release posted online by the state government](#). “Governor Northam is also urging all Virginians to avoid non-essential travel outside the home, if and when possible.”

The executive order will remain in place until April 24.

The state is distributing medical supplies from the national stockpile, according to Governor Northam: “We will continue those efforts on mobilizing, for example, respirators from non-medical industries.”

“Make no mistake, if you are essential and open you have a special responsibility to do the right thing,” said Governor Northam. “We are moving into a period of sacrifice.” Angela Navarro, Virginia’s Secretary of Commerce and Trade, spoke during the same press conference Governor Northam announced these measures, stating there are three categories of businesses affected by the executive order: recreational and entertainment businesses, restaurants and businesses that provide food and beverage services, and non-essential brick and mortar stores.

Recreational and entertainment businesses must close. Restaurants and the like will only be allowed to remain open if they provide takeout or delivery options, and a brick and mortar store that’s deemed non-essential must be closed. Businesses that remain open must adhere to the limit of 10 people or less, but that does not include staff.

“Make no mistake, if you are essential and open you have a special responsibility to do the right thing,” said Governor Northam. “We are moving into a period of sacrifice. Most of us

have already begun to experience this. Many businesses are closed already because their owners have done the responsible thing. I thank them for the tremendous sacrifices they have made. There is more ahead and things are changing fast.”

Businesses deemed essential include:

- Grocery stores and food banks
- Pharmacies
- Medical supply stores and laboratories
- Electronic retailers
- Retail stores in healthcare facilities
- Gas stations and convenience stores
- ABC stores
- Hardware stores
- Gardening
- Law car stores
- Laundromats
- Banks
- Auto service
- Pet stores.

All gatherings of 10 or more people will be prohibited but will exclude operations of the government, law enforcement, operations of the media, food banks, or healthcare facilities.

Barbershops, beauty salons, tattoo shops, tanning salons, and spas will also be closed because those services can not be done while social distancing.

“We all need to take care of each other from afar because social distancing is the only path forward. That’s why I’m directing these business closures today. That is why I am closing our schools,” said Governor Northam. “Our priority is to save lives. We have a health crisis and we have an economic crisis but the sooner that we can get this health crisis under control the sooner our economy will recover.”

Businesses in violation of this order may be charged with a Class 1 misdemeanor.

Monday afternoon [Radford University President Brian O. Hemphill announced](#) that the university will continue its online classes through May 8, 2020, which represents all activity through the remainder of the Spring 2020 semester.

Virginia is also launching a statewide communication effort to spread awareness of the growing pandemic. The “Health In Your Hands” campaign is being run across multiple forms of media, including radio, television spots, and Virginia Department of Transportation signs along highways.

“We are essentially fighting a biological war right now in this country and I expect our president and our leaders in Washington to accept that that’s reality now,” said Northam.

Photo Credit: ([Governor of Virginia Ralph Northam](#))