

State of Louisiana  
Office of Alcohol and Tobacco Control

John Bel Edwards  
Governor



Juana Marine-Lombard  
Commissioner

APRIL 2, 2020

COVID-19

## NON-COMPLIANCE OF BARS, RESTAURANTS, AND VAPE SHOPS

Since early March, the COVID-19 pandemic has taken a devastating toll on the State of Louisiana, both in terms of the health of our citizens as well as the health of our economy. Governor Edwards issued several Executive Orders to stem the tide of COVID-19, which initially required closures of many different kinds of businesses including movie theaters, casinos, and bars. The Order also restricted dine-ins at restaurants but permitted these businesses to continue operating with take-out, drive-thru, curbside or delivery. On March 22, 2020, the governor issued a more stringent "Stay At Home" Executive Order, which required closure of all non-essential businesses, including vape shops and tobacco shops.

Since then, ATC has received over 200 complaints that businesses have ignored Governor Edwards' Executive Orders and ATC's guidance. ATC has provided guidance as to what is and is not permissible operationally during this pandemic. However, some have chosen to operate without any changes. In fact, ATC agents have observed some bars and restaurants continuing to operate normally such as allowing patrons to congregate inside without observing social distancing protocols, continuing to operate a buffet line and/or allowing patrons to sit at tables inside and outside to consume food and beverages. Nevertheless, these are not normal times, and allowing the status quo to persist puts the public health at risk, which in turn may have a devastating effect on the economy and the health of Louisianans.

In less than two weeks, Louisiana has seen a precipitous rise from a handful of cases to 9150 with 310 deaths due to the coronavirus. Businesses must consider the health and safety of the public and implement social distancing protocols in compliance with Governor Edwards' Order. ATC is strongly recommending that restaurants limit their function to delivery or curbside service only. Where take-out options are offered, orders should be limited to call-in or online orders. This will reduce patrons' wait time inside the establishment. In lieu of waiting inside the establishment, patrons should wait in their vehicles until their orders are ready. Businesses should allow no more than three (3) patrons inside the establishment at one time and social distancing protocols must be implemented such as placing markers six (6) feet apart. Businesses are prohibited from offering dine-in service and prohibited from allowing any patrons to consume any food or beverages while waiting for their orders. Bars, vape and tobacco shops are required to remain closed.

While ATC understands that businesses are hurting with the recent restrictions, these conditions were imposed as a coordinated effort to flatten the curve. The faster we as a community can stop the spread of this virus, the faster we as a community can go back to normal procedures. ATC will continue to work with affected businesses but businesses that continues to operate in contravention of Governor Edwards' Executive Order may be subject to administrative action.

Should you have any questions or concerns related to this matter, please contact ATC at (225) 925-4041.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Juana Marine-Lombard".

Juana Marine-Lombard  
ATC Commissioner