

**CITY OF BEL-RIDGE MUNICIPAL DIVISION
CORONAVIRUS PANDEMIC (COVID-19) CONTINUITY OF OPERATIONS PLAN**

PURPOSE

The purpose of this Special Order is to establish policy and procedure regarding the Coronavirus (COVID-19) pandemic as it directly affects the Bel-Ridge Municipal Court operations. As the court begins to operate again this Special Order will provide guidelines and operational directives that will allow citizens and employees who enter the court environment to feel safe and understand that the health and welfare of everyone is being taken into consideration. This special order is designed to minimize the risk of exposure to COVID-19 by establishing guidelines and criteria beginning with the entry into the Municipal Division.

Social Distancing guidelines:

<https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/prevent-getting-sick/social-distancing.html>

GOVERNMENT CENTER ENTRY

1. Signage regarding limited entry/capacity will be posted on the door of the Municipal Division for those appearing for Municipal Court.
2. At least two department personnel (2 officers/1 officer and 1 other) will be present at the entrance.
3. The questions asked of anyone desiring to enter the courtroom will address the following COVID-19 criteria for possible exposure or a person experiencing the disease:
 - Have you experienced a fever, trouble breathing, persistent cough, body aches, and/or loss of taste or smell in the last 24 hours?
 - Have you been in contact with anyone who has been diagnosed, tested positive or under investigation for COVID-19?
 - Temperatures will be taken of everyone prior to entering the building.
 - If the answer is “yes” to any of these questions or the temperature of the person is above 100 degrees Fahrenheit the defendant will be provided with a continuance for their court date. Defendants will be sent home.
4. All persons entering the building will be required to wear a mask or face covering. Personal Protective Equipment (PPE) will be provided to city employees. Masks will be provided for defendants if they do not have one in their possession.
5. Officers, bailiffs and other city employees will obtain the cellular telephone number and vehicle description of defendants who will be notified by telephone (call or text message), or in person at their vehicle, when the court is prepared for them to enter.

COURTROOM PROCEDURES

1. A maximum of 27 Defendants, 6 City employees, and 2 attorneys will be allowed in the courtroom at one time (reconfiguring the courtroom setup from 150 seats to 35) and only the defendant will be allowed. The seating will be reconfigured to allow for a minimum of six-foot separation. The courtroom will be a safe place to appear for defendants, staff and attorneys.
2. After each session of court when all people have been dismissed, the court will then be placed in recess and will be cleaned and disinfected by department personnel.
3. Markings will be placed on the wall and floor six feet apart in various locations providing guides for proper social distancing.
4. The walk-through metal detector will remain in its normal location and hand sanitizer will be available as well. Court personnel will monitor the lobby area to ensure the defendants are not congregating and are maintaining social distancing while entering and exiting the building.
5. The check in location for court will be inside the courtroom entrance and hand sanitizer will be available at this location.
6. The podium for Defendants will be placed in front of the Judge, placing Defendants at least 10 feet away from the bench. Any papers or documents will be handled by the bailiffs. Hand sanitizer will be available at this location for use between transaction.
7. Attorney's will enter through the same procedures listed above and will be directed to designated attorney seating in the front of the Courtroom. They will wait there until called in to see the Prosecutor or the Prosecutor's Assistant.
8. Additional dockets will be added to the courts calendar to account for the reduced court capacity and said dockets will be staggered on the days court is held.

ALTERNATE COURT OPERATIONS

Court and prosecutor's office will provide options for video and telephone conferencing for both Attorneys and Pro Se Defendants. Attorneys will be notified that motions to plea by mail will be granted in most cases due to pandemic. Zoom dockets with a maximum of 50 defendants are being discussed for arraignments on new tickets and Zoom dockets will be organized alphabetically scheduled between the hours of 9 am and noon on "Virtual Docket Days". The court is adding information to website for pro se defendants for email and phone communication.

NOTIFICATION TO LITIGANTS OF COURT PROTOCOLS

The court website will be updated with the Emergency court protocols.

SAFETY

In any situation or scenario where a member of the police department or courts comes into contact with a communicable disease the supervisor and officer will follow appropriate procedures.