

MISCELLANEOUS DOCKET No. 20-03

IN THE 278TH JUDICIAL DISTRICT COURT OF WALKER, LEON AND MADISON COUNTIES, TEXAS

COURT PROCEEDINGS UNDER COVID-19 EMERGENCY

In accordance with Orders of the Supreme Court of Texas and the Court of Criminal Appeals of Texas issued on March 13, 2020, the 278th Judicial District Court of Walker, Grimes and Madison Counties, Texas, hereby enters the following emergency orders modifying and suspending certain provisions related to court proceedings. This order applies to all cases and is meant to provide flexibility to modify or delay proceedings as necessary to address the COVID-19 disaster.

1. This Order is effective at 8:00 a.m. 18 March, 2020 through 12:00 midnight 30 April, 2020 unless modified by further court order.
2. Felony criminal jury trial dockets – all felony jury criminal trial dockets are cancelled.
3. Criminal ancillary dockets:
 - a. Arraignments – unless there are other reasons for an in person court appearance, attorneys should file, prior to the date of arraignment, a waiver of arraignment. If a waiver of arraignment is filed, no court appearance will be necessary. Scheduling orders will be sent to the attorney.
 - b. Pretrials – if an attorney has no pretrial matters to present, an announcement of “no pretrial” should be made by email or regular mail prior to the docket. If such an announcement is made, no in court appearance will be necessary.
 - c. Hearings on MTA/MTR – if no agreement has been reached prior to call of the docket, a hearing will be set for the last week of April. If a plea agreement has been reached prior to the call of the docket it will be taken at the docket. Paperwork should be completed prior to the docket in order to minimize time and exposure.
 - d. Writs of Habeas Corpus /Requests for Bond Reduction – Writs of Habeas Corpus and Motions for Bond Reduction will be heard at the docket.
 - e. Pleas – pleas will be taken at the ancillary docket. Paperwork should be completed prior to the docket in order to minimize time and exposure.
4. Hearings on Motions to Suppress and other pretrial motions will be set the last week of April.
5. Civil jury trial dockets – all civil jury trial dockets are cancelled.

6. Civil ancillary dockets:

- a. All currently set civil hearings will remain on the Court's docket as scheduled subject to the following:
 - 1a. No party objects based on possible exposure or diagnosis or COVID-19
 - 2a. If a continuance is requested based on exposure, diagnosis or quarantine due to COVID-19 it will be granted
 - 3a. If any party, counsel or witness is considered high risk for infection (over 65 years of age, preexisting health issues, current respiratory diseases, etc.) hearing will be reset upon request.
 - 4a. No more than 6 participants, including counsel, parties and witnesses are required
 - 5a. No new in court appearances will be set except on an emergency basis for cases involving children, Writs of Habeas Corpus, Protective Orders, Temporary Restraining Orders or Temporary Injunctions.
 - 6a. If appropriate, matters should be heard by submission.

These orders are subject to change without additional notice. Any changes will be posted with the District Clerks of the counties, and posted on the Court's website. Orders may be extended and cases reset as the emergency situation progresses. It is the Court's goal to make sure all staff, counsel and participants are protected and safe from infection while maintaining the necessary functions of the court.

Signed this 18th day of March, 2020.



Hal R. Ridley
Judge Presiding