Administrative Office of the Courts

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New Mexico Courts lifting mask and physical distancing requirements

SANTA FE – Masks and physical distancing will no longer be required after March 31 for any person inside a New Mexico courtroom or jury assembly area, the state Supreme Court announced today.

Additionally, jurors will no longer need to answer health screening questions to enter a courthouse. Courts will continue to make masks available to any juror who chooses to wear one, but they are not required.

The Judiciary is lifting its remaining health related COVID-19 protocols in recognition of changes in the pandemic and the March 31 expiration of New Mexico's declaration of a public health emergency.

"As we move forward and resume normal operations, courts can fully use all available space in courtrooms and jury assembly areas to conduct more trials and hearings," said Chief Justice C. Shannon Bacon.

Courts will continue to conduct many proceedings remotely, the Chief Justice said, with audio and video technology upgraded during the pandemic to lessen the need for people to visit a courthouse for judicial services.

"Courts learned to use digital tools to operate more efficiently and improve access to justice. That remains one of the helpful lessons for courts brought on by the pandemic," said Justice David K. Thomson, who leads the Supreme Court's Emergency Response Team for pandemic-related matters.

"Our courts adapted, innovated and remained open to serve the public despite many hardships during the past three years of the pandemic," said Chief Justice Bacon. "This was possible because of many dedicated New Mexicans, particularly jurors, judicial employees, judges, hearing officers, attorneys, law enforcement and others who adhered to the COVID-safe policies of courts to preserve the availability of justice services."

For the past year, physical distancing of 3-feet has been enforced inside courthouses and masks were required for anyone inside a courtroom or jury assembly area. Court employees, judges and hearing officers wore masks while interacting with the public in all areas of a courthouse, but that masking requirement ends after March 31.

Starting in May 2020, any person entering a court building was required to wear a protective face covering and courts enforced six-foot physical distancing to help limit the spread of COVID-19. The Supreme Court changed those masking and distancing requirements last March.

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