



ABILENE CHAMBER

DAILY BUSINESS BRIEF

Skimming the daily updates for your business so you don't have to.

CORONAVIRUS TRAVEL SENTIMENT INDEX REPORT

The most recent data gleaned through independent research gathered by Destinations International demonstrate the Covid surges in Florida and Texas have dampened travelers enthusiasm, with large gatherings like festivals, movie theaters and sporting events among the top safety concerns. Consumers largely support (78%) people wearing facemasks in public while more than half say not enough people in their community are following those recommendations.

[Read more.](#)

TEXAS WORKFORCE COMMISSION TO EXTEND PAYMENT DEADLINES FOR EMPLOYERS TO REIMBURSE STATE FOR UNEMPLOYMENT COSTS

The Texas Workforce Commission [extended payment deadlines](#) for designated reimbursing employers that are required to pay a share of unemployment benefits. Designated reimbursing employers include non-profits, local governments, school districts and other qualifying employers who reimburse TWC for the full amount of unemployment benefits to be paid to eligible former employees. TWC's action extends the due date for the August 31 payment to December 31, 2020.

TEXAS 2036 REOPENING DATA

Texas 2036 continues to [track](#) the reopening of Texas, analyzing how Texas measures against the federal government's reopening criteria, and offering data and visuals to explain the impacts of COVID-19 at the state and county level.

TEXAS MANUFACTURING RECOVERY CONTINUES

Texas factory activity continued to expand in July following a record contraction in the spring, according to business executives responding to the Texas Manufacturing Outlook Survey. The production index, a key measure of state manufacturing conditions, inched up from 13.6 to 16.1, suggesting a slight pickup in the pace of output growth. For this month's survey, Texas business executives were asked supplemental questions on the impacts of COVID-19. Results for these questions from the Texas Manufacturing Outlook Survey, Texas Service Sector Outlook Survey and Texas Retail Outlook Survey have been released together.

COVID-19 TESTING OPTIONS EXPLAINED

Last week, the Abilene City Council voted unanimously to approve a reporting policy for how information regarding COVID-19 testing will continue. The policy discussion was prompted by new requirements from the Texas Department of State Health Services stating all districts are now required to add antigen testing results to their state reports.

PCR lab-confirmed positive test results will continue to be reported and used to determine active cases. Positive results from the newer rapid-antigen test will be reported as probable cases and listed as a separate data point in the city's information charts. The number of cases hospitalized will also be divided into two categories, identifying Taylor County residents and non-residents separately.

But what do all the tests exactly mean or do? We reached out to our valued partners for clarification.

Molecular PCR – detects RNA of the virus even before the symptomatic stage of the illness. For emergent cases and special groups of vulnerable patients, testing in house can be completed in three hours. If non-emergent, the tests are sent to a reference lab with a turnaround time of three-seven days. – GOLD standard, but may take 3-7 days to get any 3rd party tests results back

1. Sample is a nasopharyngeal swab.
2. 97% confidence in a result that is negative.
3. 100% confidence in a result that is positive.

Antigen with Sofia instrument – detects the protein from the COVID virus itself. All negatives are considered presumptive negative and can be confirmed with the Molecular PCR if the physician feels symptoms are consistent with COVID. Test takes 15-30 minutes to result. – the up and comer test due to accuracy of a positive test and the fast turnaround

1. Sample is a nasopharyngeal swab.
2. 88% confidence in a result that is negative.
3. 100% confidence in a result that is positive.

Antibody testing – not used for diagnostic purposes. This is due to the length of time for the antibodies to show up in person's body. Test takes 15-30 minutes to result.

1. Sample is a blood specimen.
2. IgM – if positive, there is active infection. Takes 1-2 weeks to develop this antibody.
3. IgG – if positive, there has been exposure or recovery from the virus. Takes 3-4 weeks to develop this antibody.

GOVERNOR ABBOTT EXTENDS EARLY VOTING PERIOD FOR NOVEMBER 3RD ELECTION

Governor Greg Abbott [issued a Proclamation](#) extending the early voting period for the November 3rd Election by nearly a week. Under this proclamation, early voting by personal appearance will begin on Tuesday, October 13, 2020, and continue through Friday, October 30, 2020. The proclamation also expands the period in which marked mail-in ballots may be delivered in person to the early voting clerk's office, allowing such delivery prior to as well as on Election Day.

GOVERNOR ABBOTT WAIVES GRADE PROMOTION REQUIREMENTS FOR 2020-2021 STAAR TESTING

Governor Greg Abbott [announced](#) that the grade promotion requirement related to the State of Texas Assessments of Academic Readiness (STAAR) test for students in grades 5 and 8 has been waived for the upcoming school year. Typically, school systems must take into account a student's score on the STAAR test to determine whether the student can be promoted to the next grade level. The traditional A-F rating system will remain in place, with certain adjustments due to COVID-19.

TEA [in their correspondence](#) pointed out that as a part of this waiver, there will only be one administration of the STAAR grades 5 and 8 mathematics and reading assessments for the 2020–2021 school year. This administration will be in May to coincide with the administration of other STAAR grades 3–8 assessments. The 2020–2021 testing calendar has been updated to reflect these changes and is available at [Testing Calendar](#).

WHAT WE'RE READING

The Childcare Equation

"The first five years of life are critical for children to build the strong educational, mental, and emotional foundation upon which future learning is built. The experiences, including access to quality childcare, during these formative years can significantly influence future outcomes. Childcare is important for children, and it is essential for working parents. Parents rely on childcare to help them enter, re-enter, or remain in the workforce, but access to affordable, quality childcare is hard to come by. Now due to the COVID-19 pandemic, families are experiencing additional challenges in finding childcare that meets their needs. The challenges we face are persistent and complex, but solvable, and the business community must be a part of that solution."

[Read more.](#)

Third round of family food box program launched

"USDA will spend balance of \$3 billion in authorized funds from CARES Act on food box purchases."

[Read more.](#)

You don't want to miss these upcoming event for your business.

7/27 GROWING AN INCLUSIVE TEAM A free virtual event & interactive discussion focused on helping you create a diverse and inclusive team environment, even while working remotely or under strained conditions. [Details here.](#)

7/28 SPOTLIGHT ON THE ISSUES WEBINAR SERIES The Alliance begins a new webinar series later this month called, *"Spotlight on the Issues"* with Texas State Senator Charles Perry (R-Lubbock). The webinar is scheduled for Tuesday, July 28 at 2 p.m. Senator Perry, a CPA from Lubbock, is the Chairman of the Senate Committee on Water and Rural Affairs. Water issues - from oilfield water usage to produced water - are critical to oil and gas producers in Texas, and Senator Perry will be discussing these matters and the outlook for the 2021 Texas Legislative Session. [Register here.](#)

7/28 ROAD TO RECOVERY FOR AFRICAN AMERICAN-OWNED SMALL

BUSINESSES SBA is hosting a live, virtual town hall on Tuesday, July 28 at 5pm CDT to highlight current resources available to African American-owned small business.

Entrepreneurs, non-profit organizations, faith-based organizations or anyone in need of financial assistance may join this event to learn what opportunities exist to recover from the COVID-19 global pandemic. [Learn more.](#)

7/29 GROWING AN INCLUSIVE TEAM An audience-driven discussion designed specifically for the small business community. [Learn more.](#)

7/30 TELECOM RULE IMPACTS ALL CONTRACTS...ARE YOU PREPARED? Have you heard about Section 889 of the FY 2019 National Defense Authorization Act (NDAA)? The legislation was passed to combat national security and intellectual property threats that face the United States and contains two prohibitions: Part A and Part B. [Learn more.](#)

7/30 SEED TO START OR GROW A BUSINESS: A GUIDE TO SUCCESS Every business starts with a dream. Turning this dream into a reality requires confidence, grit, knowledge, and funding. Wherever you are in growing your business, the U.S. Small Business Administration (SBA) has the tools and resources to help you start, grow and expand your business with confidence. [Learn more.](#)

8/5 SBA/FAA VIRTUAL INDUSTRY DAY The U.S. Small Business Administration (SBA), Dallas/Fort Worth District Office teams up with the Federal Aviation Administration (FAA) to bring to the small business community the first SBA/FAA Virtual Industry Day, August 5th, 2020 from 10:00 - 11:00 a.m. [Learn more.](#)

8/5 HUMANITIES TEXAS GRANTS AND EXHIBITIONS hold a free webinar on grants and exhibitions for Texas cultural and educational organizations. Learn about funding opportunities, traveling exhibitions, and other resources provided by Humanities Texas. Staff will make brief presentations and then be available for questions and discussion. [Register here.](#)

8/11 TEXAS ALLIANCE OF ENERGY PRODUCERS SUMMER CONFERENCE join this FREE webinar on Tuesday, August 11 at 2:00 pm to hear from distinguished energy professionals on issues important to you and your company. [Register here.](#)

MORE FROM THE CHAMBER:

- [Year One](#)
- [Your Chamber Commitment for Fall Events](#)
- [Free Mask Poster for Chamber Members](#)
- [Abilene Chamber Now Seeking Nominations for Citizen of the Year](#)
- [Update your newsletter preferences](#)
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