



ABILENE CHAMBER

## DAILY BUSINESS BRIEF

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

### ABBOTT SAYS TEXAS CASES ARE RISING AT UNACCEPTABLE RATES

*Below is a summary of remarks intended to give you an overview and highlight of the discussions on the various topics discussed. This report is not a verbatim transcript.*

#### **Governor Greg Abbott:**

- Decisions on how to respond to COVID-19 will be based on data and advice from doctors, virus is fast spreading and will remain in Texas and the entire world until treatments are available
- Must find ways to return to daily routines while coexisting with COVID-19
- Early goal was to slow spread to prevent hospitals from being overrun, succeeded and prevented hospitals from being overrun, hospitals continue to have abundant capacity to treat COVID-19
- As we opened up from stay at home policies, established safety protocols for opening up, references guidelines & guidebook; protocols have several core principals, if you are at risk you should stay home, should frequently sanitize hands, should maintain safe distances, and should wear face covering or mask when going out
- Have strategies to reduce the spread if positivity or hospital rate increases too much without closing down, closing down will always be the last option
- In last half of May, Texas averaged 1,500 positive cases/day, now 3,500/day; positivity rate has gone from 4.5% in late May to almost 9% today
- Hospitalizations averaged 1,600/day in late May, in last 4 or 5 day have averaged 3,200/day
- COVID-19 is now spreading at an unacceptable rate in Texas, strategies to reduce spread:
  - All Texas should follow safe protocols, staying home if you can, sanitizing hands, maintain social distancing, wear face mask or covering
  - Appropriate authorities are increasing enforcement, e.g. TABC closing noncompliant bars, shutting down river activities, requiring masks in congregate areas
  - Surging testing in places with flare ups, incl, National Guard response; 3,500 remain active to assist
  - Working with hospitals to ensure they have the ability to treat anyone testing positive
  - Know that some think masks are uncomfortable or infringing freedom, but wearing masks will help keep Texas open; not wearing will endanger lives and lead to closure
  - Highlights [open.texas.gov](https://open.texas.gov) for guidance
- Goal is to keep Texans out of hospitals and to reduce number of positive tests, COVID-19 hasn't gone away, but neither has ability to slow the spread; don't need to choose between jobs and health

#### **Questions:**

- ***You continue to encourage masks in public and mention personal freedoms,***

**are you considering similar situations where rights have been altered for public safety?**

- Gov. Abbott - All the way through the early part of May, Texas was moving productively
- Saw an increase after Memorial Day dictating steps need to be taken
- Enforcement needed differs in different areas, some larger settings that have more massive spread, there is an increased use of mask requirements
- Maintaining flexibility is important in a state this size, but with an emphasis that the right strategies are in place to slow the spread
- **Do hospitals report with local health departments and then to the state?**
  - Dr. Hellerstedt - Basically come through the RAC system
  - Dr. Zerwas - We host calls regularly with health care CEOs to understand capacity in different areas of the state
  - Gov. Abbott - Last week, I had the opportunity to speak with hospital CEOs across the state to understand ability to maintain availability, CEOs assured me they had the capability and flexibility to ensure those testing positive have beds available
- **Spikes in the tests and bed usage all began on Memorial Day weekend, another holiday is coming up, what are you doing regarding this and keeping transmission down; hospital administrators are seeing conflicting messages from government officials**
  - Gov. Abbott - Orders do allow July 4<sup>th</sup> gatherings, but also allows local flexibility for gatherings over 500 for July 4<sup>th</sup>; have seen orders already limiting city gatherings and activities
  - We speak to local officials on a weekly basis, as numbers continue to increase, we have let them know the more they can do to reduce gathering the more they can contain spread
  - Would have been one thing to talk about masks when trends going down, different to talk about this now when trends are going up; seeing an increased amount of discussion locally and at the state government level, data shows masks are effective at reducing spread
  - Discussed with a business owner that not utilizing masks could result in them needing to close down; led to business owner embracing masks
  - Masks will not be a permanent assignment, but will hopefully bridge gap to treatments
- **Is it safe for Texans to be voting in person?**
  - Gov. Abbott - Yes, increased time period for early voting; if people take their time and wear a mask shouldn't pose a problem with COVID-19
- **Depending on whether Texas could flatten the curve on infection rates, would you consider scaling back phased reopening, how close are we to that?**
  - Gov. Abbott - Important to follow the data, need to evaluate the effect of wearing masks and increased enforcement
  - If protocols are followed and people return to best practices, I think we can stop the spread, but maintain additional strategies if needed
  - With how hospitals and new cases are spiking, surely the public can understand that additional measures will need to be taken to protect health & safety
  - Another doubling of numbers over the next month means we are in an urgent situation where tougher actions would be required

[Read more.](#)

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## GOVERNOR ABBOTT ANNOUNCES \$123.6 BILLION ECONOMIC IMPACT OF MILITARY BASES IN TEXAS

Governor Greg Abbott announced yesterday the results of a study completed by the Texas Comptroller of Public Accounts at the request of the Texas Military Preparedness Commission (TMPC) analyzing the impact on the state's economy of the various U.S. military installations within Texas. The Comptroller estimates these military installations contributed at least \$123.6 billion to the Texas economy in 2019 and supported more than 630,000 jobs in communities across the state.

Dyess Air Force Base accounts for 19,200 direct and indirect jobs and a \$3,836,359,000 economic output.

[Read more.](#)

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## TEXAS WORKFORCE COMMISSION RELEASED STATE AND LOCAL UNEMPLOYMENT INFORMATION ON JUNE 19 FOR MAY

Texas' unemployment rate now stands at 13 percent, still below the national average of 13.3 percent. Texas added 237,800 jobs in May. The Abilene MSA (Metropolitan Statistical Area) remains the third lowest unemployment rate in the state at 8.9 percent. Unemployment Insurance claims in the region exceeded 15,300 at the end of May, but declined to 13,300 as of June 14.

County unemployment rates within the region ranged from a low of 5.4 percent in Kent County (representing 23 individuals) to a high of 12.4 percent in Scurry County (representing 773 individuals). Despite some increases in unemployment rates at the county level, all counties in the region reflected increases in employment from April to May with almost 5,000 individuals returning to employment. Taylor County accounted for almost half of the growth with a gain of 2,400 jobs. The chart on the next page provides county level information for April and May 2020.

[More info.](#)

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### WHAT WE'RE READING

#### Feedlot inventory down slightly

*"Fed cattle backlog expected to continue to plague feedlots and fed cattle markets for many weeks."*

[Read more.](#)

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

**6/23 WATER SEMINAR** Join Kenneth Jorgensen (Professor, Aalborg University, Denmark) – “Water Agency” and Julia Hayden (Internationally Recognized Body Whisperer, Author, and Founder of the Gaia Storytelling Lab at the European School of Governance in Berlin, Germany) – “Make Water, Not War!” [More Info](#)

**6/24 VIRTUAL ONE MILLION CUPS** The Abilene Chamber of Commerce and McMurry University Center for Free Enterprise and Entrepreneurship are excited to bring the first virtual 1 Million Cups to the Abilene community! Are you an entrepreneur? Are you searching for a way to connect with other entrepreneurs to discover solutions for your small business needs? Started by the Ewing Marion Kauffman Foundation, 1 Million Cups is a free program designed to educate, engage and inspire entrepreneurs over coffee. [More Info.](#)

**6/25 SBA WOMEN FEDERAL CONTRACTING CERTIFICATION PROGRAM CHANGES** Join the SBA on June 25 at 10:00 (Central Time) to discuss the Women Own Small Business (WOSB) and Economic Disadvantage Women Own Small Business (EDWOSB) Federal Contracting program changes that will take effect soon. [More info.](#)

**6/25 WEST TEXAS SUCCESS VIRTUAL JOB FAIR** Join Workforce Solutions of West Central Texas on Thursday, June 25, 2020 from 9:00 am to 9:00 pm\* for a virtual job fair (employers will be active at their virtual booths until 5:00 pm). [More info.](#)

**6/9 WEBINAR - UNDERSTANDING THE PPP LOAN FORGIVENESS PLAN** Abilene SBDC & MSU SBDC presents PPP Loan Forgiveness. This webinar will help you get the maximum PPP loan-forgiveness for your business. [More info.](#)

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