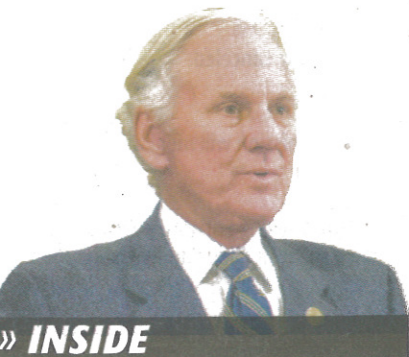


Local officials react to stay-at-



» **INSIDE**

McMaster issues work-to-home order, adds criminal penalties. **D1**

Around \$10M in SC unemployment benefits given out last week. **D1**

Virus deaths slow in places, but British premier gets worse. **D1**

**BY GREG OLIVER
AND NORM CANNADA**
THE JOURNAL

SENECA — On Monday, local officials said they weren't surprised South Carolina Gov. Henry McMaster had issued a "home or work" order.

"Prior to the order coming out, we had already deployed as many work-at-home employees as needed, divided between essential and non-essential employees," Oconee County administrator Amanda Brock said. "We identified this a month ago, realizing this was coming and were prepared for work-at-home orders. So, we were one step ahead of the game."

WHAT'S THE PENALTY?

The governor's order allows law enforcement officials to issue citations and/or fines to those traveling unless working, visiting family, exercising or obtaining essential goods. Violators face a misdemeanor criminal charge with up to 30 days in jail and/or \$100 fine for each day of the violation.

Brock said the county has closed the Oconee County Airport to the public and has no more than one person from the roads department in trucks. It's also cutting hours for some

employees and having a flex schedule for others in an effort to eliminate people working closely together.

State Rep. Bill Sandifer said he "truly expected" the order to come.

"I think this was the next logical step," he said. "I didn't know whether to expect it today or tomorrow, but I knew it was coming in my own mind. I just felt that was the right thing for him to do, and he was going to take that step sooner rather than later."

"This is more enforceable, in my opinion, than what some of the states have enacted. You can

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home order

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exercise. You can walk, but it's also that you're allowed to work. What he was saying, I believe, was, 'If you're not at work, you'll be at home.' I think that makes sense."

Oconee County Sheriff Mike Crenshaw said he was waiting to get a copy of the order to "read the exact wording."

"The important thing is for everyone to realize the seriousness of what we're experiencing, not only in Oconee County, but the world," he said. "Once we get the order, we'll review it and put out some orders and guidelines. Essential businesses are going to have to issue some ID for their employees stating why they are essential."

Oconee County Emergency Services interim director Scott Krein said he was already prepared for the announcement.

"We have already been planning on this and are pushing out information to our (Emergency Operations Center) staff and our fire and rescue staff and our county staff," he said.

EDUCATING THE PEOPLE

Seneca Police Chief John Covington said he understands the "necessity" of the order.

"From a law enforcement standpoint, we're going to approach it through advisement, education and warnings," he said. "We're going to deal with each (issue) on a case-by-case basis. When it comes down to it, if we have something flagrant and dangerous for what we deem to be the public health, then we have the authority to enforce it. I think the vast majority will be willing to comply, but you always have those few."

Walhalla Police Chief

Sean Brinson agreed.

"Our main thing will be to educate people and help them understand the importance of abiding by this, because the quicker we move on this, the faster it will die off," he said. "If we see people doing something that is not what is deemed essential, we'll be going up to them and letting them know they probably need to go home. The times of citations will occur if somebody completely disregards our request to go home."

Clemson Police Chief Jeff Stone said the order is "a big step for the governor to take."

"You have to give people the benefit of the doubt and understand that most people out here are trying to comply," he said. "Hopefully, people will stay home and take this seriously, and hopefully we can take a step to be-

ing more healthy."

Clemson Mayor J.C. Cook said he doesn't believe the order will impact the city's temporary curfew and hopes the order "doesn't create another buying attack."

"The grocery stores have yet to recover from the beginning panic-buying attack," he said. "One grocery store manager told me it would be a couple of months before he got hand sanitizer items back, because the hospitals and emergency officials need them more."

Prisma Health-Oconee Memorial Hospital chief operating officer Hunter Kome said late Monday afternoon he hadn't seen the order, but "In general, I think everybody is trying to limit the activity of everybody to keep the virus from spreading."

State Sen. Thomas Alexander of Walhalla said he had been in communi-

cation with McMaster's office on Monday "to express support for such a move at the appropriate time."

"I think it's the right thing at the right time for us," Alexander said.

'I SUPPORT HIS DECISION'

Alexander said the fact that surrounding states had already enacted similar orders opened up the "potential impact that we would have" if people from other states came to South Carolina because there was no order in place.

"We didn't want to get an undue burden of consequences of folks coming into our state as a result of not having the order in place," he said.

State Rep. Bill Whitmire expressed support for McMaster's order

"I support his decision because obviously he is

ground zero with all his advisors," he said.

State Rep. Gary Clary said the stay-at-home order doesn't have necessary bite.

"This sends a mixed message," he said. "When you look at what police have expected of them, in addition to their normal duties, they're going to have to deal with big box stores when issues arise."

State Rep. Davey Hiott said the governor "is still in charge and doing what he thinks is right," but added, "I don't know that a lot has changed."

State Sen. Rex Rice said McMaster "obviously has his reasons" for issuing the order.

"I'm not exactly happy about it, but I'm also not happy about people going out and not following his former request," Rice said. "People were going out and doing their own thing."

Area COVID-19 cases still rising

COLUMBIA —

The South Carolina Department of Health and Environmental Control reported two new cases of COVID-19 in Pickens County on Monday, taking the total in the county up to 20.

Though there were no new cases reported Monday in Oconee County, three were

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CASES: 8 in Oconee

announced on Saturday, making the total eight cases across the county.

While Oconee County has eight cases, DHEC believes there could be an estimated 97 other cases in the county. Pickens County, with 20 confirmed cases, could have another 139, according to estimates released Monday.

"These estimated

counts represent those who are potentially undiagnosed," according to DHEC. "By including estimates, we hope to better convey more meaningful information about the risk of disease spread in our community. We encourage everyone to continue to take action to protect themselves and those they love."

— The Journal staff