



# THE BOARD OF BLAINE COUNTY COMMISSIONERS

206 FIRST AVENUE SOUTH, SUITE 300

HAILEY, IDAHO 83333

PHONE: (208) 788-5500 FAX: (208) 788-5569

[www.blainecounty.org](http://www.blainecounty.org) [bcc@co.blaine.id.us](mailto:bcc@co.blaine.id.us)

Jacob Greenberg, Chairman \* Angenie McCleary, Vice-Chair \* Dick Fosbury, Commissioner

## **PRESS RELEASE**

**FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE—March 18, 2020**

### **For more information, contact:**

Larry Schoen, Public Information Officer, [lschoen@co.blaine.id.us](mailto:lschoen@co.blaine.id.us); cell: 208-727-9580

## **BLAINE COUNTY COMMISSIONERS ANNOUNCE**

Blaine County Commissioners formally declared a Disaster Emergency under the provisions of Idaho Code in response to the global COVID-19 pandemic on Monday, March 16, 2020. As a result, Blaine County has since taken a number of measures to allow for continued provision of county government services to the public while reducing or eliminating person-to-person infection with coronavirus. Blaine County Commissioners are concerned about disease spread by any means, from customers to staff, staff to customers and staff to staff. “Our first obligation in government is to protect the public’s health, safety and welfare,” said Blaine County Board of Commissioners Chairman Jacob Greenberg.

Accordingly, The Blaine County Annex building was the first facility ordered closed, effective Monday March 16, 2020. The Annex houses these County government offices: DMV, Assessor, Treasurer, Prosecuting Attorney, Public Defender, Probation, Land Use & Building Services and GIS. Each of these departments provides unique services and each has expressed its commitment to remaining responsive to client and customer needs through this period of emergency response. Staff for each of these offices will handle inquiries, offer guidance and, except for special services for which in-person interaction is required, assist customers and clients only by telephone, e-mail or mail.

Blaine County Commissioners ordered additional building closures, public access restrictions and staff schedule changes on Tuesday, March 17, 2020. The public concerned about how to conduct their important business is strongly encouraged to contact any County department by phone, email or mail. Contact information for all departments is available on the [Blaine County website](http://www.blainecounty.org). Click the “Government” tab. Many functions typically handled in person can and will be handled online or by telephone. Processes for doing so already are in place. County Staff can help anyone needing assistance with them.

The Old Courthouse, housing the offices of the Blaine County Clerk, Elections, County Commissioners and County Administrative Services, including the Weed Department, was closed effective 2p.m. MDT, Tuesday, March 17, 2020. The exceptions to



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this closure rule include scheduled public meetings and scheduled appointments. The number, frequency and duration of public meetings will be reduced. Commissioner Greenberg said, “We honor the public’s right of access to public meetings and are working with our IT department and legal counsel to ensure meetings are accessible in compliance with Idaho law.” The Clerk’s office will schedule appointments with the public for their business that does need to be handled in person. All these offices can be reached by telephone, email or mail.

The Judicial Building housing the District and Magistrate Courts and Court Clerks’ window (where fines and fees are paid) will remain open on a restricted basis, continuing operations according to an Idaho Supreme Court order effective Monday, March 16, 2020, noted in [Idaho Supreme Court Response to COVID-19 Emergency](#). Blaine County Magistrate Jennifer Haemmerle said, “We’re going to be continuing to provide as much access to the courts as we can in the safest way possible with that order as the guideline.” Additionally, Judge Haemmerle advises people to contact their attorney, if represented, or the Court Clerks for guidance.

Access to the Public Safety Facility, housing the Blaine County Sheriff’s Office, County Jail and Emergency Communications Center, is restricted according to Sheriff Steve Harkins’ [guidelines](#) affecting such activities as jail visitation, the work release program, etc.

The McBride Building, housing University of Idaho Extension services, also will be closed to public access, but Extension and 4-H are reachable by phone, email and mail. 4-H participants are being contacted concerning upcoming events and activities. Facilities occupied by Blaine County Road and Bridge, or Buildings and Grounds are not typically open to public access, but these government functions will continue uninterrupted, with precautions taken to protect employee health and safety.

Similarly, municipal solid waste transfer stations, along with Blaine County Recycling, remain in operation at all locations. Contact with staff onsite at recycling locations will be restricted.

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