

PRESS RELEASE



SUPERIOR COURT OF CALIFORNIA COUNTY OF IMPERIAL

Court to Reopen for Cases Necessary to Protect Public Safety

El Centro, California – On April 1, 2020, the Superior Court of California, County of Imperial intends to reopen its main courthouse in El Centro limited to criminal and juvenile matters, restraining order cases, and other matters necessary to protect public safety. The Brawley courthouse will remain closed until at least April 6, 2020.

The Court will hold criminal hearings limited to felony cases and any in-custody misdemeanor defendants. Juvenile cases will be heard as well as domestic violence and other restraining order hearings. Some civil matters will be heard but will be limited to emergency requests and counsel can only appear via video conferencing. All other matters including misdemeanor, civil, family, family support, traffic, and small claims cases set to be heard between March 23 through April 17, 2020 have been continued and notices have been sent with new hearing dates. The Court will continue to act on any emergency request. The Court will begin holding hearings via video remote conferencing so that all who normally appear in court may do so remotely.

The Criminal and Civil Clerks' offices will be open for filing but unless a person is facing a statute of limitation or other filing deadline, the public is encouraged to wait. Electronic filing is available and all attorneys are requested to use this means of filing to reduce traffic in the courthouse. Questions regarding electronic filing will be answered by emailing court@imperial.courts.ca.gov or visiting the Court's web page at www.imperial.courts.ca.gov.

When opened on April 1st for the statutorily required hearings and issues of public safety, the Court will have a system in place where there will be limited seating in courtrooms and hallways that take into consideration distancing that will be monitored by Sheriff's deputies and security personnel. People waiting for their cases to be called will be seated outside the courthouse and asked to distance themselves as well and will be escorted in when called. We realize this will slow down matters but ask that all concerned be patient and understanding under the circumstances. The Court issued General Order 2020-2 on March 25, 2020 limiting attendance in courtrooms to litigants, attorneys, court staff, and media. Public access is currently restricted during the emergency.

The Court is cognizant of the fact that courts have been designated as essential services by the Governor in his Emergency Orders. This includes judges, staff, and attorneys who appear to represent their respective clients. The Court is serious about its response to the current emergency and is taking precautions along with other justice partners to minimize risk to employees, counsel, parties, and others who enter our buildings.

However, the Court must weigh health and safety concerns against its constitutional duties and the constitutional rights of persons who have been charged with crimes and are in custody who are presumed innocent unless they have been convicted, the rights of victims, the safety of children and rights of parents in dependency matters and public safety issues such as domestic violence restraining orders. It is for these reasons this Court has not completely closed during this emergency and will now reopen to handle the matters as noted.