



# COVID-19 AND COUNTIES

Handling essential county responsibilities during the  
pandemic

## [In Short...](#)

This brief guide offers a summary of how some of Arizona's counties, elected officials, and their offices are performing their essential duties in the face of the COVID-19 pandemic.

## FOREWORD

This guide is a compilation of information gathered from various county elected official offices throughout Arizona. It is, however, not fully comprehensive of each office's responsibilities and duties. Every county elected office plays an essential role in Arizona's communities in ways more detailed and diverse than this brief guide documents. Not every county has been available for comment, and not every detail of an office's job is present in the guide. However, this guide is an opportunity for counties to look at the similarities, differences, and possibilities on how offices from county to county are handling their business amidst the COVID-19 pandemic. From all of us at AACo, thank you for the work that each and every county puts in during these trying times.

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# ASSESSORS

## THE OVERVIEW

Assessors continue to do their work, simply transitioning to business with their office being conducted over the phone instead of in person. Many of the Assessors and their staff work remotely as is the case with many of the county offices, the COVID-19 situation has changed how they go about their jobs, but the responsibilities of their positions remain unchanged and essential.

## INFORMATION FROM OFFICES:

### **Maricopa**

As of March 25<sup>th</sup>, Maricopa County stopped taking walk-in customers and installed a secure drop-box at the front entrance for drop off forms and documents. The majority of Maricopa's staff is working remotely using VPNs and other virtual mechanisms that provide them access to shared drives, e-mail, and other essential programs to perform their work. Maricopa continues to assist customers via their website and telephone conference options.

In the event that it is absolutely necessary to meet with someone, they have prepared an appointment only process that ensures the employee is practicing social distance and there is glass between the customer and employee. The office itself is working with minimal staff, spaced out to observe social distancing. Maricopa's office continues to try and discover remote opportunities for those currently in the office.

The Maricopa Office continues to be able to manage most of their business operations as they can be completed remotely and continue to prioritize functions with upcoming deadlines to ensure they are performing their essential constitutional and statutory requirements.

### **Mohave**

Mohave County closed their doors regarding face-to-face contact at all three of their offices. They have offered drop boxes at each location and conduct business via telephone and email. Appraisers are still going on-site if necessary but are practicing social distancing and avoiding contact. Mohave County has not altered any of their deadlines, although appeals have slowed considerably.

The Mohave County office is allowing personal property appeals to be extended if someone makes a request. Mohave County does not currently offer off-site working arrangements via VPN. However, the office is working hard within their offices since each member has their own cubicle allowing minimal exposure to co-workers. Just to be safe, staff members do have their temperature taken upon arrival to work.

**Pinal**

Like many other offices, Pinal has closed their public walk-up windows and installed tele-video phones as a substitute. Their field appraisal staff is not currently visiting properties. Pinal is in the process of getting VPN access for internal staff.

**Yuma**

The Yuma Assessors Office is not taking appointments for in-person business. All business is being conducted either telephonically or electronically. There are insufficient amounts of VPN licenses for employees besides departments heads and top level of management who possess county issued laptops. To mitigate the risk, the office has split the line staff in half and having them work alternate days at the office. The office continues to seek out projects for stay-at-home staff that do not involve a connection to the county IT infrastructure.

The only critical function of the Yuma Assessors Office at this time is to try and stay on top of recorded deeds and process business personal property statements that are being filed. The field appraisal staff is working on a re-canvass project for the 2022 roll using aerial imagery. Properties requiring an on-site visit will be delayed until autumn 2020. Currently, deadlines have not been extended for either business personal property statements or petitions for review.

The office is not closed completely in order to preserve production levels. This is necessary so that tax bills issued in September go to the correct owners and new construction not captured on the 2021 Annual Notice of Value are properly captured this tax year.

# COUNTY ATTORNEYS

## THE OVERVIEW

County Attorneys are still hard at work in pursuit of justice. However, our justice system is not blind to the effects of COVID-19 and has worked very effectively, to mitigate the risks. This includes measures such as attending telephone court hearings, addressing motions from defense counsel on a case-by-case basis which seek to modify release conditions due to complications from COVID-19, and other measures.

## INFORMATION FROM OFFICES:

### **Cochise**

While the method of completing work has changed somewhat, the only task not currently being completed is the notarizing of documents outside the legal system.

### **Mohave**

The Mohave office is appearing telephonically for the majority of hearings presently. They have employees coming in to take care of essential functions and preparation of files when necessary, but otherwise have them working from home as much as possible using their *Justware* program.

### **Navajo**

Despite the significant changes in our lives put forward by COVID-19, crime continues to occur. If defendants are out of custody, the courts are holding telephonic hearings. If a plea is reached, they are taking the pleas over the phone. Sentencing has been put off until May for the time being because they require the defendant to be physically present. The rules are similar for in-custody defendants except that they can video conference from the jail.

All attorneys and staff who want to telecommute from home are able to. Navajo recently upgraded their laptops a couple of months ago for the attorneys, so they've had enough laptops to provide to staff to allow for this change.

Meanwhile, prosecutors still go to court under social distancing guidelines. They periodically come into the office to pick-up and drop off files if needed, much of this can be done via a data base system. The Navajo County Attorney's Office has been rotating staff to process the paperwork that comes into the office each day to get it into the data base system in a timely manner to aid the process.

Civil attorneys have been working from home and are incredibly busy with issues related to COVID-19. This includes numerous HR matters from modifications made at the federal, state, and county level; interpreting Executive Orders; and typical day-to-day issues.

# CLERKS OF SUPERIOR COURT AND JUSTICES OF THE PEACE

## THE OVERVIEW

*Note: Clerks of Superior Court and Justice of the Peace were joined because the offices provided a fair amount of shared information regarding the courts.*

While COVID-19 has affected many businesses and institutions, including those within the justice system, most of the courts remain open. That being said, COVID-19 has changed more of how the courts handle their responsibilities than what responsibilities they handle. Many of Arizona's courts have taken measures to reduce the amount of in-person trials and appointments as much as possible while maintaining their responsibilities. The Clerks of Superior Court and Justices of the Peace continue their duties, though in some cases such as the Maricopa Superior Court, in person visits have been reduced as much as 40%.

## INFORMATION FROM OFFICES:

### **Cochise**

Cochise's Benson Justice Court continues to operate on a limited basis. All civil and criminal trials have been cancelled and are waiting to be rescheduled until the end of the Governor's order in case it is extended. The Benson Justice Court will also not hold Eviction Trials due to the fact that Writs of Restitution cannot be served as ordered by Governor Ducey. The court continues to conduct initial appearances, but only through video conferencing from the jails.

Arraignments are still being conducted, however only 8 defendants are allowed in the court room at a time to comply with the 10-person rule. An additional 8 defendants are permitted in the lobby for the same reason. Following the arraignments on the initial 8 defendants the benches and tables are being disinfected. This process is repeated.

The Prosecutor for Benson Justice Court is conducting Pre-Trial Conferences telephonically with Defendants. When 8+ Plea agreements are signed, they then schedule Change of Plea Hearing and put the Pleas on record. The policy mentioned above used to arraignments is observed here as well.

Plaintiffs are being encouraged to enter their petitions for Protective Orders online, but if it cannot be completed online, they may come to the Court to obtain the petition. The security guard hands them the petition just outside the lobby door, instructs them to fill it out either in their car or from home and to fax, email, or return it to the court. Afterwards, a telephonic Protective Order Hearing is scheduled and put on record.

Staff are wearing gloves when accepting payments and counting monies at the end of day and the court is allowing no one other than court staff and security into the Clerks area.

Deliveries are left at the door of the court and security brings it into the lobby and they are distributed. All inter-office transfers to other courts are passed through the lobby window slot when they are picked up.

### **Coconino**

Information on how the courts of Coconino are managing their duties in the face of COVID-19 is available on their county website at: <https://www.coconino.az.gov/510/Flagstaff-Justice-Court>

The Coconino office has distributed this information through their website, letters to the local bar association, as well as to litigants in specific types of cases.

### **La Paz, Mohave, and Santa Cruz**

These county offices have had no change in duties and responsibilities. The courts are currently holding more telephonic or video conferences with fewer people in the building and courtrooms. However, the duties themselves have not changed. Due to the FMLA policy, the offices now have fewer staff available to do the work. Phone traffic has increased as well as the number of people from other states wanting to come to Arizona to get married since their courts are closed. Santa Cruz has not seen this same increase in marriage certificate requests.

Questions regarding potential court closures and foot traffic concerning passports have also gone up. The only reduction they have experienced is in jury trials. That being said, Mohave and La Paz continue to work on jury duties and getting ready to request jurors for the second half of the year.

### **Maricopa**

*Maricopa County provided a document with their operation plan, which was too large to embed within this document. [The document can be viewed here.](#)*

### **Yuma**

Yuma's clerks are still operating and performing nearly all of their duties with the exception of passport applications. There has been limited guidance on what is 'essential' and so they must perform all of their tasks. The only significant change at this point besides passports is that there have been exceptions created to the rule for having a "wet" signature on documents and they have been accepting e-mailed filings to decrease the number of people in and out of the lobby and building.

# CONSTABLES

## THE OVERVIEW

*Note: The Constables section consists only of the overview due to limited feedback received.*

The Constables and Deputy Constables continue to serve documents and see to their other responsibilities to the public while adjusting their methodology to account for the COVID-19 pandemic. Lobbies are largely closed, with individual escort occurring only when necessary. While some offices are splitting shifts between the Constable and Deputy Constable, the job that must be performed remains the same.



# ELECTION DIRECTORS

## THE OVERVIEW

Election Directors have been maintaining their constitutional and statutory responsibilities because regardless of the wave of disruption sent by COVID-19, their responsibilities also remain essential to our local and state government. While the Elections Division has temporarily suspended all in-person services, Elections Directors continue to maintain all of their duties.

## INFORMATION FROM OFFICES:

### **Apache**

The Apache office consists of two individuals, Angela Romero and her assistant. The office is currently utilizing face masks, gloves, disinfectant sprays/wipes, and social distancing as much as possible. They still have business throughout the county requiring travel such as picking up election equipment used during the PPE election; however, they are waiting to hear when they will be able to access said equipment.

Protective equipment available is limited by their Health Department and unavailable from a vendor. Candidates are currently filing their nomination documents for the 2020 Primary Election and the office is in direct contact with each of those candidates. After each candidate leaves the office, they disinfect the area, only one candidate is allowed in the office at a time.

### **Coconino**

The Coconino office continues to operate upon all of its duties. Between the candidate filing and candidate challenges through April, the municipal election in May, the August election, and financial filings; all of the office's staff are essential and required to work.

### **Gila**

The Gila office has 4 full time staff members. In response to the COVID-19 pandemic the county has put in place protocols to ensure that continuity of services will occur. The office has two shifts, 6:30am to 12:30pm and 12:30pm to 6:30pm, the two teams practice the CDC social distancing protocols with the public. Right now this largely consists of candidates who are filing paperwork.

In addition to CDC's social distancing guidelines, use of disinfectant, sanitizer, etc. is also practiced. The Gila office continues to maintain all of their responsibilities as elections move forward, as the conduct of elections are considered essential services as noted by the Department of Homeland Security.

**Mohave**

As a relatively small county, the Mohave office is able to work with minimal interaction with the public. With approximately 24 people running for public office, the Mohave office can continue the process of contacting the potential candidates, setting up appointment times, and meeting with them in person for the necessary paperwork. The office is able to continue performing each of their duties by phone or e-mail with little to no personal contact.

**Yavapai**

The Yavapai County administration building has been closed to the public as of March 30<sup>th</sup>. The office posted the phone numbers to the building's various departments so that the public can call in. For elections, Yavapai is allowing in-person visits from candidates and designees who are filing nominating paperwork as needed, as well as for candidate filings. Only one person at a time is allowed inside the public lobby.

Internally, Yavapai County has half of their staff (2 people) working from home on alternating days. Two full time employees staff the office during normal business hours. Other than the candidates and filings for elections, there will be no public allowed in the lobby until at least April 30<sup>th</sup>.

The Yavapai office is utilizing Microsoft Teams to aid in working from home. The staff member assigned in the office aids those at home by uploading needed documents and coordinating appointments, responding to department e-mails and answering phone calls. Those at home are working on tasks related to preparation for the Primary Election in August.

# RECORDERS

## THE OVERVIEW

From their recording responsibilities, to voter registration and elections; the Recorders across Arizona's counties are still hard at work. While significant changes to the 'how' in their process have been put in place to help overcome the obstacle of COVID-19, the 'what' of their responsibilities has remained the same. Recorders continue to see to their responsibilities with most offices running a skeleton crew in an attempt to get as many people working remotely as possible and taking most if not all of their appointments with the public by phone or e-mail.

## INFORMATION FROM OFFICES:

### Coconino

Coconino has temporarily closed their Flagstaff Mall and Tuba City Election Offices to the public. The building where the main office is located is open but kept locked. The office has a doorbell and intercom system to talk to people when they come to the door, which can be remotely activated from the inside.

Overall Recorder's office staffing arrangements:

- 5 staff members are working at the OTEC office
- 2 part-time staff members working at Tuba City Office
- 1 staff member working at Flagstaff Mall office
- 2 staff members working at warehouse
- 12 working at home

### Recording

- Urging the Title Companies, Banks, Mortgage Companies, Surveyors and other regular customers to record their documents through e-recording or the mail.
- Using our ballot drop box at the office as a drop box for documents to be recorded (no cash payments)
- There is 1 staff member working at the office to answer calls & assist members of the public. In-person assistance is only being done by appointment.
- Three staff members are working from home

### Voter Registration

- 1 employee is working at the office
- 5 employees are working from home
- 1 employee is working at our Flagstaff Mall location because she does not have internet access at her home. The Mall and our office there are closed to the public.

## Elections

- 2 part-time employees working at Tuba City Elections Office. They are staggering their shifts, so they are not working at the office at the same time. The office is closed to the public.
- 4 staff members working at home
- 2 staff members working at the warehouse staying in two separate sections of building.
- 1 staff member working in the office
- 2 staff members are taking vacation time

## Mailroom – Our office is in charge of the county mailroom

- Asked county departments to only do one mail pick up & drop off a day
- Courier service between county buildings that are open will continue
- Departments will be responsible for working out their internal arrangements for picking up & dropping off mail if the courier services do not go to their offices
- Mail delivery continues uninterrupted

Recording, Elections and Mailroom will be open regular business hours with reduced staffing.

## **Graham**

The Graham County office is closed to the public except by appointment. Customer service is being conducted by phone and e-mail. The office continues their duties by utilizing their drop box, mail, and meet by appointment if necessary. The office continues to process everything as it comes in.

## **Santa Cruz**

Santa Cruz County closed to the public on Wednesday, March 25<sup>th</sup>, 2020, except by appointment. The office currently has a sign outside their building notifying the public that they may call the switchboard telephone number and will be directed to the appropriate department to be able to conduct business inside. Once that call is received, the staff will go outside and walk the customer inside to their window where they receive their assistance. Santa Cruz Recorder's Office currently has a skeleton crew alternating time in the office with telecommuting from home.

## Yavapai

The Yavapai Office is closed to the public however, recording and voter registration are essential and so the office has established the following procedures:

1. Approximately half of staff (7 people) are working from home at any one time as all members are rotating between working in the office and working from home.
2. Three members of the office are working from home full time tending to recording responsibilities such as e-recording, verifier, indexer, and historical online uploading project (back to 1864). When the person doing e-cording is on break, lunch, or has a teleconference, one of the staff in the office does this task until they return. This task is time sensitive and must be continually processed.
3. Recordings - One member of the office doing all e-recording from home.
4. Voter Registration – EZ Voter, working scanned documents into voter records, answering emails, processing UOCAVA updates and request
5. Office placed signs on their ballot drop boxes at their Prescott and Cottonwood office, repurposing them for customers to deposit recording packages. These are checked twice daily.
6. PSA was sent out encouraging the public to use the USPS or drop boxes for recordings.
7. Utilizing Microsoft Teams for meetings.
8. The office has put up a sign on the front door with all department phone numbers for the public.
9. For meetings which must occur in person, the office has repurposed a small kiosk in the first-floor lobby normally used for early voting. Plexiglass has been installed where these meetings can take place without public accessing the building or violating social distancing.
10. Naturally, the office is exercising diligent use of hand sanitizers, gloves, etc.

# COUNTY SCHOOL SUPERINTENDENTS

## THE OVERVIEW

With the closure of our public schools due to the COVID-19 pandemic, the County School Superintendents work the orchestrate solutions and help maintain the infrastructure of schools in their county. COVID-19 has certainly changed the landscape of public education for a couple months, but the County School Superintendents still see to that landscape amidst the crisis. Like many offices however, many of them have transitioned their staff to work remotely as much as possible.

## INFORMATION FROM OFFICES:

### **Greenlee**

The Greenlee County School Superintendent's Office is maintaining all of their standard job duties as they are all essential. The primary adjustment they have made is having only one of their three office staff in the office at a time, with the others working remotely.

### **Santa Cruz**

Every aspect of Santa Cruz's scope of responsibility is operating at 100%. A rotation to allow no more than 2 people at one time in the office has been in place, while all other employees telecommute. Before the quarantine, the office was set up with laptops and access to operate 100% remotely. In order to stay in sync as an office, they have two Zoom meetings daily with staff and keep track of assigned work on their outlook calendar for the employees working from home. The public may visit the office by appointment only. At this point, so specific prioritizing of responsibilities has been necessary due to operating at full capacity.

# SHERIFFS

## THE OVERVIEW

Nearly all of law enforcement's responsibilities are considered essential and continue about their work. Sheriffs are doing their part to help address the COVID-19 pandemic. Patrol, detention, dispatch, and administration are a few of the functions of the sheriffs that continue to go about their work. Most of these positions still work their full shifts. However, limitations on time in the office and meetings to limit officer exposure, working with courts/attorneys to release low level offenders, and not allowing personal contact with dispatchers are some of the many effective ways the Sheriffs are mitigating the risks of the COVID-19 situation while not compromising on their duties and responsibilities to their communities.

## INFORMATION FROM OFFICES:

### Gila

#### Patrol,

- All considered essential and must report for full shifts.
- New procedure initiated to screen potential personal contacts for signs/symptoms of virus.
- Limiting time in the office and meetings with other officers to limit exposure.
- Asked to work out of vehicle as much as possible.
- Asked to follow all hygiene recommendations although PPE supplies are limited, and frequent disinfecting (all bureaus).

#### Detention,

- All considered essential and must report for full shifts.
- No inmates transported in from other jurisdictions.
- Booking agencies asked to cite non-violent/non-DV misdemeanants.
- Modified screening procedures for inmates that meet new booking requirements (medical and increased questionnaire).
- Continual monitoring current inmates and staff for signs/symptoms.
- Isolation/testing procedures for inmates with suspected cases.
- Reducing overall inmate population by working with courts/attorneys to release low level offenders (150ish to 88 in just a few weeks).
- Encourage video conferencing for courts/attorneys.
- Limit travel between facilities.

#### Dispatch,

- All considered essential and must report for full shifts.

- No personal contact with dispatchers from the outside (all contact through a window, including public and other employees).
- New screening procedures (mentioned above) for callers that may result in personal contact by the officers.
- Encourage matters to be dealt with over the phone rather than personal contact if at all possible.

#### Administration,

- All considered essential although with drastic shift modifications.
- Shifts adjusted to have only one employee in a given work area at one time.
- Requires a certain amount of administration time each day to fulfill a work week (generally 2 hours/day under current plan).
- Morning shift disinfects before leaving over the noon hour, afternoon shift disinfects before leaving for night.

Those employees already set up for remote work (laptop/hotspot) encouraged only to come to facilities when absolutely necessary (for items that cannot be removed for the office or requires their physical presence)



# TREASURERS

## THE OVERVIEW

As the banks for our communities many districts, the duties of the Treasurer are vital regardless of the COVID-19 situation. Most, but not all Treasurer offices are now closed to the public to limit COVID-19 exposure. However, Treasurer's offices continue to function with in-person business transitioning to telephone and e-mail as much as possible. While VPN access options have been limited for many offices, the Treasurers have continued to find ways to conduct their business and see to their tasks in a method that overcomes the hurdles of COVID-19 while not compromising on their responsibilities.

## INFORMATION FROM OFFICES:

### **Coconino**

The Coconino Treasurer's office has 4 staff members working at the office. The front doors to their building are locked and they have installed Ring doorbell cameras to talk to people who are showing up for services. The only in-person services being done at the main location is the service for legal cases by process servers. In this case, there is a button to unlock the door temporarily so that the individual can enter. Social distancing measures are in place for when the staff member comes down to receive the documents.

In the parking lot, the office has set up a drop box for check payments to be dropped into. Districts and departments are encouraged to utilize check scanners, mail, or inner office to send us their deposits. If a district falls into the negative, the Treasurer will register their warrants at 0% interest until June 1<sup>st</sup>.

Open Monday-Wednesday from 9am-12pm a drive-up window at a temporary location is available for cash payments and cash deposits. Bullet-proof glass, Ring camera, and a bank drop box are present to limit exposure. Each week, the Coconino Treasurer is hosting a webinar with their districts from her office. These webinars are recorded. Reconciling, transfers, investments, and online banking services have been moved to remote assistance.

Lastly, the office has partnered with PayPal to be one of two counties offering PayPal Credit. If qualified, someone can utilize the credit to pay property taxes and if they pay the entire amount within 6 months, they pay 0% interest.

### **Greenlee**

The Greenlee Office consists of three members. In order to keep their office running efficiently during the pandemic, the office rotates between the Treasurer and the chief deputy for in office work, while the Treasurer's assistant works entirely from home. The county lobby has remained open to the public throughout the crisis, however there's been very light traffic only. The office is considered essential because they are responsible for receipting property taxes, paying warrants

for various districts, as well as receipting and distributing monies for those districts. At this point, the office continues to complete all of their necessary responsibilities.

### **Mohave**

Essential treasury functions are mandated by Arizona Revised Statutes (Titles 11, 15, 35, 42 & 48) and are critical to the continued and effective performance of many operations/functions of Mohave County. Essential Treasury functions include:

- Tax collection/payment processing
  - This includes answering taxpayer phone calls and emails pertaining to making tax payments
- Delinquent Tax and related Tax Lien processes
- Disbursement of funds to county departments, school, fire and other taxing authorities within Mohave County
- Banking and accounting functions for county departments, school, fire and other taxing authorities within Mohave County
- Investment operations
- Systems Maintenance as it relates to all of the above functions

Failure to collect and distribute tax revenues would have significant impacts for the County and other entities within Mohave County, including the ability to sustain payroll, obtain critical COVID-19 related supplies, and provide needed Public Health and Safety services.

Managing and operations staff perform these functions as part of their routine assigned job duties whereas support staff may include staff whose skills allow for essential function performance even if their routine job duties do not involve performing the functions assigned under the Treasury's COVID-19 response.

Most essential treasury functions can be performed entirely or in part via telecommuting arrangements. Exceptions are processing of payments received by mail or drop box, some tax-lien related services (time sensitive Court documents must be processed in-office), and various administrative tasks.

### **COVID-19 Treasury Operations Response:**

- Closure of Cashier Windows
- Limited hours for processing of Treasury Receipts (deposits) from County departments
- Utilization of drop boxes in Kingman, Lake Havasu City and Bullhead City

### **COVID-19 Treasury Working Arrangements:**

- Arrange for Telecommuting where possible

- Consider staggered schedules if needed
- Limit face-to-face interaction for in-office staff
  - Meetings and other office interactions conducted via phone or video conference
  - Maintain adequate social distancing

### **Pima**

Pima County has faced a reduction of their staff of about 60%, so they continue to perform essential duties with 40% of their staff. Due to the nature of the Treasury's work as a bank, the various monetary transactions and bank services they handle are all considered essential.

### **Pinal**

The Pinal office has not had to reduce their staff in light of COVID-19, but their IT admin is now working from home. Additionally, an accountant and a tax person working at a closed satellite office to allow for two operating locations with IT support in case there is a COVID-19 exposure at the other location. The Treasurer, Accounting Supervisor, and Tax Supervisor have VPN access.

Neither of the satellite offices are open to the public and the main office is not accepting payments at the counters, however there is a video phone in the lobby next to a computer with access to the Treasurer's website in order to help taxpayers with questions. Payments can be left in the drop boxes out front as well; there are envelopes by the video phone to use. Lastly, receipts are completed via mail.