



Written by [Warren Mass](#) on May 4, 2020

## Despite Newsom's Shutdown Order, Three California Counties Are Reopening

Three counties in California have announced that they will reopen segments of their economies in defiance of Democratic Governor Gavin Newsom's statewide restrictions on "nonessential" businesses, among which were churches. Newsom put his executive order in place on March 19, ordering California's nearly 40 million residents to stay home. California was the first state to impose such a strict mandate on all residents.



Newsom's order took effect immediately and remains in place "until further notice." Californians are not allowed to leave home except for "essential" purposes. They are allowed to purchase groceries and prescription drugs, access healthcare, and commute to jobs deemed "essential."

Twenty-one of California's 58 counties had already imposed enforceable shelter-in-place orders for all residents before Newsom's announcement, but residents in some counties believe a one-size-fits-all approach is not appropriate for such a large and diverse state.

The three counties that have announced that they will start reopening their economic sectors are Modoc, Yuba, and Sutter. The first of these was Modoc County, whose plan launched on May 1. A statement issued several days earlier — signed by representatives from the county's health officer, Board of Supervisors, Office of Emergency Services, and Sheriff's Office — said, "Modoc County has coordinated with partners to strategically plan a staged reopening." The statement noted its intentions to restore the county "to a pre COVID-19 state" in phases. However, Modoc will reinforce its previous lockdown order if two or more cases of the coronavirus are identified among its population.

Modoc is a small county with only 9,600 residents located in a rural area near California's border with Oregon. It has had no confirmed cases of Covid-19, as of May 2.

A May 3 press release posted on the Modoc County Sheriff's Office Facebook Page quoted Sheriff Tex Dowdy, who said, "We set up strict guidelines that would help our County open in a staged, safe manner to keep all of our residents healthy. We are confident that if we do this right, we will make it through this incident.... We need you to be respectful of the steps that businesses are taking to prevent COVID-19, be kind and know that the fear of this virus is real in many residents and that fear varies from person to person."

Yuba and Sutter counties, both located about 50 miles north of Sacramento, are beginning to reopen segments of their economies as we write on May 4.

The *Sacramento Bee* on May 2 quoted Randy Fletcher, a Yuba supervisor, who said officials believe the two counties can be reopened without compromising public safety.

Their decision goes against Newsom's April 30 statement that county officials aren't supposed to relax his state order.



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“Big state, very diverse,” Fletcher said. “One policy may not be the answer.”

Fletcher said that Yuba County officials have not yet received any negative feedback from Newsom’s office and added that the governor, despite the broad emergency powers he has assumed, isn’t likely to order a crackdown to enforce his shutdown directive.

“You can only lead if they’re willing to follow. If they don’t follow, what are you going to do?” he said.



*Warren Mass has served The New American since its launch in 1985 in several capacities, including marketing, editing, and writing. Since retiring from the staff several years ago, he has been a regular contributor to the magazine. Warren writes from Texas and can be reached at [wmass@thenewamerican.com](mailto:wmass@thenewamerican.com).*

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