

Cooper extends curfew

COVID-19 emergency orders to run through Feb. 28

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TRIAD — Gov. Roy Cooper extended COVID-19 emergency orders that have been in place since early December for at least another month, citing continued

high numbers of coronavirus cases and patient hospitalizations.

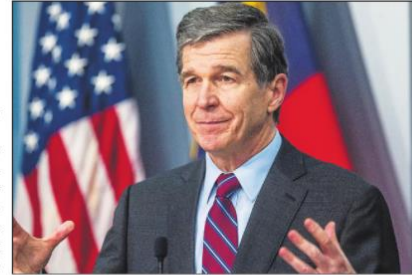
On Wednesday afternoon, the governor announced he would push the emergency orders out to Feb. 28. The current orders

were set to expire this Friday afternoon.

The orders include a curfew from 10 p.m. to 5 a.m. for people to remain at home except for essential tasks, as well as closing restaurants, personal care businesses and entertainment venues during the curfew time frame.

Face covering requirements

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TRAVIS LONG | AP

Gov. Roy Cooper speaks during a briefing on North Carolina's coronavirus pandemic response Wednesday at the NC Emergency Operations Center in Raleigh.

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and restrictions on people gathering in indoor and outdoor settings remain in effect.

The extension of emergency orders also allows for to-go or delivery sales of mixed beverages by restaurants and the continued moratorium on evictions.

Cooper and state Health and Human Services Secretary Dr. Mandy Cohen said they are encouraged that COVID-19 cases appear to be stabilizing after the spikes in new cases that followed the Thanksgiving, Christmas and New Year's holiday seasons. But the number of cases and hospitalizations remain too high to relax the emergency orders now, they said in the briefing at the State Emergency Operations

Center in Raleigh.

"With more than 3,300 people in the hospital, and the percent of positive tests in double digits, we know this virus is still spreading," Cooper said. "And with at least one new contagious variant of COVID-19 in our state, we still have work to do. We cannot let our guard down, especially in these cold winter months."

Cooper and Cohen reiterated that vaccine supplies to the state remain tight, though Cooper said deliveries from the federal government should improve soon. The administration of President Joe Biden on Tuesday pledged to

increase vaccine shipments to the states by 16% during the next three weeks.

Cohen said North Carolinians should remain adamant about following coronavirus pandemic precautions emphasized since the outset of the crisis last March.

"The best way to protect those around you is to act as if you do have the virus and could be contagious," Cohen said. "That means always wearing a mask — over your mouth and nose — always waiting apart from others and always washing your hands frequently."

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— Gov. Roy Cooper