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Golf Course Operation During Quarantine

The San Diego County Sheriff's Department regularly receives inquiries from business owners and members of the community seeking guidance on whether their business or activity is allowed under the County's Public Health Order or the Governor's Executive Stay Home Order.

It is up to the Sheriff along with the respective chiefs of police in their jurisdictions to decide on how to go about enforcing the orders. However, it is up to the County's Public Health Officer and Director of Emergency Services to decide what the order does and does not allow. The Public Health Order last updated on April 8th, states: *"All public parks and recreation areas, including public beaches, shall comply with section 10, above (references posting a social distancing protocol and other requirements). Parking lots at such facilities shall be closed, and all such facilities shall be accessible only from members of the public who reside within walking distance of the facility. Said facilities shall be used solely for walking, hiking, equestrian or bicycle riding. The public shall not congregate or participate in active sport activities at said facilities."*

We have received several questions regarding allowing golf courses to operate. As stated above, all public golf courses must close their parking lots and not allow active sport activities, such as playing golf. The April 8th order also prohibits any gathering of two or more people in any private or public space. It defines a gathering as, *"...any event or convening that brings together more than one person in a single room or single indoor or outdoor space at the same time, including people in multiple vehicles in one location. A gathering does not include...A gathering consisting only of members of a single family or household."*

So with the example of golf courses, as long as members of one family or household do not actually play golf and do not gather with any other persons, the management of the course may permit them to walk, hike, ride horse or bicycle on the property. Furthermore, the golf course must be within walking distance of the family's home.

We provide this example to illustrate the impact of the orders. While playing golf or engaging in similar activities may seem to some to be a permissible exception to the rule, the fact is the orders exist to protect public health. The more we stay at home, limit contact with others and practice good hygiene, the shorter and less severe this crisis will be. We realize it is a disappointment not be able to engage in recreational activities. We also realize the real and significant hardships business owners are suffering right now. While we are sympathetic to these issues, these orders must be followed to keep everyone safe. They are not suggestions to be followed only when convenient.