



COVID-19 Standing Order  
UPDATED May 14, 2020

On March 12, 2020, Governor Bullock issued Executive Order No. 2-2020, declaring a state of emergency within the State of Montana due to the spread of COVID-19. Since that time, various Federal, State, and County officials have enacted rules and regulations, as has the Montana Supreme Court. On March 19, 2020 Justice Court enacted temporary rules designed for the preservation of order, and the protection of the general public and court staff. The initial order was modified April 3, 2020, and all prior COVID-19 Orders of this Court are now revoked and superseded by this Order.

- **If you received a ticket, do not come to Court unless instructed to do so by the Judge or a Court Clerk.** Until Montana reaches “Phase 3” reopening, Justice Court does not intend to hold in-person appearances on charges. The Court will consider requests of the defendant to appear in person in exceptional cases or may require a personal appearance due to the nature of the offense. In such cases, you will be notified by a court clerk.
- **All Court hearings are by telephone or video.**
  - For hearings in front of Judge Beal (Dept 1):
    - Call (646)558-8656, when prompted enter ID 406 215 2085
    - Or go to <https://mt-gov.zoom.us/j/4062152085>
      - When prompted, enter password 2085
  - For hearings in front of Judge Holloway (Dept 2):
    - Call (646)558-8656, when prompted enter ID 406 215 2086
    - Or go to <https://mt-gov.zoom.us/j/4062152086>
      - When prompted, enter password 2086
- If you are represented by an attorney, please contact your attorney rather than the Court. Your attorney is likely busy right now. They are likely dealing with many of the same issues you are. Please have patience.
- The clerks of court will do their best to contact unrepresented parties and attorneys to discuss options. We will attempt to contact all persons

with scheduled hearings or who have recently received tickets. You may also contact the court directly. **Please call the court at (406)258-3470 or email [jpinfo@missoulacounty.us](mailto:jpinfo@missoulacounty.us)**

#### **Weddings:**

- Justice Court will again begin performing weddings, but under limited circumstances guided by the public health situation. Please contact the clerk of court with questions.

#### **Criminal Cases:**

- **Law and Motion. Do not come to court.** The Court will continue to hold law & motion on Tuesdays (Dept 2) and Wednesdays (Dept 1). Parties should not physically appear at the courthouse unless they are instructed to do so by the Judge or a court clerk, but should appear by telephone or video.
- All attorneys may appear for hearings by telephone or video as set out above. When possible, the Court prefers that parties appear by video. In most cases the Court is able to conduct changes of plea and sentencings via telephone.
- **Bench Trials.** The Court is again conducting bench trials. If on the date of trial, the courthouse is not open, parties should contact the clerk of court for admittance.
  - **PPE:** Parties should appear for court with a face covering or mask that reasonably conforms to the face and does not contain fabrics with disruptive patterns or words. The Court will provide disposable masks to those unable to provide their own.
  - **Public Viewing:** While the courtroom will not be open for persons to physically view the trial, *upon request* of any member of the public or litigant, the trial will be broadcast via Zoom. See “Open Court” below.
- **Jury Trials.** The Court will not be conducting jury trials until at least July 1, 2020. All jury trials set prior to July 1 will be continued at the jury confirmation hearing if they have not yet resolved.

#### **Civil Cases:**

- **Law and Motion.** The Court will continue to hold law and motion on Tuesdays (Dept 1) and Wednesdays (Dept 2) primarily to conduct pre-trial conferences and status hearings. All hearing will be via telephone as set out above.
- **Evictions.** The Court will continue to meet its statutory obligation to conduct landlord/tenant possession hearings. Various recent Federal and State mandates impact eviction hearings. Any party seeking to file a new eviction case or proceed forward with a previously filed case must

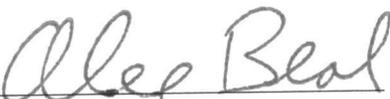
provide a non-conclusory analysis that convinces the Court that they may proceed. Such requests must contain a sworn statement of the property owner certifying that the facts in their attorney's analysis are true. The Court discourages pro se individuals from filing eviction cases at the moment—you would be best served seeking guidance from a licensed attorney.

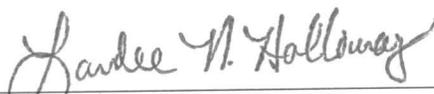
- **Bench trials.** Civil bench trials and possession hearings will resume May 26, 2020.
- **Jury trials.** No civil jury trial will occur until at least September 1, 2020. Because criminal trials are entitled to precedence on the calendar, it may be significantly later before the Court is able to schedule a civil jury trial.
- **Mediations.** Parties are encouraged to check with the Clerk of Court about the status of the mediation program.
- **Deadlines.** The Court encourages all parties to continue meeting deadlines or requesting continuances. Parties should anticipate that the Court is adhering to all deadlines, though the Court may be delayed in processing filings.

**Open Court:**

- Pursuant to MCA § 3-1-312, court must be open to the public, and court shall remain open to the public. Because appearances are only being held telephonically and by video, interested persons or members of the media may join the Zoom. Trials will be available to members of the public via Zoom as well. Persons who are interested should contact the Clerk of Court.
- **Jail appearances.** The Court will continue to conduct jail appearances which will be available via Zoom. The Court grants permission to the media to rebroadcast those hearings without additional permission. The Court encourages broadcast media to be judicious with such images.

**Anyone with questions should call the Court at (406)258-3470 or email [jpinfo@missoulacounty.us](mailto:jpinfo@missoulacounty.us)**

  
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Hon. Alex Beal  
Justice of the Peace

  
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Hon. Landee Holloway  
Justice of the Peace