



## FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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### **Community Storm Shelter Will Remain Open at This Time (COVID-19)**

We are in unprecedented times. National and state leaders, including President Trump and Governor Parson, have recommended equally unprecedented action to protect the most vulnerable Americans from this virus and to “flatten the curve.” The Odessa Emergency Management Team consisting of both City and Fire District leaders began meeting to discuss our options to observe the recommendations put forth by the National Centers for Disease Control (CDC) regarding public gatherings and social distancing, while understanding the needs of a safe place to shelter in the event of severe or tornadic weather. Currently as of this press release we will follow our standard protocol of opening the shelter at the Community of Christ Church (515 S 1<sup>st</sup> Street) if a Tornado Warning is issued for Odessa, Lafayette County, Jackson County, Cass County, Johnson County (Missouri), or Saline County. However, as we continue to navigate these uncharted waters, *we are strongly encouraging you to make plans and preparations for you and your family to shelter in a place that is not a public gathering space.* Visit today with a neighbor, friend, or family member close by where the number of people sheltering will be limited. If you do not have a basement or time to get to the shelter, move to the lowest most interior portion of your home, preferably an area without windows.

As we are doing our best to follow the recommendations of the CDC and our National and state leaders in encouraging social distancing and avoiding large gatherings of people, we want you to be proactive in making your severe weather preparations. Please do what is best for you and your family and start making your plans today for what you will do if you do not have a basement or storm shelter in your home in the event of severe weather. It is also a good idea to share your plan with a friend or family member outside of the area, so they will know your location should the need arise.

Please know, this decision was made with great consideration for all involved, and our steps are driven to make decisions that we feel are for the greater good of the community. Locally, our two entities are working diligently together in cooperation with all Lafayette County departments to create systems here locally that support the goals and recommendations of our National and state leaders as we address the ever evolving situation at hand. Regardless of your personal opinion of COVID-19 itself, please understand effective social distancing and the modifications being made to our basic services are being done in an effort to slow the spread of the virus. If we can do this, the existing health care systems will best be suited to treat our loved ones whom may become affected by this or other health issues.

Please remember, this too will pass. We will get through this by working together and caring for one another. We encourage you to check in on the elderly and your neighbors with a phone call and support our local businesses as they too are working diligently to modify their operations to provide their services to our community while keeping their customers and employees health of priority.

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