



# **MEDIA RELEASE**

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SAULT STE. MARIE, Mich.

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## **Sault Tribe government extends temporary closure to May 3**

SAULT STE. MARIE, Mich. -- On April 7, Sault Tribe's government extended its temporary closure of all governmental offices, with a planned reopen date of May 3. All government team members are considered on call with many working from home. The closure started March 23 with a plan to reopen April 13. Due to the ongoing climbing number of COVID-19 cases in Michigan, the tribe is extending the emergency closure until May 3 to protect tribal members, team members and their families from exposing themselves to COVID-19.

Tribal team members' emergency pay will continue with exception of seasonal team members and those who may be given temporary lay-off status. Team members should contact their supervisors with any questions.

On April 1, Michigan Governor Gretchen Whitmer signed Executive Order 2020-33, declaring a state of disaster and requesting resolutions by legislature extending the state of emergency by 70 days. After closing schools on March 26, Whitmer suspended the school year on April 2, providing guidelines for remote learning.

As of April 6, the Upper Peninsula had 32 confirmed COVID-19 cases, with 26 in the tribe's seven-county service area. With health experts projecting COVID-19 peak this week (University of Washington's Institute for Health Metrics and Evaluation), tribal leaders considered the Stay-at-Home closure to be crucial to the tribal community's health and safety.

Sault Tribe began emergency planning for COVID-19 pandemic in early March, with leadership and Health understanding the possibility of COVID-19 spread into the US interior. This allowed the tribe to be ready for closures, health equipment and infrastructure, and membership needs for health, housing, necessities and other emergencies as they emerge.

The Sault Tribe Board of Directors has worked steadily to ensure tribal government and casino team members wages are covered during this period. At its March 24 meeting, the Board of Directors unanimously

voted to access to the tribe's \$5.5 million in Contract Support Cost Settlement Funds to cover team member wages during the COVID-19 State of Emergency.

All but essential services will stay at home to help limit the spread of the coronavirus. Tribal Health Centers, Law Enforcement and Detention Center, the Domestic Violence Shelter, USDA, ACFS essential team members, and any other needed essential services will remain in operation to provide members with needed services.

Tribal Elder Services have been handing out lunch to elders who drive up, and are delivering meals as usual. Commodity Foods has been preparing food boxes based on members' previous preferences and loading them into members' trunks as they pull up. All health clinics are open with limited hours and appointment only status and taking the utmost precautions to keep team members safe.

Tribal Administration is actively following all federal announcements and adapting to new federal regulations with as much flexibility as possible.

Keep in touch with the tribe at [saulttribe.com](http://saulttribe.com) and on Facebook/[saulttribe](https://www.facebook.com/saulttribe).

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