



TACO

**Promoting RV Travel
& Camping in Texas**

SUMMER 2020
www.tacomembers.com

COVID-19: A *Blessing* or a Curse?

By Brian Schaeffer, TACO Executive Director / CEO

We have talked with campground owners across Texas and the country. We've asked the question, "How you doin' since the Virus came to town?" The responses are not exactly all the same, but the unscientific answers are quite interesting. Before we discuss those, let's look at some things we do know, because there's a lot we don't know.

We know that prior to the Virus, most parks were experiencing excellent occupancy and truly looking forward to a 2020 camping season that was going to be among their best, if not the best year they ever had. RVs were selling consistently, and RV rentals were also holding their own just fine. The country was seeing records being set in many areas of the economy, and tourism was a big part of it. Then came the Virus, and the months of March, April and May were a gut punch.

Depending on where you were in the country or even in Texas, you were experiencing record numbers — good or bad. When schools closed and state parks shut down, we had private campgrounds (deemed essential) go through the roof with bookings and occupancy. We also had monthly parks tied to projects that disappeared and so did those workers. RV dealers and manufacturers also had to shut down or drastically reduce their interaction with the public.

The Virus caused us to miss our Spring Meeting & Trade Show for the first time in at least 30 years. Meanwhile, your TACO board and staff have continued to work diligently to promote and protect TACO members, as you will see throughout this newsletter. Bright spots include unprecedented demand for the TACO guide, as folks are camping like crazy. Website traffic is off the charts. The government wants more of your hard-earned money — think property taxes! As we fight for you, your continued support is appreciated.

Fast forward to today. The Virus has not gone away — if anything, it is worse in many regards. Businesses have opened; some have had to close back down. Tourism overall is taking an extreme beating. BUT, RVing and camping is going nuts! Dealers can't get enough product to sell or parts to complete service jobs. Campgrounds are overbooked (not all, but many) and it is creating some

happy problems and a few not so happy. Fortunately, campgrounds are still essential businesses and filling critical needs within communities across Texas.

On the concerning side is the fact that parks are reporting cases of the Virus among their guests, and it raises process questions. Do you have to make an announcement and tell the whole park about who is sick and all the details as you understand them? That seems to be a game time management decision. Most parks have a "network" of communication (sometimes known as gossip), and there are few secrets. It is necessary for infected guests to be informed of quarantine requirements, and it is appropriate to monitor and make sure they aren't continuing to use park facilities/amenities until they test negative.

You can't control whether the Virus comes to your park. You can follow CDC guidelines, state/county orders, and common sense. You have to weigh this against the fact that you are in the hospitality industry. It is not reasonable to think that folks will "greet themselves" upon arrival; communicate effectively "with themselves" during their stay; and "check themselves out" and "invite themselves back" to your lovely establishment. Keep in mind there will be life after COVID-19 and the actions you take during this time will affect you later down the line. So, be careful, empathetic, and smart, and we will all come out the other side of this thing and in many instances better than when we started.

How are parks doin'? For the most part, really well. Occupancy is strong, finances are in decent shape, and community standing is strong. It is worth noting that many local businesses are not fairing so well. We really need to reach out and develop or maintain relationships within our communities, because *we are blessed to be a blessing!* Stay safe and healthy. ★

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With the COVID-19 situation continuing in Texas, there are some important programs and policies going on in state and federal policies.

TACO Legislative REPORT

TACO BOARD MEETING

July 21, 2020

Three draft recommendations have been previously discussed for possible bill filing for the upcoming 87th Texas Legislative Session.

But to give some context, it is unclear how legislative leadership is going to organize and work in this COVID-19 environment. Others states that are in session have made various accommodations in trying to perform their constitutional and legislative duties while trying to commit to duties while social distancing, wearing masks, and sanitizing themselves and their environment.

At this stage at the Texas Legislature, plastic partitions have been erected between legislators' desks in the 150-member Texas House of Representatives. Plastic partitions have also been erected on the dais of the numerous committee meeting rooms at the State Capitol. There are informal discussions among legislators how the legislative process will commence. Some suggest limiting the public in the Capitol to participate in committee testimony, etc. That would take a total rewrite of law regarding the Open Meetings Act, etc.

It's entirely possible, unless the coronavirus is leashed by then, that the Legislature will convene in January without the rest of Texas allowed into the important rooms of the Capitol with legislators and necessary staff. One committee chairman stated, **"I'm not sure we're going to allow anyone on the floor. I don't know if either chamber is going to be open next year."**

The Senate, with 31 members and necessary staff in attendance, could probably meet in its regular chamber with the desks moved apart — socially distanced, but operational. But the House, with 150 members and staff in the room, might be forced to take over the balconies to conduct business safely with everyone in the chamber.

Those Chamber galleries are ordinarily for the public, lobbyists and others who want to watch the proceedings. It's contemplated that possibly the public, the lobby and the media might all be forced out, left to follow the action online. The Senate might have its galleries open, but while we're in this pandemic, there will be rules for social distancing.

The members of the 87th Legislature might be as busy as usual, but they might be alone in a building designed for a multitude.

With that background, the following are potential TACO legislative issue in full:

I. Commercial Property Tax Appraisal

The Texas Constitution provides that "[t]axation shall 'be equal and uniform.'" Tex. Const. art. VIII, § 1(a). The Tax Code provides that "[t]he market value of property shall be determined by the application of generally accepted appraisal methods and techniques." Tex. Tax Code § 23.01(b). The Tax Code includes the "cost method," "income method," and "market data comparison method" as acceptable appraisal methods. Id. §§ 23.011–.013. However, the Tax Codes require that "[t]he same or similar appraisal methods and techniques shall be used in appraising the same or similar kinds of property." Id. § 23.01(b).

Additionally, Texas courts have held that the "constitutional mandate of equality and uniformity requires only that all persons falling within the same class be taxed alike." Midcon Compression, L.L.C. v. Reeves County Appraisal Dist., 478 S.W.3d 804, 816 (Tex. App.—El Paso 2015), aff'd in part, rev'd in part, 563 S.W.3d 207 (Tex. 2018). Therefore, a statutory provision that would allow property owners of the same type of property (e.g., RV parks) to select different appraisal methods would likely violate the Texas Constitution and existing Tax Code provisions.

Two potential options to address the issue are below:

Appraisal Increase Caps:

- Currently, the appraised value of a residence homestead may not increase by more than 10 percent each year. Tex. Tax Code § 23.23(a); Tex. Const. art. VIII, § 1(i)
- Extending the appraisal caps to other types of property could reduce the annual appraisal increases certain RV parks incur.
- Multiple bills to extend the appraisal cap to all real property (HB 878/HJR 47, HB 945/HJR 50) and to commercial property (HB 4329/HJR 136) were filed last session. Only one of the bills filed received a hearing in committee.
- Ways & Means held a [hearing](#) on HB 878/HJR 47, which would have set an appraisal increase cap of five percent on all real property. The fiscal note projected a five year state cost of \$7.2 billion if the bill and constitutional amendment passed. The fiscal analysis was as follows:

Contingent on the passage of a constitutional amendment, the bill would require appraisal

districts to limit the growth in the appraised value of real property to 5 percent per year creating a fiscal impact on the state and units of local government. The analysis was based on appraisal roll information reported electronically by appraisal districts. The year to year percent change in value for a large random sample of real properties listed on the appraisal roll in each of the two most recent years was calculated and the results were sorted by percent change. The value loss resulting from the proposed limitation was calculated for real properties that increased in value more than five percent. Value lost to the existing 10 percent value limitation on homestead property was excluded. The results were extrapolated to all real property. Value losses would occur in proportion to future real property growth rates. Mathematical modeling supported by historical data from the existing 10 percent cap shows that, when property value growth rates are relatively stable, value losses increase substantially in the second year after the imposition of a value growth cap and then increase at a decreasing rate. The value loss was adjusted in the second and succeeding years of the analysis to reflect this growth pattern.

Projected tax rates were applied to the taxable value losses through the five-year projection period to estimate tax revenue losses to school districts, special districts, cities and counties.

Special Appraisal Methods:

- The Tax Code provides numerous methods of special appraisal for different classes of property including "dealer's motor vehicle inventory," "dealer's vessel and outboard motor inventory," "dealer's heavy equipment inventory," "retail manufactured housing inventory," and "solar energy property." Tex. Tax Code §§ 23.121–.26
- In one example, the provision for solar energy property states that "[t]he chief appraiser shall use the cost method of appraisal to determine the market value of solar energy property." Id. § 23.26(b)
- A special appraisal method for RV parks could specify the method of appraisal that each chief appraiser must use when determining the market value of RV parks

Board Report continued on page 11

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MY CAMPGROUND IS FULL!

How you can limit your liability during the COVID-19 Camping Surge.

Camping has never been more popular! Across Texas and the U.S.A., RV sales and rentals are up, and campgrounds are filling to capacity. How do you take advantage of this great opportunity for your business and limit your liability at the same time?

Set clear expectations about what to expect at your park. Start by thinking about the camping segment you serve best — families, 55 and over only, long term stays, weekenders, etc. Your website and Facebook page should present a clear idea of what campers can expect regarding amenities, COVID-19 related restrictions required, general rules and cancellation policies. Don't be afraid to say no when people push for things you do not offer, such as large group outings or tent camping.

Understand the needs of new campers.

Just because you own a \$100,000 RV does not mean you know how to park it! Fortunately, most campground insurance policies provide park owners Trailer Spotting coverage

for parking RVs or guiding RVs into campsites. Communicate early and often with new campers to orient them to other unique aspects of camping at your park so they learn quickly how to be good campground citizens.

Enforce rules, document incidents and make sure you have the coverage protection you need.

Liability for spreading COVID-19 is generally excluded on business insurance, but the increase in new campers in tense times creates another liability exposure — agitated campers, rule breakers and rowdy campers. Establish behavior expectations and share your rules, starting with your reservation and check-in process. Have a waiver that states that campers agree for all parties to follow the rules provided or they will be subject to ejection. Enforce rules swiftly and complete incident reports for all incidents, so you have a record on file if a lawsuit or problem arises later. And, even when you do all the right things, you can still be sued. So, make sure you have the enough liability insurance coverage to protect your assets in event of a covered loss.

Irene Jones, Campground Program Manager, Marshall & Sterling Insurance



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EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR / CEO

Brian & Debra Schaeffer
TACO Office
Crowley, TX

Editor: Lisa Rhodes

Design: Elizabeth Whitmire

Distribution: TACO Members,
TACO Trade Members,
TACO Prospective Members

Contact: 910 S. Crowley Rd, Ste. 9-504
Crowley, TX 76036 | 877-518-1989



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The Supplier of the Year Award is ordinarily presented to the winner annually at the TACO Meeting and Trade Show. Congratulations Ken Rowley and staff for your Excellence in Service for our TACO members!

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Did You Know? RELATIONSHIPS BECOME RESERVATIONS

I'm just going to say it. If your park is not active on social media, you are missing a prime opportunity to fill your campground. Not only that, your competitors who are active have been snagging what could have been reservations in your park. Campers must not only know you exist but choose to visit you over many other campgrounds.

Give guests a reason to book with you. Make them feel like they not only know you but are missing out by not staying at your campground. Most importantly, post often to stay fresh on people's minds. Here are some great ideas sure to have your followers taking notice:

- Pictures around the park, facilities, pool, and other amenities
- Upcoming park or local events and attractions
- Past guest comments and reviews
- RV/camping tips, tricks, and advice
- Meal ideas and recipes
- Insight about the owners, staff, and park history

Encourage potential guests, along with guests past and present, to interact with your business on Facebook and Instagram. Then make it your mission to build meaningful relationships with your followers before they ever book a stay. Since social media is all about relationships, you are able to develop personal connections on a mass scale right on your page.

Social media is like a campfire. Gather your audience and tell your best story. ★



For fifty more great social media post ideas, visit: <https://marketingbonfire.com/fifty-social-post-ideas/>
Heather Dudley — Marketing Bonfire



Catering to Kids IS YOUR CAMPGROUND TRULY FAMILY FRIENDLY?

By Silvana Clark

When my daughter was 12, we traveled around the country for a year in an RV, staying in a different campground every three or four days. I gave Sondra a very unusual homeschool assignment to tie in with our trip. We called it “Undercover Cop.” At each campground, she went with me to register our RV. Her job was to simply record how many staff members acknowledged her in some way, and then to create a graph showing those interactions. She was to document how friendly the staff members were to her, especially at campgrounds marketing themselves as family friendly. The result of our highly scientific survey? One campground! Out of the 103 campgrounds we visited, only staff members at the Jellystone Yogi Bear Campground in Frankenmuth, Michigan, commented on her cute headband and then asked what activities she enjoyed doing.

It’s a known fact: if children are made to feel special, parents have a positive impression about an RV park. The following are some ways to establish personal contact with young guests so they feel welcome:

1. Display a large bulletin board or white board by the park entrance. Label it VIK, “Very Important Kids.” As children check in with parents, invite them to autograph the board. With a parent’s permission, take a Polaroid or digital picture of the young guests. Make sure to write their name on the back of the photo because this is a golden marketing opportunity. Several weeks after the family’s visit, mail the photo to the child with a note saying, “Thanks for staying with us at the Hidden Valley RV Park. Here’s a picture to remind you of the fun time you had. Hope to see you again!” If you feel really ambitious, mount the photo on a small calendar imprinted with the name of your campground. Parents will proudly display the calendar, creating a daily reminder of their visit.
2. As children arrive, hand them an activity sheet with information about how to play “RV Park Scavenger Hunt.” Ask them to find answers to some of the following questions:
 - How many sidewalk lights are there from the sidewalk to the front door?
 - What does the inscription say on the wishing well by the pond?
 - What is the name of our resident cat?
 After children complete the survey and turn it in at the front desk, they receive a small gift or coupon for a free ice cream cone.
3. Prepare small swag bags for children. These can include a deck of cards, a piece of candy, or another treat. The contents don’t have to be expensive because the children will have fun finding the bags. As the family registers, tell them, “We have a small gift for Ashley. After you are settled, follow these clues to your gift.” Then list a set of directions, such as: “From the front steps of the office, turn left at the sidewalk. Look for the heart-shaped boulder and turn right, etc.” Continue the clues until the child finds a gift labeled with their name, which can simply be behind the registration desk! It’s not uncommon for campground

- owners to hear, “I liked looking for my prize. Can you hide it again in a different place and give me different clues?”
4. Try to provide some nature-related activities. One campground planned a “Mud Pie Making” event for kids to actually get their hands dirty and play in the mud. Offer nature hikes or a chance to observe frogs and ducks in a natural or man-made pond. Set up some easels outdoors with a variety of colored paints available. Let kids use small twigs, pinecones, or whatever natural item they find on the ground to use as a paintbrush. This produces creative paintings with a modern art feel! You’ll get a kid’s attention by offering a chance to take part in the “Leaf Cutting Salon.” Have kids find leaves on the ground. Provide scissors so kids can “cut” the hair of their leaf face. Cutting leaves is easy and something most kids haven’t done. Simply add a few wiggle eyes to complete this well-groomed creation. Parents will applaud you for getting kids away from video games!



5. Most campgrounds plan special events on traditional holidays, such as July Fourth or Halloween. Sure, children enjoy these activities, but how about celebrating some “untraditional” holidays? Why not celebrate National Clown Day on August 5? Pass out red noses when families register. Hire a clown or juggler to perform during your ice-cream social. Ask kids to put on a talent show featuring a circus theme. Fill a wagon with popcorn and go from site to site, passing out (or selling) bags of popcorn. These events are fun for adults and kids. Who knows? Maybe a few kids will write about celebrating this unusual holiday in the annual “What I Did This Summer” essay!
- As you can see, it only takes a small amount of extra effort to make children feel like welcome guests. Parents appreciate the thoughtfulness you exhibit towards their children, and are likely to tell their friends about your family-friendly RV campground. ★
- Silvana Clark has stayed in over 350 campgrounds across the U.S., Canada, and overseas. She frequently presents keynotes and workshops on how campground owners can improve customer service and increase the number of guests who turn into repeat customers. For more information, visit www.silvanaclark.com.**

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II. Water Code – Administrative Fees on RV Parks

Current law (see below) does not allow a municipal water utility or water district to charge administrative fees to RV parks, and a RV park cannot be charged for water service that is not consistent with rates of other commercial entities within the service area. A water district is a local, governmental entity that provides limited services to its customers and residents. Examples of water districts include municipal utility districts, water control and improvement districts, special utility districts, and river authorities, and are subject to Chapter 49 of the Texas Water Code. Chapter 13 of the Texas Water Code governs municipal water service.

Sec. 49.2122. ESTABLISHMENT OF CUSTOMER CLASSES. (a) Notwithstanding any other law, a district may establish different charges, fees, rentals, or deposits among classes of customers that are based on any factor the district considers appropriate, including:

(1) the similarity of the type of customer to other customers in the class, including:

- (A) residential;
- (B) commercial;
- (C) industrial;
- (D) apartment;
- (E) rental housing;
- (F) irrigation;
- (G) homeowner associations;
- (H) builder;
- (I) out-of-district;
- (J) nonprofit organization; and
- (K) any other type of customer as determined by the district;

(2) the type of services provided to the customer class;

(3) the cost of facilities, operations, and administrative services to provide service to a particular class of customer, including additional costs to the district for security, recreational facilities, or fire protection paid from other revenues; and

(4) the total revenues, including *ad valorem* tax revenues and connection fees, received by the district from a class of customers relative to the cost of service to the class of customers.

(a-1) Notwithstanding Subsection (a), a district that provides nonsubmetered master metered utility service, as defined by Section [13.087](#)(a)(1), to a

recreational vehicle park, as defined by Section [13.087](#)(a)(3):

(1) shall determine the rates for that service on the same basis the district uses to determine the rates for other commercial businesses that serve transient customers and receive nonsubmetered master metered utility service from the district; and

(2) may not charge a person who owns or operates a recreational vehicle park that receives nonsubmetered master metered utility service from the district an administrative fee for the services provided.

(b) A district is presumed to have weighed and considered appropriate factors and to have properly established charges, fees, rentals, and deposits absent a showing that the district acted arbitrarily and capriciously.

Sec. 13.087. MUNICIPAL RATES FOR CERTAIN RECREATIONAL VEHICLE PARKS. (a) In this section:

- (1) "Nonsubmetered master metered utility service" means potable water service that is master metered but not submetered and wastewater service that is based on master metered potable water service.
- (2) "Recreational vehicle" includes a:
 - (A) "house trailer" as that term is defined by Section [501.002](#), Transportation Code; and
 - (B) "towable recreational vehicle" as that term is defined by Section [541.201](#), Transportation Code.
- (3) "Recreational vehicle park" means a commercial property:
 - (A) that is designed primarily for recreational vehicle transient guest use; and
 - (B) for which fees for site service connections for recreational vehicles, as defined by Section [522.004](#)(b), Transportation Code, are paid daily, weekly, or monthly.

(b) A municipally owned utility that provides nonsubmetered master metered utility service to a recreational vehicle park shall determine the rates for that service on the same basis the utility uses to determine the rates for other commercial businesses that serve transient customers and receive nonsubmetered master metered utility service from the utility.

(b-1) A municipally owned utility that provides nonsubmetered master metered utility service to a recreational vehicle park may not charge a recreational vehicle park a fee that the utility does

not charge other commercial businesses that serve transient customers and receive nonsubmetered master metered utility service from the utility.

(c) Notwithstanding any other provision of this chapter, the utility commission has jurisdiction to enforce this section.

III. Lawsuit Exemption for RV Parks

The Ohio House of Representatives passed HB 355 which protects RV parks and campgrounds from frivolous lawsuits. The bill is now in the Ohio Senate for consideration. The bill amends the law to exempt RV parks, campgrounds and operators from certain liability for damages resulting from risks inherent from camping. Those risks can include fishing, campfires, hiking, walking the grounds, etc. Since an operator cannot eliminate those risks the operator should not be held liable if an injury occurs. The Ohio bill, however, does not exonerate operators from all liability such as damage for recreational activities within the control of the operator; purposeful or criminal activities with their control; willful disregard for the safety of the campers; and failure to disclose known risks to campers.

The TACO lobbyist met with staff of the Texans for Lawsuit Reform (TLR) group in Austin, Texas to discuss if any current language in Texas statutes already protect RV park operators in the same or similar manner as the Ohio bill is aiming for. TLR staff stated that there is currently a law under Chapter 75A, Civil Practice and Remedies Code, Title 4, Liability in Tort, for "agritourism activity" (means an activity on agricultural land for recreational or educational purposes of participants, without regard to compensation), which provides limited liability for the entity to any person or agritourism participant injury or damages arising out of the agritourism participant injury, but does not limit liability for an injury caused by the agritourism entity's negligence of dangerous condition on the land, facilities, or equipment used, dangerous propensity of a particular animal, agritourism's failure to train employees, or intentional harm caused by the agritourism entity.

TLR would be supportive of a change in law that would provide the same or similar liability to RV parks and campgrounds and can be accomplished through amending the Civil Practices and Remedies Code to include RV parks and campgrounds. ★



QUESTION OF THE MONTH

Cleaning RV Pedestals in the Age of COVID-19

A few weeks back, we received an email from a RV Park franchiser asking how RV Pedestals should be cleaned to limit the possibility of spreading the COVID-19 virus. We thought, "Great question!" We called all the major pedestal manufacturers and even Underwriters Laboratories (UL). UL maintains a standard for power outlet panels (UL 231 is the standard) which includes RV Pedestals and Boxes, Marina boxes, etc. The answer was the same from all parties; no one has addressed the issue.

How do you balance the issues of electrical safety, usability, and reducing the spread of the virus? Can you hose down (spray) the outside of the pedestal? After all, the pedestal is made to be rain-tight. No, you cannot just spray the pedestal. While designed for rain-tight operation, the assumption is the rain is generally falling and the pedestal is upright in its properly installed position. High pressure water spray from the side rather than above could introduce water into energized portions of the equipment. This is a shock hazard and could cause damage to the equipment. **RAIN-TIGHT IS NOT WATER-TIGHT.**

How about using a fogging device that we see in news reports on other equipment? In a document issued by the National Electrical Manufacturers Association (NEMA) titled: "COVID-19 Cleaning and Disinfecting Guidance for Electrical Equipment" dated May 13, 2020, NEMA tells us that these fogging devices could allow disinfectant solutions to contaminate internal components and damage these components. This also goes for disinfectant sprays in hand held bottle or cans. Furthermore, the National Electric Code states, "Some cleaning agents and lubricating compounds can cause severe deterioration of many plastic materials used for insulating and structural applications in equipment" (Note 2 to Article 110.11).

How about Ultraviolet (UV) light? According to the NEMA document above: "UV sources are also used to disinfect the air and surfaces of critical areas in hospitals, laboratories, group facilities, and public spaces. Electrical equipment installed in areas subject to UV light disinfection will be exposed to UV radiation at various intensities and time durations, depending on the design of the disinfection system. Materials used in the fabrication of electrical equipment may degrade when exposed to UV light. Consult the electrical manufacturer to confirm the application and acceptable use of artificial sources of UV light for disinfection on equipment." The electrical manufacturers I spoke to on this subject did not have any data on UV light and the acceptability for use.

From the NEMA document issued this week: **NEMA recommends the following steps for COVID-19 related cleaning and disinfection of electrical equipment:**

- Ensure all required electrical safe work practices are followed before accessing any electrical component for any reason, including cleaning.
- If possible, de-energize electrical equipment before cleaning.
- Allow hot surfaces to cool before cleaning.
- Let cleaning solutions dry before re-energizing.
- Have equipment users and maintenance personnel follow all CDC recommendations to reduce the risk of COVID-19 transmission, including washing hands diligently, using an appropriate hand sanitizer, and using face coverings and personal protective equipment.
- Consult the equipment manufacturer for instructions regarding equipment cleaning.
- Do not use disinfecting products, including foggers, sprays or other types of atomized cleaning agents on any electrical equipment components of any material type: plastic, insulating, molded, painted or metallic unless specifically instructed by the manufacturer of the electrical equipment; and
- If you have specific electrical equipment questions regarding cleaning and disinfection, please contact the equipment manufacturer.

Summarizing, as we have seen, the manufacturers of RV Pedestals generally did not have recommended cleaning instructions. In many instances, the only approved method for cleaning various types of electrical equipment may be to use a lint free, **DRY**, clean cloth, which provides mechanical cleaning but not disinfection. We do what we can.

The NEMA document NEMA GD 4-2020 is a copyrighted document and is available on their website (<https://bit.ly/2Pqj7U3>). ★

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Recent Tax News

Ron Hinkle – TACO Legislative Consultant

Posting some of the worst numbers since the 1980s, Texas Comptroller Glenn Hegar on Monday, June 1st announced that the state saw the biggest year over year drop in sales taxes in a decade. Overall, sales taxes were down 13.2 percent in May compared to the previous May — the largest drop since January of 2010.

Just to give you an idea — oil production taxes saw the worst drop since 1988, hotels saw the worst drop since 1982, and alcohol taxes went down the most they have since 1980.

"The business closures and restrictions and stay-at-home orders due to the COVID-19 pandemic spurred deep drops in collections from restaurants, amusement and recreation services, and physical retail stores," Hegar said. "These declines were offset in part by increases from big box retailers and grocery stores that remained open as essential businesses, online retailers and restaurants that could readily pivot to takeout and delivery service," he said.

"With the easing of state and local government social distancing orders beginning in May, business activity in the sectors most affected by measures to curb the pandemic should begin to slowly recover, but operations resuming at reduced capacity will result in continued reductions in employment, income and activity subject to sales tax for months to come," Hegar said. Here are the big bullet points from the Comptroller's announcement:

- Motor Vehicle Sales and Rental Taxes** — \$265 million, down 38 percent from May 2019 and a modest improvement over April's results;
- Motor Fuel Taxes** — \$221 million, down 30 percent from May 2019 and the steepest drop since 1989;
- Natural Gas Production Tax** — \$31 million, down 76 percent from May 2019;
- Oil Production Tax** — \$90 million, the lowest monthly amount since July 2010, down 75 percent from May 2019 and the steepest drop since a 77 percent drop in March 1988;
- Hotel Occupancy Tax** — \$8 million, down 86 percent from May 2019 and the steepest drop

IMPORTANT NOTICE

Important News about License Expiration Dates and Proposed Rules Propane Meters and Propane Scales

Texas Department of Licensing and Regulation (TDLR) took over the licensing of propane meters effective August 1, 2020. If your meter is current in the license from Texas Department of Agriculture (TDA), that expiration date will be extended by 6 months. A renewal notice will be sent by TDLR 60 days before the expiration of the license. The TDLR license will be a 2-year license (the current fee will double). You must also have the new TDLR sticker posted. The sticker must be posted **IN VIEW OF THE CUSTOMER**. If the sticker will not fit on the front of the meter, it can be posted close to the meter. The cost of the sticker is \$1.00 and can be ordered here: <https://www.tdlr.texas.gov/fmq/fmq.htm#sticker>

Scales for propane sales will still be licensed by TDA. If you receive a renewal notice from TDA for your propane meter and scale that expire before July 31, 2020 you must renew both the scale and meter. For licenses that expire after July 31, 2020 renewals from TDA will be for the scale only.

Outdoor Hospitality and COVID

What does the future look like?



First and foremost, we hope you and your families are healthy and safe during these crazy and stressful times. The Gorin+Cohen team is well and has been working from home since mid-March. We have been busy assisting clients with action plans and PPP strategies, writing a Standards of Operations manual and working on several market analysis and feasibility studies. The time grounded from travel has allowed us to catch up on all the organizational and administrative items you tend to push aside when busy with other projects. Most importantly we have done our best to keep our fingers on the pulse of the industry; attending industry related webinars, reading all the reports and trade info we can get our hands on, and attending the two day “Back to Camping Summit” this past Monday and Tuesday.

My career in the camping industry has not just survived but flourished through 6 recessions including the great recession in 2008 and the first half of 2009. The industry grew each year through gas shortages, high unemployment rates, soaring gas prices, high interest rates, the September 11th attacks, and the subprime mortgage crisis. In fact, throughout my 36 years of operating campgrounds and RV parks, beginning with my first season in 1972 through my last season in 2011, gross revenues and profits increased each year. This said, there were times through certain crisis and recessionary periods where policies and procedures needed to be adapted to achieve this success.

Prior to the pandemic, the outdoor hospitality industry was in the midst of many years of double-digit growth. As the economy reboots and states begin to reopen for business, what does the future hold for the camping and RV industry? No one has a crystal ball to accurately predict the future but let us share some of our thoughts with you regarding the anticipated impact of COVID-19 on the outdoor hospitality industry.

For the most part travel is at a standstill. Cruises are down to nothing; air travel is seeing 5 percent and hotels 10 percent of their respective typical volume. While consumers are eager to travel, they are frightened; fearing for their health, and for many finances are strained. Of all travel options available, camping in their own RV is the most attractive to travelers because it is the safest means to vacation in the COVID world we are living.

Camping naturally lends itself to social distancing. Renting a cabin at a campground or RV resort is more attractive than being in a hotel with rooms side by side, shared corridors, lobbies, elevators, and HVAC systems.

Campgrounds and RV parks are organically adaptable to COVID safety measures, especially compared to other travel options. There is an opportunity for our industry to bring camping into the mainstream of travel, and market to consumers who may have never camped before or even considered camping. KOA's 2020

North American Camping Special Report reveals that 46 percent of all leisure travelers (campers and non-campers) view camping as the safest way to vacation.

Campgrounds, RV parks, RVshare (an online RV rental marketplace) and RV Life (a network of consumer facing camping websites) report reservation traffic has begun to tick up since mid-April. KOA began seeing more reservations than cancellations on April 15th.

Campgrounds that have been allowed to open report sold-out weekends and increased summer reservations. Changes in camping behavior because of COVID are evident. Most people will camp closer to home by choice or because they are confined to camp within their state. Many will choose seasonal or longer extended stays rather than traveling the country as they had planned. Guests making reservations are seeking flexible cancellation policies which at the very least allow credits after booking, contactless transactions, and transparency in the park's COVID safety and cleaning policies.

Many RV manufacturers are back to work. 2020 RV shipments were ahead of 2019 through February. Many RV dealers are reporting steady sales. Camping World stock prices increased by 35 percent. RVshare and other RV rental companies reported record reservations before the March downturn. Since mid-April there has been an uptick in reservations and strong but different growth is projected. Campers are not booking as far in advance as in the past, instead reserving closer to their trip date.

The future of camping is bright. There is strong short-term optimism for August. The fall will be determined by what is happening with the virus come late summer. Post vaccine the outdoor hospitality industry is projecting a surge possibly greater than ever seen.

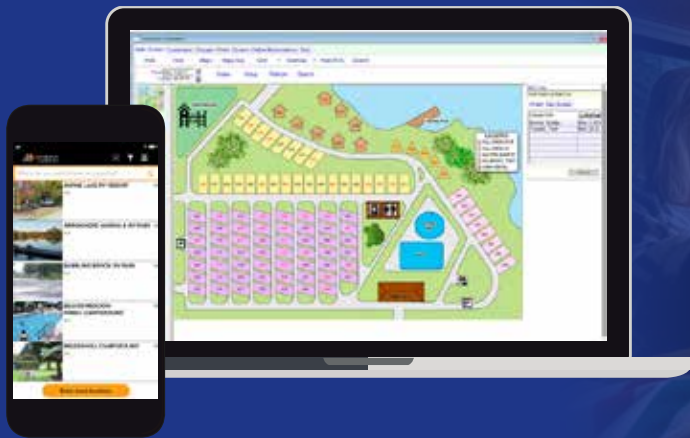
Parks will need to rethink how business looks for the remainder of 2020 and be prepared to change course if needed. Marketing will need to focus more locally even for those in national destinations. Parks which are primarily transient may want to offer more seasonal or extended stays. Delaying repairs and maintenance or capital improvements may be advisable if a park is unsure of their occupancy and cash flow.

The RV and camping industry has had tremendous resiliency during the past economic downturns and proven to be significantly recession resistant. The recommendations for social distancing, staff and guest masks in indoor areas, daily staff health checks, and watching for guests with obvious health issues, and for “staycations” benefits RV parks and campgrounds.

A fundamental reason people purchase RVs is for independent travel. Unlike cruises, where thousands of people are traveling together, and airplane travel,

continued on next page

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Outdoor Hospitality and COVID

continued

where passengers may be exposed to unknown viruses, RVers travel in small family groups in their own vehicles staying in their own RVs. Further, the nature of RVing and camping as an outdoor activity keeps RVers and campers from large gatherings in closed spaces.

In tough times, people still take their vacations, although the way they vacation often changes. The RV and camping industry offers safe and fun alternatives for people who still want to vacation. Consultants expect the RV and camping industry to ride out the current economic downturn and come out of this situation far better than other travel and recreation sectors.

Like campground and RV park operators we at Gorin+Cohen have had to adapt our way of doing business. While nothing replaces visiting an RV park or potential property for development, or meeting with our clients face to face, through the use of modern technology, internet, and phone we have been able to continue with our feasibility studies, operational audits and other services offered. There is no better time to get on our schedule than now. Our schedules will be filling up quickly once travel restrictions are lifted. **Visit www.gorincohenconsulting.com for a full list of services offered.** ★

Jayne Cohen, Principal Gorin+Cohen Consulting Group LLC

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