

# Alton Police Issues First Charges for Violation of Social Gatherings Restrictions

by Dan Brannan, Content Director  
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ALTON - The Alton Police Department announced Monday afternoon that it issued its first criminal complaints after finding several individuals gathering in public this weekend.

Alton Police received several citizen complaints over the last week that Hiram's Tavern, located at 219 W 3<sup>rd</sup> Street in Alton, was continuing to operate on the weekends even

after the Illinois Governor had issued executive order 2020-10, prohibiting “all public and private gatherings of any number of people occurring outside a single household or living unit” on March 20, 2020. Officers had previously investigated the complaints and observed no unauthorized activity, however, on Sunday, April 5, at approximately 1:00 am, several individuals were located inside Hiram’s Tavern in an area outside public view, clearly disregarding the executive order and public pleas for compliance.

A criminal complaint for Reckless Conduct, a Class A Misdemeanor charge, was signed against every person found gathering at the bar, and each will be summoned to court at a later date.

Two of the individuals contacted had warrants for their arrest from other counties, but were released at the scene due to the issuing county’s unwillingness to extradite at this time. The bar’s owner, Hiram Y. Lewis, was found to have an active warrant for his arrest out of Madison County for Domestic Battery and was taken into custody and transported to the Alton Jail.

According to the Illinois Department of Public Health website there are 48 confirmed cases of COVID-19 in Madison County at the time of this release. With Alton being a large community in Madison County, the Alton Police again encourage individuals to adhere to the Stay-At-Home portion of the governor’s executive order and not leave their homes for anything other than those tasks that are absolutely essential.

Alton Police Chief Jason Simmons said, “There seems to be a lot of confusion in our community about why we will, and will not, charge individuals during this time. The Alton Police will not arbitrarily stop vehicles traveling in our community. We will, however, continue to enforce all Illinois laws and protect our community. If members of our community will not protect each other, and will be so brazen as to gather in public places, we will be forced to take action like we did this weekend without hesitation. On the other side of this issue, if you are obeying Illinois laws while traveling for essential purposes, you will not be stopped.”

*All charges, as well as the statements made herein, are based upon probable cause. The defendants are presumed innocent unless proven guilty.*