



freedom of (all) the press?

Impact of "Shelter in Place" Orders on Media Companies

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In today's age, people consume their news in myriad ways: from more traditional means such as watching the nightly news to reading a wide variety of media websites. Many of these organizations require people on the ground to report and deliver the news, and also thrive on the ability to collaborate in-person so as to deliver the news in a timely and compelling way. Yet, as local governments across the country issue "shelter in place" (SIP) orders, media companies are left to determine whether these orders allow them to keep operating as they have, or if such collaboration will have to move into Slack chats, video conferences, and conference calls and whether other essential parts of their business will have to shutter for the time being. And because SIP orders have been issued by city, county, and state governments, there exists a patchwork of requirements and enforcement mechanisms that must be analyzed and adhered to.

The good news is that most SIP orders issued so far have included news and media organizations as "essential" businesses, which may continue operating as normal, in recognition of the need for robust and timely dissemination of information related to the COVID-19 pandemic. However, unlike many other "essential" businesses listed in SIP orders, such as healthcare companies and gas stations, the media industry is not so easily defined.

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