



COMMONWEALTH OF THE NORTHERN MARIANA ISLANDS
OFFICE OF THE GOVERNOR
COMMONWEALTH HEALTHCARE CORPORATION
GOVERNOR'S COVID-19 TASK FORCE



FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

March 23, 2020

Enhanced Social Distancing Directive

Guidance relative to **Directive 14** of the Governor's Public Health Emergency Executive Order

On Monday, March 23, 2020, Governor Ralph DLG. Torres added Directive 14 to his Second Amended Executive Order 2020-04, declaring a continued state of significant emergency and public health emergency for the CNMI due to the COVID-19 pandemic.

The purpose of Directive 14, "**Enhanced Social Distancing Directive**," is to limit public gatherings of people and to prevent potential public exposure of residents to prevent the spread of COVID-19 within the CNMI.

This is meant to protect the lives of the elderly, the sick, and those with preexisting illnesses or underlying medical conditions, who are most vulnerable to severe illness from the virus.

In accordance with the Governor's Enhanced Social Distancing Directive, effective Tuesday, March 24, 2020, all businesses that have facilities open to the general public shall only be open to the public from 6:00 a.m. to 1:00 p.m. Outside of those hours, businesses may not be open to the general public.

WHAT DOES THIS MEAN?

Businesses that will only be open to the public from 6:00 a.m. to 1:00 p.m. include, but are not limited to:

- Grocery stores, retail stores, farmers' markets, street markets, convenience stores, produce stands, and any store that sells household products (such as cleaning and personal care products) and other non-grocery products (such as clothing, electronics, and telecommunication services).
- Hardware stores
- Banks and financial institutions
- Entertainment facilities, movie theaters, skating rinks, children play areas, and arcades
- Laundromats, dry cleaners, and laundry service providers (see **exception** below)
- Hair and nail salons
- Auto-supply, tire shops, auto-repair, and related facilities
- Car dealerships
- Insurance firms
- Businesses engaged in gaming such as the casino, video poker establishments, and e-gaming facilities
- Businesses of the type described in this list

Businesses may only set face-to-face appointments with customers and/or clients within the hours of 6:00 a.m. to 1:00 p.m.

Businesses that do not have high public interaction, such as garbage collection, sanitation services, mailing and delivery services, and businesses of similar type, do not need to follow the time restriction.

After 1:00 p.m., business owners and employers have the discretion to allow their employees to continue working behind closed doors and away from public interaction. Businesses are advised to follow social distancing practices (six feet apart and avoid handshaking and close interactions). Examples include:

- Taking inventory and stocking up supplies within a grocery store for the next day
- Administrative and clerical work
- Strategic planning and logistical planning
- Financial planning, record keeping, and producing budgets
- Small groups (less than 10) of employee training (in line with social distancing)
- Small groups (less than 10) of professional development
- Delivery and pickup of goods and services

Businesses always have the discretion to close operations at 1:00 p.m.

EXCEPTIONS AND MODIFICATIONS

- Business hours of **restaurants, bars, and eateries** are not affected by the time restrictions of Directive 14. However, they are not allowed to have dine-in services. They are only allowed to serve food and beverages to customers to be consumed off-premises, meaning at home or in an area away from public gatherings.
- Restaurants can only serve customers through drive-thru, take-out, curbside pick-up, and delivery options.
- Customers may enter the premises to purchase food or beverages for take-out. However, establishments offering food or beverages for take-out, including food trucks, must ensure that they have an environment where patrons maintain adequate social distancing.
- Businesses located in the airports or hospital are exempt from this Directive.
- **Hotel restaurants** may continue to provide room service and take-out.
- **Catering services** may continue.

In line with social distancing practices, all public parks including Mañagaha Island and the Grotto are hereby closed to the public.

Large public gatherings (more than 10) on beaches are not permitted except that individuals, couples and their children may exercise or recreate on the beach.

Outside of the 6:00 a.m. to 1:00 p.m. hours, **laundromats, dry-cleaners and laundry service providers** may conduct drop-off/pick-up service.

The Commonwealth Healthcare Corporation (CHCC), public and private health clinics, dental clinics and pharmacies are excepted from the restrictive hours but may set hours that, in their judgment, best deal with the COVID-19 threat. Further, these facilities and businesses are encouraged to follow best social distancing practices.

Gas stations may remain open and set their own hours but only for the dispensing of gasoline. If the station has a convenience store, then that store may not be open to the public before 6:00 a.m. or after 1:00 p.m.

ENFORCEMENT

CHCC, in coordination with and with the assistance of the Department of Public Safety, the Department of Commerce, Alcohol Beverage & Tobacco Control Division, the Department of Fire & Emergency Medical Services, and any other necessary commonwealth agency, shall enforce this Directive.

Violators of this Enhanced Social Distancing Directive will be subject to penalties available under the law.

In a statement, Governor Ralph DLG. Torres said:

“Our government has already taken unprecedented steps to protect our families, our loved ones, our man’amko, and our sick. We have already established mandatory quarantine for all incoming travelers, including returning residents and requested FEMA’s help and federal assistance, while working to get more federal help on the way. We also were approved for SBA Economic Injury Disaster Loans for businesses struggling because of the virus. We are asking everyone in the Marianas to take this seriously. I know that if we all work together, help each other out, practice proper hygiene, and promote social distancing, we can beat this virus.”

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