



# **STATEMENT ON GRAND BAHAMA**

**The Most Hon. Dr. Hubert Minnis**

**Prime Minister**

**Tuesday, 21 July 2020**

Good morning.

I am announcing today that after consultation with health and other officials, including officials on Grand Bahama, that Grand Bahama will be placed on a two-week lockdown in order to slow and control the community spread of the COVID-19 virus on this island.

This lockdown will take effect beginning Thursday, the 23<sup>rd</sup> of July at 7 p.m. until Friday the 7<sup>th</sup> of August at 5 a.m.

I note that similar lockdown periods were applied on the island of Bimini and in other countries to help to control the spread of COVID-19.

This measure is absolutely necessary in order to save and to protect the lives of the residents of Grand Bahama.

Epidemiological management of the COVID-19 outbreak in Grand Bahama requires strict adherence to shelter in place to prevent and to control the spread, which will worsen if preventative measures are not taken quickly and adhered to.

After a little more than two months without recording any new cases of COVID-19, Grand Bahama has recently seen a significant increase in cases.

The island has been classified as a COVID-19 hotspot by health officials.

As of Monday the 20<sup>th</sup> of July, health officials have confirmed a total of 59 cases of COVID-19 on Grand Bahama. Fifty-one of those cases have been

recorded since the borders fully re-opened on the 1<sup>st</sup> of July.

Outside of New Providence, Grand Bahama now has the largest number of recorded cases in The Bahamas.

The number of confirmed cases is expected to increase if much of the population continues to fail to practice recommendations for physical distancing,

wearing protective face coverings, and frequent, and thorough, hand washing.

During the period of July 18<sup>th</sup> to July 20<sup>th</sup>, a seven-member team from the Ministry of Health was mobilized on Grand Bahama to assist with identification, testing and mapping of contacts for characterization of the epidemiological situation following the significant increase in the number of

confirmed COVID-19 cases on that island.

The team also provided public health and clinical support.

During my National Address this past Sunday, I announced a number of restrictive measures for Grand Bahama to help control the spread of COVID-19 on the island.



I advised that if efforts to decrease the number of cases were unsuccessful, other restrictive measures may be recommended, including a lockdown beginning Friday the 24<sup>th</sup> of July.

However, based on the advice of health officials and the confirmation of 20 new cases of COVID-19 on Grand Bahama just yesterday, the decision was made to increase restrictive measures as soon as practicable.

Effective this evening, the 21<sup>st</sup> of July 2020, at 6pm all domestic flights in and out of Grand Bahama will cease.

Residents are urged to make the necessary preparations for the lockdown.

I want to assure the residents of Grand Bahama that there are adequate food supplies on the island at all of the food stores.

It is important that residents do not overcrowd the food stores as this may contribute to the spread of COVID-19.

During the lockdown, food stores will be allowed to operate Monday to Friday from 7am to 5pm.

Pharmacies, water depots and gas stations will be allowed to operate

Monday to Friday from 7am to 1pm for the general public.

The Grand Bahama Humane Society and waste disposal and sanitation companies will be permitted to open Monday to Friday 7am to 1pm for the general public.

Food stores, pharmacies, gas stations and water depots will be allowed

to operate on Saturdays 7am to 1pm for essential workers only.

Exempted persons include:

- Essential services workers at:
  - The Rand Memorial Hospital and other public health and medical facilities
  - Quarantine Centre
  - Royal Bahamas Police Force
  - Royal Bahamas Defence Force
  - NEMA
  - OPBAT

-Department of Correctional  
Services

-Department of Immigration

-Customs Department

-Ministry of Environment and  
Housing

- Members of the National Food Distribution Task Force, Grand Bahama Food Distribution Centres and NGOs for the purpose of food distribution;

- Industrial businesses, including

-Polymers International;

-Grand Bahama Power Company;

-Grand Bahama Utility Company;

-Bradford Grand Bahama Limited;

-PharmaChem Technologies G.B.

Ltd. and subcontractors;

-Freeport Container Port Ltd;

-Bahama Rock - Martin Marietta;

-Buckeye Bahamas Hub Ltd and

subcontractors;

-Grand Bahama Shipyard;

-Bahamas Industrial Technologies

Ltd.;

-Bahamian Brewery;

-Tropical Shipping;

-MSC Bahamas;

-Freeport Aggregates Ltd; and

-Quality Services Ltd.

- Print and electronic media, security guard companies, Grand Bahama



Airport Company and Air Traffic  
Controllers.

Construction activity related to  
hurricane restoration and hurricane  
preparedness will be permitted.

If supplies are needed application  
should be made to the Competent  
Authority.

I want to encourage residents to get their construction supplies before the lockdown comes into effect. Permission to purchase supplies during the lockdown will only be granted for emergency purposes.

Religious services may be held virtually, only.

Funerals may be held but at the graveside only, with a maximum number of 10 people, including the officiant.

I want to urge the residents of Grand Bahama to follow the guidelines that are being put in place for their protection and the protection of their family members and loved ones.

You should not leave your home during the week unless you have to

purchase food, water, medicine or for some other essential purpose, or you are an essential worker.

During Saturdays and Sundays, a complete lockdown will be in place.

Residents should not leave their homes for any purpose, unless you are an essential worker or in the case of an emergency.

As previously stated, Grand Bahama's domestic borders will close tonight, and its international borders will be closed to all incoming and outgoing flights and sea vessels to and from Grand Bahama, except for emergencies and to transport essential services and goods, effective Wednesday the 22<sup>nd</sup> of July 2020.

The Government of The Bahamas will do all that it can to assist those in need of help during the two-week period.

The National Food Distribution Task Force and the Department of Social Services are making arrangements to ensure that food needs will be met during the lockdown.

It is anticipated that food vouchers will be distributed to 14,000 residents.

Additional support, security and enforcement of the lockdown will be

provided by the Royal Bahamas Police Force.

Various measures are being taken to ensure the safety of essential workers on the island, including the use of PPEs.

Health officials will respond to any health-related matters about this lockdown.

A lockdown like this is not something that would have been preferred.

But it is absolutely necessary because things will get much worse on Grand Bahama if we don't take this strong measure now.

I know that a measure like this even further disrupts daily life and economic activity.



But we are in an emergency situation.

We must work now to stop the spread of the virus on Grand Bahama before it gets even more out of control.

Time is of the essence.

I ask the residents of Grand Bahama to cooperate with health and other officials to prepare for the lockdown and

to adhere to these measures over the next two weeks.

I thank the residents of Grand Bahama in advance for their cooperation.

The lockdown measures will be strictly enforced in order to save lives and to protect the general health of the residents of Grand Bahama.

I thank officials on Grand Bahama and New Providence who are helping to coordinate this lockdown period.

Before I end, I would like to clarify a point I made during my National Address on Sunday.

I noted that the 14-day quarantine period required for Bahamians and residents returning to The Bahamas without a negative RT-PCR COVID-19

test would be counted as vacation for public servants.

I also noted that if vacation time was not an option, the public servant's salary would be deducted.

To be clear, this applies only to those required to quarantine upon return from traveling abroad who do not have the required COVID-19 negative test result.

This does not apply to other circumstances where quarantine may be required by health officials.

I would also like to be clear that while international commercial flights and commercial sea vessels with passengers will not be permitted to enter The Bahamas, except for commercial flights from Canada, the United Kingdom and the European Union, starting tomorrow at midnight – private international flights and charters,

pleasure craft and yachts will continue to be permitted to enter The Bahamas (with the exception of Grand Bahama) from all countries, including the United States.

Thank you and good morning.

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