



COMMONWEALTH of the NORTHERN MARIANA ISLANDS
OFFICE OF THE GOVERNOR

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

March 2, 2020

Governor Torres strengthens CNMI's ongoing screening and prevention of coronavirus
CNMI remains coronavirus-free

Governor Ralph DLG. Torres and Lt. Governor Arnold I. Palacios continue to lead government efforts in screening passengers from affected countries and preventing the spread of the COVID-19 (coronavirus) outbreak in the CNMI.

As of March 2, 2020, there is no confirmed presence of COVID-19 on the islands of Saipan, Tinian, and Rota.

"The CNMI remains coronavirus-free, but we are strengthening our ongoing efforts to screen passengers from affected countries, most especially South Korea," said Governor Torres.

"Our administration has been working closely with the White House in implementing additional measures to safeguard our Commonwealth. Last Friday, we issued Executive Order 2020-02, which continues our emergency protective measures for response, quarantine, and containment of the disease. Public health is our top priority, and we will continue to keep our residents safe," said Governor Torres.

Governor Torres will be joining governors from around the United States in a conference call early Tuesday morning with Vice President Mike Pence and White House officials to discuss national efforts to monitor and contain the spread of coronavirus in the US. Vice President Pence leads the President's Coronavirus Task Force.

In late January, the CNMI was the first US state or territory to locally take proactive action and preventative measures against the coronavirus and any other illnesses. The Office of the Governor, in collaboration with the Commonwealth Healthcare Corporation (CHCC), Marianas Visitors Authority (MVA), Commonwealth Ports Authority (CPA), and the CNMI Division of Customs established local protocols and procedures to prevent the coronavirus from entering the CNMI. Accordingly, proactive health screening began to take place at all CNMI ports of entry.

Whole-of-Government Approach

The Governor's Coronavirus Task Force, led by CHCC, will continue to lead the administration's efforts to screen and prevent the spread of the coronavirus, monitor the economic impact to the CNMI, and ensure all CNMI residents have the most accurate and updated health and travel information. The Office of the Governor will continue working with the White House and the nation's governors on national protective measures.

CHCC is working with the US Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) and the World Health Organization (WHO) on prevention and quarantine guidelines, as well as on accurate public information. As cases of coronavirus continue to rise across the globe, CHCC has elevated efforts on preventative and precautionary measures with increased Airport Surveillance, and screening at our CHCC entry points (Family Care Clinic & Emergency Room) to safeguard patient intake should a case present itself on island. During a communicable disease outbreak, CHCC has the responsibility and authority to issue orders of Isolation & Quarantine to prevent the spread of a communicable disease.

The following primary and secondary sites/facilities have been identified in the CNMI to prevent or limit the transmission of this disease:

Saipan

Primary: CHCC Mobile/Inflatable Tents, Navy Hill

Secondary: Juvenile Detention Facility, Kagman III

Healthcare Workers & Frontline Responders Isolation Areas

Primary: Transitional Living Center, Navy Hill

Secondary: HOPE Recovery Center, Marpi

Tinian

Primary: Gymnasium, San Jose

Secondary: Public Library, San Jose

Rota

Primary: Round House, Songsong

Secondary: Elementary School, Sinapalo

CPA continues monitoring all ports of entry with the US Customs and Border Protection. The CPA Board of Directors recently approved the purchase of a thermal scanner to screen incoming passengers.

MVA will continue monitoring all visitor source markets and passenger flow, while maintaining its communication with travel agencies and airline partners.

“We continue to work with our federal partners in implementing additional screening efforts that assist our ongoing measures. We have been doing an effective job in our local screening so far, but we will be ramping up our border security with the help of our federal partners,” said Lt. Governor Palacios.

Governor Torres and Lt. Governor Palacios noted that the coronavirus will have “unprecedented effects” on the CNMI’s economy and government budget.

“Our tourism industry has already taken a major hit with the loss of the China market, and our South Korea market has already seen thousands of flight cancellations. To be clear about this, no

tourists coming in means no revenue for all government services. This unanticipated virus will have unprecedented effects on our entire economy and our budget,” said Governor Torres.

“Here is the reality: this virus is affecting the entire global market. Every country is seeing a downturn. We are an island economy in a vulnerable region, and the global economic effects worsen our current situation,” said Lt. Governor Palacios.

Governor Torres said he will continue to work with the White House and other federal partners on the determination of a timeline for control of the virus and returning to economic normalcy.

“Our top priority is the health and safety of the CNMI. This is not a moment for panic or alarm. It is a moment to come together as one Commonwealth and continue to be vigilant and follow proper hygiene for yourselves and your families,” said Governor Torres.

CNMI residents are advised to take precautions now by practicing good hygiene practices:

- It is flu season, and CDC recommends getting a flu vaccine.
- Wash hands often with soap and water for at least 20 seconds. Use an alcohol-based hand sanitizer if soap and water are not available.
- Cover your mouth and nose with a tissue or your sleeve (not your hands) when coughing or sneezing.
- Stay home or seek medical attention if you are not feeling well.
- Communicate with friends and family on personal hygiene and caring for each other if sick.

#