



**COVID – 19 UPDATE**  
**The Hon. Renee Ming, JP, MP**  
*Minister of National Security*  
**December 22, 2020**

Thank you Premier.

This evening, I will touch on matters to do with the Department of Corrections, the Bermuda Police Service, the Royal Bermuda Regiment, and the Customs Department.

First and foremost I wish to extend my appreciation to all of our officers in these Departments, as well as to the Disaster Risk Reduction Mitigation (DRRM) Team, who under very strained conditions ensured that our emergency services continued operating during the island-wide blackout last Friday.

This national event caused considerable anxiety throughout our community.

And we're thankful that all of our uniformed services continued to safeguard and protect the public under extraordinary circumstances.

Turning to Department of Corrections, I can advise that all our facilities continue to operate without major disruptions or incidents.

The department continues to manage our current Covid-19 cases in accordance with Department of Health guidelines and in keeping with the Department of Corrections' pandemic plan.

And the department will continue the regular COVID-19 testing of staff and inmates at all our facilities.

I should note that all visit by members of the public to our facilities have been suspended until the end of this year.

We will review the reinstatement of visitation in January 2021.

Lastly, I want to once again reassure the public that we're taking all of the necessary actions and precautions to ensure that those who work and reside at our facilities are safeguarded and protected.

Switching to the Bermuda Police Service, I advised last week that the COVID Compliance Team have stepped up their efforts in ensuring the community's compliance with COVID-19 regulations.

Regrettably 10 persons were cited for various breaches of the regulations.

As it relates to the COVID-19 violations, I want to be clear about the process, as there's been some commentary as to why there aren't immediate arrests and subsequent prosecutions.

Simply put, if a breach occurs at a check point, or at an establishment, or at another location, the BPS doesn't make an arrest, as they have no powers of arrest under the regulations.

Instead, they will take the requisite information or details of the person or persons in violation.

A file is then compiled and sent to the Department of Prosecutions.

The DPP considers whether there needs to be any further action, such as a court appearance.

Make no mistake though, the Bermuda Police Service have a mandate to enforce the regulations and will continue to do so even over the holiday period.

As a reminder, this weekend, the BPS conduct their road sobriety checkpoints, which will also take place over the New Year's holiday.

So again, we're urging the public to make sensible choices.

This includes exercising safe and responsible driving habits on our roads.

Sadly, this is the time of year, when we tend to see increases in road traffic collisions and anti-social behaviour associated with alcohol.

So we're urging people not to drink and drive, or make sure they have a designated driver.

Also I can advise that the Bermuda Coast Guard will have an operational presence across the Island's waters throughout the holiday period, enforcing all regulations.

Boat operators are reminded of the updated laws regarding drink driving on the water, and to always act in a manner which puts everyone's safety first.

Additionally, boaters are reminded of the current maritime restrictions that prohibit recreational use between 6.00 p.m. and 5.00 a.m., as well as a maximum gathering of 10 persons.

Rounding out the public safety briefing, I'd like to share some crime prevention tips, as this is the time of the year when we see an increase in residential break-ins.

- Residents are encouraged to always lock their doors and windows when leaving home, even for a few minutes. If leaving home for an extended period of time, ask a neighbour or family member to watch the house. Displays of holiday gifts should not be visible through windows or doors.
- Be aware that criminals sometimes pose as couriers or persons soliciting donations for charitable causes. Always ask for identification and ask how the donated funds will be used. If you're not satisfied, do not donate. Only donate to recognised charitable organisations.
- When out shopping, avoid carrying large amounts of cash, and where possible pay for purchases by cheque, credit or debit card.
- Keep car doors locked and windows closed when you are away from the vehicle. And don't leave purchases in the car seat, instead lock them in the trunk.
- Further crime prevention advice can be found on Bermuda Police Service website at [bermudapolice.bm](http://bermudapolice.bm).

Finally, I will end with an update from the Customs Department.

The 2020 holiday season has been an extraordinarily busy time for Customs, with residents importing courier packages from abroad in record numbers.

This is in part due to the reduction in overseas travel by residents.

We understand the public's eagerness to have their packages cleared as swiftly and as efficiently as possible.

However Customs must also carefully balance their approach to prevent the cross border movement of contraband such as firearms, illicit drugs and criminal proceeds.

But in light of the increase of imported packages, Customs has modified their operational measures:

**To that end Customs has:**

- Maintained communication with all courier services to discuss troubleshoot critical issues and enacted solutions where needed.
- Maintained peak staffing levels by transferring staff from other areas of the Department to assist in Courier operations.
- Used non-intrusive inspection technology, such as x-ray and drug detector dogs to assist in the examination of arriving packages and thereby reducing the time spent on physical inspections.
- Taken steps to expedite the clearance of sensitive materials and emergency medical shipments.
- Relaxed the requirement for non-commercial importers to register for a Customs Automated Processing System or CAPS ID Number. The deadline for registration has been pushed back to 31<sup>st</sup> January 2021.
- And lastly Customs has allowed Courier Services to use the temporary CAPS number "999999" for declaring personal goods.

Again, we understand the public's desire in seeking to clear their imported goods and packages as quickly as possible.

But our Customs Officers are doing their level best to assist where they can and within reason.

It's hoped that the public can appreciate our need to balance our clearance protocols and our need to ensure the national security of our borders.

Thank you.