



COVID-19 PRESS BRIEFING

The Hon. Wayne M. Caines, JP, MP
Minister of National Security

MAY 28, 2020

As we approach the holiday weekend and we begin to witness more activity, the Bermuda Police Service and the Royal Bermuda Regiment will maintain a regular presence around Bermuda.

The Royal Bermuda Regiment will triple their force on land and sea over the long weekend, establishing visibility in public places and stronger enforcement of the evening curfew.

Although the community has been generally compliant with laws and regulations thus far, there is an expectation that the use of boats, beaches and parks will increase during this period.

Whilst it is usually a time for families to gather in their dozens, they are reminded that group sizes are clearly defined in law, and all personnel are expected to comply.

The Coast Guard will continue its 24-hour a day coverage, taking particular interest in boat movements in the early morning, and where raft-ups are common.

Coast Guard jet skis will be out each day to monitor public behaviour on the water, and the BPS is expected to utilise drone capability in the Great Sound.

Boat operators and passengers are reminded that they are to be off the water by 7pm.

Any vessel found to be in use for recreational reasons after that time will be considered in breach of the law, even if they are returning to their dock or mooring. Here are some other holiday weekend guidelines that the public should be aware of:

Boats and watercrafts:

- All vessels must be off the water by 7:00pm.
- Only 10 person maximum on board including the crew, all should be exercising physical distancing in and out of the water.
- There should be NO raft-ups.

Public Beaches and Parks:

- There should be no overnight camping.
- The public should still be exercising physical distancing in the water and on land.
- The Police and Regiment will be patrolling the beaches and parks to ensure compliance, even while swimming.

Restaurants:

- Outdoor dining only.
- Guests must provide their personal details to restaurant staff.
- Guests must be masked until seated.
- The public can report breaches by calling 211.

I'd like to now turn to the matter of Immigration.

The Ministry of National Security has been flooded with questions from the public and our business sectors about the status of Immigration during the COVID-19 landscape. Here is what I can advise.

On Monday, June 1st the Department of Immigration will receive all types of applications for processing – this includes work permits, passports, land licenses, Bermudian Status, naturalization, PRCs, and more.

All application submissions will be via drop box.

ALL incomplete applications will be returned via regular mail.

Applicants are encouraged to ensure their applications are complete at initial submission. If they have doubts they should contact the Chief Immigration Officer (dwming@gov.bm) or the Assistant Chief Immigration Officer (magrimes@gov.bm).

Completed Passports will be mailed via registered mail, and Visitor's Extensions will continue to be processed at the L.F. Wade International Airport.

The Department will maintain its online banking payment process.

I'd like to now outline the submission guidelines for applications in the Personal Services Section. New Applications will be accepted starting June 1st.

This includes applications for Bermudian Status, Permanent Resident's Certificate, Extension of Ex-Spouse's Employment Rights, Permissions to Let, Land Licences, Annual Basis, Residential Certificates, Spousal Letters, Naturalisation, British Nationality, Deferral Certificates, and requests for copies of documents.

The Process:

Completed applications; including supporting documents should be put in the dropbox provided.

- Your application will be vetted for completeness.
- Applicants will be contacted and advised that their application can be processed or if information remains outstanding.
- If no additional information is needed, applicants will be instructed to pay the fee online and submit the application via the drop box.
- If additional information is required, the applicant must satisfy this before re-submitting the application via email for re-vetting.

Passport Applications:

Expired Passports will be accepted starting Monday June 1, 2020.

There will be no requirement for counter-signatories for persons 16 and older.
The passport process is as follows:

- Completed applications; including supporting documents should be put in the dropbox provided.
- Your application will be vetted for completeness.
- Applicants will be contacted and advised that their application can be processed or if information remains outstanding.
- If no additional information is needed, applicants will be instructed to pay the fee online and submit the application via the drop box.
- If additional information is required, the applicant must satisfy this before re-submitting the application via email for re-vetting.

New Passports (First-time Applicants) will be accepted on Monday June 1.
Counter-signatories are still needed for new passport applications.
The process:

- Completed applications; including supporting documents should be put in the drop box provided.
- Your application will be vetted for completeness.
- Applicants will be contacted and advised that their application can be processed or if information remains outstanding.
- If no additional information is needed, applicants will be instructed to pay the fee online and submit the application via an appointment.
- If additional information is required, the applicant must satisfy this before re-submitting the application via email for re-vetting.

Any requirements for face-to-face interactions with customers will be by appointment only. On such occasions all customers and Immigration staff must wear a mask and gloves.
Turning to the area of work permits.

For work permits that will expire between June 1, 2020 and September 1, 2020, work permit holders can continue to work without penalty or the need for an appeal to the Minister responsible for Immigration.

Lastly, while this Government recognizes the significance and sensitivities associated with the topic of immigration, as a country we are facing times of the likes we have never seen before.

The COVID-19 pandemic has resulted in business and economic uncertainty and widespread unemployment globally.

Consequently, here at home, as we progress forward, we will need to review, reassess and reevaluate our immigration policies and procedures in order to adapt to these unprecedented times.

More specifically, we will now be closely scrutinizing our work permit policy as there are a significant number of Bermudians who are unemployed.

We must now look at closing certain categories.

Quite frankly, permission to reside and seek employment is going to be assessed on a case by case basis.

Employers and guest workers must understand that in this current climate, work permit approvals are not guaranteed.

In instances where there are clearly opportunities for hiring Bermudians, work permits will be denied.

And as a result in some of these cases, guest workers may need to leave the island if their work permit is not granted.

We will make every effort to balance the need for work permit holders who provide specialized services to remain in those roles.

However, in these cases, the local business must provide training, development and succession planning for Bermudians to take over in these roles.

Bermudians also have a responsibility.

They must retrain where necessary, and they must be willing to work in other areas of industry that they may not be used to.

Ultimately, this Government has a responsibility to ensure Bermudians have access to employment opportunities.

We've heard the heartache of our people who have been left without work due to COVID-19.

We've heard the devastating accounts of Bermudian families who during the economic shut down have been desperately trying to make ends meet; who have been desperately trying to pay mortgages and

rent; and who have been desperately trying to put food on the table for their children.

These are real accounts from people who we know --- our brothers, our sisters, our close family members, our neighbours and our friends.

So this Government is urging our businesses as they reopen – to consider hiring out of work Bermudians to provide a service in their establishments.

If a Bermudian can do that job instead of a guest worker, than the Bermudian worker should take precedence.

During this time of uncertainty, we must all do our part to help and support one another.

And our businesses have a significant role to play in ensuring that Bermudians are employed. Finally, the public is reminded that they can report any immigration breaches via the Tip Line at 296-5202 or they can call 295-5151, ext. 3514, 3515, 1951 or 1694.

Thank you.