

## **Cook Islands moves to Code Yellow Alert**

**24 March 2020**

The Cook Islands will move to Code Yellow alert at 6pm Wednesday 25 March as the country implements its COVID-19 emergency response plan.

Secretary of Health Dr Josephine Aumea Herman says the escalation from Code Blue to Code Yellow signals health officials have reasonable grounds to believe there is a suspected case of COVID-19 in our community.

“Code Yellow means COVID-19 is contained but the risk of community transmission is growing. At this stage, preventative measures implemented early can slow the transmission of infection and reduce the peak number of cases. We’re aiming to flatten the curve and slow the spread of the disease, but this will rely heavily on community action and participation. We urge people to stay home whenever possible, especially when you are sick, avoid public spaces and cut down gatherings of more than 10 people,” she says.

### **Code Yellow advice to the public**

- Maintain handwashing and cough hygiene etiquette
- Stock up on food, water and medicines for two weeks in case you are required to stay home in quarantine or isolation
- Make arrangements to work from home if possible
- Avoid kissing, hugging or shaking hands with others
- Stay at home and avoid public spaces and others
- If you have fever, cough, or shortness of breath/breathing difficulties - please stay at home and free call the Healthline for advice on 0800 1800, 0800 1801 or 0800 1802
- Avoid or defer non-essential and non-urgent travel overseas and to the Pa Enea
- Be kind to others and remember one day it could be you
- Cooperate with health officials and your local Puna
- Visit [www.covid19.gov.ck](http://www.covid19.gov.ck) for up to date information

### **Code Yellow measures include:**

- National Emergency Operations Centre resourced 24/7
- Health professionals on standby as needed
- Essential services will be maintained such as food, water, energy, waste disposal, mortuary services, financial services, law enforcement, ICT, transport, infrastructure
- Parliament on standby to pass enabling legislation under urgency
- Te Marae Ora to monitor flu-like symptoms presenting over phone
- Testing lab samples overseas and plans to expand testing capability in-country
- Border measures and travel restrictions assessed and revised as needed
- Cargo staging areas to minimise interactions between cargo handlers at ports and workers in country
- Strict infection control procedures observed and regular decontamination
- Personal Protective Equipment (PPE) stocked
- Additional resources and finances mobilised as needed

- Puna are mobilised as needed to support the community

ENDS: Enquiries to Jaewynn McKay +682 55486

## **ADDITIONAL NOTES**

### Key measures introduced in recent days

#### **10 community Punas have been activated**

Across Rarotonga, 10 Punas have been activated to engage with the people in their immediate communities. Each Puna has been allocated a number of qualified medical health experts to assist with your most vital health and social needs. They will provide guidance to prevent infection and the spread of this virus.

#### **Emergency services have shifted to Tupapa Clinic**

We've shifted our emergency service to free up capacity for a possible influx of high-need patients. The Tupapa Clinic will now provide emergency medical care – and the hospital's emergency department is closed. We've also closed the 'coughs and colds' flu clinic at Tupapa. If you have symptoms like fever, cough, or shortness of breath - please stay at home and call the free of charge 0800 Healthline for advice: phone 0800 1800, 0800 1801 or 0800 1802.

#### **Penalties will be enforced for anyone not complying with new quarantine rules**

Quarantine for any traveler entering the Cook Islands is not optional - it's now mandatory for everyone. Both residents and visitors must quarantine for 14 days on arrival. Any breach will be liable for a \$10,000 fine or up to 12 months imprisonment.

#### **Pa Enea travel restrictions**

New regulations restrict travel between Rarotonga and the Pa Enea (outer islands), and among the outer islands, for all persons unless that person has been in supervised quarantine for at least 14 days prior to their scheduled departure.

#### **Bars and nightclubs close**

The liquor licences for Bars and nightclubs are cancelled until further notice - licenses have been suspended to strengthen health and safety measures in public places. This prevents people from congregating in large groups and helps support social distancing and public health hygiene practices. Restaurant owners are recommended to sell take away food only: observing the hygiene protocols that have been widely publicised.

#### **Police licensing services suspended**

To support the country's COVID-19 measures, Police have suspended the following services until further notice:

1. Driver's Licence testing
2. Issuing and renewal of Driver's Licences
3. Due diligence reports
4. Issuing and renewal of permits for raffles, housie, importation of firearm and ammunition, importation of dog
5. Issuing and renewal of Transport Licenses
6. Issuing and renewal of Liquor Licences
7. Liquor Licensing Authority and Transport Licensing Authority meetings

