



Saba to close for visitors, non-essential travel

Currently, there are no (suspected) cases of COVID-19 corona virus on Saba. In order to keep this disease at bay, also in light of the island's vulnerability and limited medical capacity, the Public Entity Saba has decided to take a number of additional measures following a meeting of the Emergency Management Team.

Per Monday, March 16th, Saba will be closed for visitors and non-essential travel. This goes for both the harbor and the airport. An exception will be made for medical specialists and for island residents who want to return home, announced Island Governor Jonathan Johnson in a public address on Sunday morning. He assured that as long as flights and boats came to Saba, it would be possible for residents to come home.

However, returning residents will be subject to some conditions. All incoming residents will need to go into self-quarantine for 14 days when they are traveling back from countries or islands originating outside of the six Dutch Caribbean islands.

If residents are returning from Aruba, Curaçao, St. Maarten, Bonaire or St. Eustatius, and if they have not traveled to other countries or islands within the past 14 days, self-quarantine will not be needed. These persons will have to limit social interactions and monitor for symptoms closely. This is subject to change as the situation develops. Residents on Saba are asked not to travel unless it's absolutely necessary. This is in line with the advice of international health organizations.

Cargo, ferries continue

Cruise boats can not come to Saba for the rest of the high season. As for ferries, it was decided that the Edge and the Dawn are able to continue traveling with residential passengers. Residents are reminded that the ferries' schedules may change due to the decrease in demand. Cargo boats will remain welcome. Johnson explained that that government has been in contact with the supermarkets to share updates from both sides.

Chronically and critically ill patients will be contacted by medical personnel with instructions for the upcoming weeks. The hospitality sector and other parts of the business community will also be contacted to discuss the measures which will be implemented and the effects they may cause. The Saba University School of Medicine has also been contacted to discuss measures which will be implemented.

Schools remain open

Schools will remain open for now. "We see that other countries are closing their schools. Most of these countries have serious outbreaks, so they are minimizing the social contacts wherever possible. That is not the case on Saba. The decision is that we will continue our normal life as much as possible, with the inclusion of the prevention measures. The schools will stay open for now. This might change if/when there is a (suspected) case and if so, the public will be updated accordingly," stated Johnson.

Visitors who are already on the island are reminded that they can get stranded on the island because of travel restrictions generally being applied around the globe, and as such are advised to make additional travel plans.

Personal hygiene

Johnson urged everyone, residents and visitors, to keep focusing on personal hygiene as this is essential in preventing and containing the virus. People should wash their hands regularly, sneeze or cough in their elbow, don't touch their face, avoid hand shakes and limit cash going from hand to hand. People are asked to pay with their bank card or to put cash on the countertop whenever possible. Also, clean surfaces and objects that are touched often more regularly.

"If you begin to display symptoms which are related to COVID-19, such as fever, shortness of breath and coughing, do not go to work or school. Do not go into the hospital. Instead, call the hospital to describe your illness and you will receive instructions on how to proceed. Keep a distance of two meters from persons who are displaying symptoms," stated Johnson.

"These measures are to help prevent the introduction of COVID 19 on Saba. We want to prevent a complete lock-down, and to also protect the vulnerable members of our community, we ask you to follow our instructions to help us achieve this. This means don't travel unless it's absolutely necessary. Being an isolated island also presents the opportunity to implement measures which mitigate the risk of COVID-19 entering Saba. Our health is our priority."

Work together

Johnson said it was important for the community to come together to help ensure the success of the necessary measures. "With your cooperation, we will stand together as the resilient people that we are. We must all work together to ensure that the introduction of COVID-19 to Saba is prevented as long as possible. As a community, we should combine our efforts, help each other as needed and work towards the common goal of keeping Saba safe and free of COVID-19."

The community is urged to stay informed, but to do so only from reliable sources. Government will continue to provide updates on a regular basis. "We will inform you of any necessary changes or additional measures if/when they are decided on. The situation surrounding COVID-19 continues to develop rapidly, which means that each day the situation changes and our measures may have to change also," stated Johnson.