



COMMONWEALTH OF THE NORTHERN MARIANA ISLANDS
OFFICE OF THE GOVERNOR
COMMONWEALTH HEALTHCARE CORPORATION
GOVERNOR'S COVID-19 TASK FORCE



FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

March 28, 2020

**Two cases confirmed positive for COVID-19
Hours for grocery stores adjusted**

Governor Ralph DLG. Torres, the Governor's COVID-19 Task Force, and the Commonwealth Healthcare Corporation (CHCC) announced on Saturday that two specimens sent to Guam Public Health Laboratory has been confirmed positive for COVID-19.

The cases include one male, 42 yrs. old, and one female, 49 yrs. old. They are presently isolated at the quarantine facility at the Kanoa Resort after presenting symptoms on March 26, 2020 at CHCC. As a result, CHCC has already initiated contact tracing for the most immediate contacts which include close family members, friends, and members of a faith-based organization. The Governor's COVID-19 Task Force and CHCC are monitoring their health closely while in quarantine. Both of these cases are linked to travel into Saipan.

One individual traveled from Guam on March 12, 2020 and the other individual traveled to Tinian on March 13, 2020 and returned to Saipan on March 14, 2020. Both cases noted that they began showing symptoms on or around March 17, 2020 and sought care at CHCC on March 25 and 26, 2020, respectively.

Both cases were determined to meet the CDC person under investigation criteria. Specimens were obtained on March 27, 2020 and submitted to Guam Public Health Laboratory which confirmed positive COVID-19 today.

"Since January, we have done everything to be proactive as a government and implement strict social distancing procedures to keep you, your families, our man'amko, and our loved ones with pre-existing illnesses safe," said Governor Torres.

"Now more than ever, we ask everyone in our community to stay at home and leave only for quick trips to the grocery store or to pick up food. We will be putting in place measures to ensure no public social gatherings at the beaches and parks. This will be enforced by our DPS officers in coordination with our COVID-19 Task Force."

"Let us continue to practice social distancing, staying six feet apart in public areas and avoiding contact with our man'amko and our loved who have chronic illnesses. Staying home means we can save lives of the people we love the most," said Governor Torres.

Hours of Operation for Grocery Stores

Governor Torres announced Saturday that effective Sunday, March 29, 2020, all grocery stores will be open from 6:00 a.m. to 6:00 p.m. under the conditions that social distancing is strictly implemented.

This includes posting of “one-way” flow signs for entrance and “one-way” flow signs for exit; maintaining crowd control; and ensuring there are visible customer line-up markers that are six feet apart leading to the cashier counter. Retail establishments must regularly and frequently clean all surfaces; sanitize main entrance door handles; sanitize handles of shopping baskets and shopping carts; sanitize handles for chill boxes, coolers, and freezers.

Grocery stores will also be mandated to limit their capacity within their facilities to 50% of their permitted occupancy, as set by the Department of Public Works (DPW) Building Code.

The CNMI Department of Commerce, in coordination with the Governor’s COVID-19 Task Force and CHCC, will enforce the social distancing requirements stated above at stores and retail establishments. Failure to comply with such requirements will result in the closure of the establishment until such time that all deficiencies have been corrected.

Stay at Home, Stop the Spread

Everyone in the Marianas is encouraged to:

- **PLEASE STAY HOME** and avoid unnecessary travel as much as possible.
- **WORK OR DO SCHOOLWORK FROM HOME** whenever possible and reasonable.
- **AVOID SOCIAL GATHERINGS** in groups of more than 10.
- **USE DRIVE-THRU, TAKE-OUT, or DELIVERY OPTIONS** when buying food from a restaurant.
- **CONTINUE PRACTICING GOOD HYGIENE:**
 - 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.
 - Avoid touching your face.
 - Disinfect frequently used items (cellphones, computers, household items) as much as possible.

IF YOU FEEL SICK or IF SOMEONE IN YOUR HOME IS SICK, please contact your personal doctor or call the COVID-19 INFO LINE at 285—1352, 1542, 1672, or 1854.

IF YOU ARE AN OLDER PERSON (MAN'AMKO), you are more vulnerable to becoming severely ill with the virus. Please stay home and away from other people as much as possible.

IF YOU ARE A PERSON WITH A PREEEXISTING ILLNESS (such as ASTHMA, DIABETES, AND HEART DISEASE), you are more vulnerable to becoming severely ill with the virus.

Rumor Control – Stop the Spread of Misinformation

During crises like this, oftentimes the spread of misinformation is just as dangerous as the virus itself. The CNMI is reminded to only share official and verified notices, press releases, and advisories from the Governor's COVID-19 Task Force and CHCC.

For media inquiries, contact the Governor's COVID-19 Task Force at covid-19@gov.mp.

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