

Minister Nkosazana Dlamini Zuma: Amendment of Level 3 Coronavirus COVID-19 Regulations

13 Jul 2020

Briefing notes by Dr Nkosazana Dlamini Zuma on the amended enhance Level 3 COVID-19 Regulations

Colleagues;

Members of the fourth estate;

Compatriots.

Thank you for taking the time for us to elaborate on the added measures announced by the President which we Gazetted last night. Indeed, we are rapidly approaching the eye of the storm. With over 276 242 total cases and 12 058 new infections between Saturday and Sunday, South Africa is now amongst the most infected countries in the world, with a death toll of over 4 000.

The situation would have been far worse, had we not taken extra ordinary and precautionary measures. Despite this, we are burying fathers, mothers, breadwinners, sons, daughters and relatives on a daily basis. Over the past week in our portfolio we buried Her Majesty the Regent of the Amarharhabe and the MEC for Cooperative Governance in the North West. This morning we received the sad news of the passing of Ambassador Zindzi Mandela. Indeed, this disease knows no class, gender, race or social status. It is up to all of us to play our part in preventing it further and devastating spread.

As we approach the eye of the COVID storm, we must preserve the capacity of our health care facilities to manage the consequent increase in COVID-19 cases. At the same time, we ought to also maintaining economic activity and protect livelihoods whilst ensuring the observance of strict health protocols.

The saving of live and maintenance of livelihoods is at the centre of our Risk Adjusted Strategy. To this end the President has announced added measures we will put in place under Level 3 of the Strategy.

In this regard, the following measures and restrictions are being implemented so as to enhance our response:

We have introduced provisions that enforce the mandatory wearing of face masks, particularly in a public setting. Regulation 5 of the regulations now reinforces the mandatory wearing of masks (which includes a cloth face mask, homemade item, or another appropriate item that covers the nose and mouth) in public and in public places. Any employer, manager or owner of a building used by the public to obtain goods or services, will be responsible if any person enters and remains in such building, place or premises, without wearing a mask. The penalty, should they not take all reasonable measures to ensure masks are worn, is a fine or imprisonment for a period not exceeding six months or to both such fine and imprisonment. This penalty is now contained in regulation 14(5) of the Regulations.

This is necessary to achieve compliance with the wearing of masks to prevent the spread of Covid-19. Together with social distancing, sanitization and the regular washing or sanitizing of hands, the wearing of masks constitutes one of the most effective systematic means of reducing transmission of Covid-19. The penalty lies with the employer, manager or owner of a building as access is controlled by such persons.

We have reintroduced the prohibition on the sale, transportation and dispensing of alcohol, because the risks associated with alcohol are far too high and we must limit the pressures on our health care system. We have based this decision partially based on the comparative observation we have made between Levels 5, when there was no prohibition, Level 4 (when there was a full prohibition for consumption) and Level 3 (when there was partial access). When there was an absolute prohibition on the sale of alcohol, the overall number of visits to trauma units in South Africa dropped from 42 700 to approximately 15 000 visits. Following the lifting of the prohibition on the sale, transportation and dispensing of liquor in Alert Level 3, health facilities have seen a substantial rise in alcohol related trauma injuries and death, resulting in added strain on the capacity of health facilities.

Given the rapid increase in the number of people infected by COVID-19 and in need of healthcare, we thought it prudent to save bed space for COVID cases by limiting the potential hazard of alcohol related trauma cases.

Because these and other violent trauma cases often happen at night, we have also reintroduced a curfew, as of tonight, between 9pm and 4am. This means only people undertaking essential and permitted services will be permitted on the road in between these times. Such persons will need the approved and signed form which is annexed to the regulations. This form is similar to the one we used during level 4 but will have to be resigned by heads of institutions or duly authorized officials.

We are also reintroducing penalties when contravening the regulations in respect of public transport. The use of public transport in previous Alert Levels 3 and 4, was regulated by way of Directions issued by the Minister of Transport. There were no penalties for transgression of these Directions.

It has since become necessary to implement stricter measures for the use of public transport in the regulations, which are now permitted to carry 100% of licensed capacity for travel not regarded as long distance travel, subject to strict health protocols, measures to ensure air circulation (which will be detailed in relevant directions) and the wearing of masks by all passengers and drivers as well as conductors. For long distance intra-provincial travel and permitted inter-provincial travel, public transport may carry 70% of licensed capacity. Where loading capacity in respect of long distance travel is contravened, penalties will now be applicable in respect contravention thereof. In respect of exceeding the loading capacity for travel not deemed long distance travel, the existing enforcement in terms of traffic legislation will be enforced.

On the wearing of masks in public transport, the driver, owner or operator of the vehicle who fails to take reasonable steps to ensure compliance with regulation 5(2)(a) commits an offence and is liable on conviction to a fine or to imprisonment for a period not exceeding six months or to both such fine and imprisonment.

There were also areas that required further elaboration as they may have been vague in the regulations and directions. In this regard:

- **We have retained the regulations that permit longer exercise hours, and the utilisation of parks for this purpose (and this purpose only) but we cannot open beaches as they carry with them higher risks.**
- **We will continue with the prohibition of social gatherings such as the visitation to families and friends, and will not permit any social gatherings but for funerals. These will require the observance of the established health and wellbeing protocols, including limiting participants to 50, so long as there is washing of hands, wearing of masks, sanitisation of surfaces and the maintenance of the 1,5metre social distance.**
- **We will also revert to the previous practice of not allowing interprovincial travel, as we have seen that travel between low and high concentration zones have made virtually all our country a hot spot. In this regard, permits will have to be secured for interprovincial travel.**
- **We have also taken the time to clarify that the use of accommodation (such as hotels, bed and breakfasts, lodges) for leisure activities is prohibited. At this stage we can only permit the use of such establishments for persons travelling for work or business purposes or where these facilities are used for quarantine or where there are remaining tourists. The establishments must also maintain a record of patrons.**
- **We have also enhanced the regulations with respect for auctions to take place, in line with health protocols and social distancing measures. These auctions can be conducted safely and in line with the health protocols similar to those that have been developed for permitted agricultural auctions.**

This fight against the virus, requires a society wide effort. It requires all of us to make sacrifices, which at face value may seem unreasonable. However, when we make these sacrifices now, we secure our future as a nation. South Africans from all walks of life have played their part, they have worked from home where they can. They have worn their masks public places whilst also washing and sanitising their hands. They have maintained the necessary social distance where possible. However, gradually fatigue has set in and the effects of the virus have taken toll on our people. Anxiety and cabin fever have set. This at the time when fortitude and added sacrifices are required.

We must strengthen our resolve and redouble our efforts. The eye of the storm is near, and by preparing ourselves victory is certain. Through, collaboration and concerted actions, we will see a brighter and better South Africa, beyond the virus.

All the measures we have implemented are difficult, but necessary. We must endure today so as to secure the future of this beautiful nation.

I thank you

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