



Tax and Legal News

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With the escalation of the number of COVID-19 cases in South Africa, the President of South Africa has declared a National State of Disaster on 15 March 2020 to manage this pandemic virus. Effective from 18 March 2020, the South African government has implemented travel restrictions and closed some of its ports of entry to reduce the impact of the virus.

Why this matters

Extreme measures have been enforced by the South African government to restrict travellers from high-risk countries such as China, Germany, Italy, Iran, South Korea, Spain, the United Kingdom, and the United States of America as well as medium risk countries, including Hong Kong, Portugal, and Singapore from entering into South Africa, to curb the spread of the virus. Visas issued to individuals from these countries have been cancelled and previously granted visas have been revoked with immediate effect. Furthermore, any foreign national who has visited or travelled through and of the listed high-risk countries since 15 March 2020, will be denied a port of entry visa or a temporary residence visa.

Travel Restrictions

Regardless of compliance with visa requirements, foreign nationals travelling from or transiting through high-risk and/or medium risk countries are prohibited from entering the Republic of South Africa until further notice.

Visa applications by foreign nationals from high-risk countries will not be approved and visas already issued to foreign nationals who have not yet entered the Republic of South Africa are revoked with immediate effect.

High- and medium risk countries will have their visa waiver agreements suspended and dates will be advised through the Travel Alerts by the Department of International Relations and Cooperation (DIRCO).

Strict screening and testing measures have been implemented at the main ports of entry, such as OR Tambo, Cape Town and King Shaka International Airports. In addition, effective 16 March 2020, 35 land ports and 2 sea ports have been closed.

Any foreign national affected by the travel restrictions and who needs to travel to South Africa for emergency or compelling reasons, may contact the nearest South African Mission or Consulate to apply for a visa. These visa applications will be considered on merit and on a case-by-case basis.

Holders of diplomatic, official/service passports and travel documents issued by international organisations (including their family members), accredited to the Republic of South Africa, will be excluded from the travel restrictions. Crew members of aircraft and cargo ships, as well as cross border rail and road transportation workers, are also excluded from the travel restrictions. However, such travelers will be subjected to medical screening and can be isolated or quarantined for a minimum period of 14 days, if required.

International Travellers

All international travellers, including South African citizens entering South Africa, will be required to complete and submit the prescribed Health Form and hand it to the Health officials and Immigration officers upon their arrival. South African citizens returning from high-risk countries will be subjected to testing and self-isolation or quarantine on return to South Africa. Furthermore, all travelers (whether foreign nationals or South African citizens) who entered the Republic of South Africa from high-risk countries on or after 15 February 2020, are required to present themselves for testing.

Temporary measures for foreign nationals

Any foreign national who originates from a country affected by the Covid-19 virus outbreak or who needs to transit to a country affected by Covid-19 virus and is already present in the Republic of South Africa, whose temporary residence visa is due to expire or has already expired, will be allowed to re-apply for such visa. The visa may be issued/ extended until 31 July 2020.

Foreign nationals who hold temporary residence visas that expired between 31 December 2019 and 31 March 2020, will also be allowed to re-apply for the relevant visa. Visa holders of visas that expired from 31 December 2019 will be allowed to re-apply without having to obtain a FORM 20 (Authorization for an illegal foreigner to remain in the country pending an application for status). This will only apply to foreign nationals who were admitted legally into the Republic. This is applicable until further notice.

Where a foreign national is unable to meet some of the prescribed visa requirements for a temporary residence visa, the applicant may apply for a waiver of such requirements from the Minister of Home Affairs.

It is imperative to note, that applicants will not be allowed to apply for a change of status or conditions of their visa.

Other precautionary measures

- o Effective immediately, all non-essential travel for all spheres of government outside of the Republic is prohibited.

- The government discourages all non-essential domestic travel, particularly by air, rail, taxis and bus.
- Effective immediately, South African citizens are advised to refrain from all forms of travel to or through the European Union, United Kingdom, United States of America and other identified high-risk countries such as China, Iran and South Korea.
- Effective immediately, all non-essential travel for all spheres of government outside of the Republic is prohibited.
- The government discourages all non-essential domestic travel, particularly by air, rail, taxis and bus.
- Effective immediately, South African citizens are advised to refrain from all forms of travel to or through the European Union, United Kingdom, United States of America and other identified high-risk countries such as China, Iran and South Korea.
- Gatherings of more than 100 people are prohibited.
- Mass celebrations of upcoming national days, such as Human Rights Day and other large government events have been cancelled.
- All schools have been closed from Wednesday, 18 March, 2020, until 14 April, 2020.
- Visits to all correctional centres were suspended for 30 days with immediate effect

For additional information or assistance, please contact your local GMS or People Services professional or one of the following professionals with the KPMG International member firm in South Africa:

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Regards
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FOOTNOTES:

World Health Organization:

<https://www.who.int/emergencies/diseases/novel-coronavirus-2019/advice-forpublic>

Department of Health, South Africa:

<http://www.health.gov.za/index.php/outbreaks/145-corona-virus-outbreak/465->

Department of Home Affairs:

<http://www.dha.gov.za/>

Corona-virus-outbreak

For any inquiries related to this Travel Advisory, contact the 24 hours operations centre of the Department of International Relations and Cooperation at +27 12 351 1000. Information is also available on the website of the Department of International Relations and Cooperation at www.dirco.gov.za

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