

FSM Information Services

Press Release

President Panuelo Signs Nation-wide COVID-19 Social Distancing Decree

PALIKIR, Pohnpei—On August 25th, 2020, His Excellency David W. Panuelo, President of the Federated States of Micronesia (FSM), signed a Decree setting the National Standards on Social Distancing Measures during the COVID-19 Pandemic Public Health Emergency. This release will describe the details of the Decree, but the summary is that without a case of COVID-19 social distancing is encouraged (not mandated), and if/when the Nation becomes a COVID-19 country social distancing and other measures will be strictly enforced. The Decree may be found here: http://gov.fm/files/August_25_Decree_on_Social_Distancing_Measures_during_COVID-19_1.pdf

The Social Distancing Decree was requested by the 21st FSM Congress on May 30th, 2020. After consultations between the FSM COVID-19 Task Force and the Task Forces of the States of Yap, Chuuk, Pohnpei, and Kosrae, the Decree advises that—prior to a case of COVID-19 in the FSM—every person is strongly encouraged to practice Social Distancing at all times in public, by maintaining a space of at least six feet between persons. Individual FSM States may require stricter social distancing guidelines and procedures, and such guidelines shall be respected within the State.

Prior to a case of COVID-19 in the FSM, gatherings such as marriages, funerals, and other inherent cultural practices may be permitted under State regulation and advisories.

In the event that the FSM has a confirmed case of COVID-19, multiple measures will become compulsory in the affected State and/or island, in the interest of protecting the health and safety of the general public. These include:

1. Cloth face coverings or facemasks are required of every person when in a public place—and individuals who are sick or who have flu-like symptoms are required to wear facemasks at all times.
2. Everyone must stay at home unless it is essential to leave the house for legitimate reasons, such as if their place of employment is deemed essential per the FSM COVID-19 Guidelines. Families should limit trips outside of the home for groceries, utilities, and health services.
3. Strict enforcement of physical distancing of no less than six feet between individuals in all public settings.
4. Large meetings and gatherings of more than twenty (20) or more people, except for health workers and law enforcement officials and services, are prohibited.

5. All non-essential services and activities are immediately suspended, such as organized sports activities, beauty parlors, barbershops, bars, and nightclubs.
6. All taxi services shall be restricted by limiting the number of hours of operation and reducing passenger capacity; the FSM COVID-19 Task Force shall establish the details of the restrictions.
7. An island or state in the FSM with a confirmed case shall be placed under a total lockdown, i.e. no entry/exit of people with the exception of essential workers (i.e. health workers and law enforcement), and urgent medical or Vienna Convention-related travel.

Until a lockdown is required, State Government authorities will continue to provide guidance with respect to essential services, including the burial of human remains within the State.

Any person who violates the Social Distancing Measures under the Decree may be convicted of a National offense under Title 11 of the FSM Code, Section 803. This may result in a penalty of not more than five years of imprisonment and/or up to \$5,000 (five thousand dollars) in fines.

“My fellow Micronesians,” President Panuelo said in a statement, “By implementing this Decree and by updating our FSM COVID-19 Guidelines, our Nation has taken another step in preparing itself for our COVID-19 adaptation, mitigation, and repatriation efforts. I have no doubt that some of you will consider the mandates to be extreme, maybe even draconian—but I would emphasize to you all that the goal is not to punish anyone or limit liberties, but to keep our citizens safe. We have every intention of preventing COVID-19’s entrance into the FSM. If we continue to focus on developing airtight repatriation measures, then we’ll never get to the point where the bulk of this Decree has to be implemented.”

“That said,” the President continued, “We’ve been so fortunate to be COVID-19 free so far that we cannot afford to become complacent. The dangers it poses to our Nation and its communities is no less severe now than it was before. Following the Decree promotes not only your own safety as an individual, but the safety of your family, your neighbors, and our entire Nation.”

As of August 25th, 2020, the FSM remains COVID-19 free.



Pictured Above: His Excellency David W. Panuelo, President of the Federated States of Micronesia, signs the Social Distancing Decree



Pictured Above: President Panuelo signs the Social Distancing Decree while Vice President George, AG Gallen, Secretary Amor, and Assistant Secretary Pretrick look on



Pictured Above: The attendees of the meeting clap as the President finishes signing the Social Distancing Decree