



Statement on Preparations for Hurricane Isaias

The Most Hon. Dr. Hubert Minnis

July 30, 2020

Fellow Bahamians; Members of the Press:

Yesterday, officials held a press conference to brief the country on Tropical Storm Isaias, which poses a threat to The Bahamas.

Officials outlined various measures in preparation for the upcoming storm, which has now strengthened.

This evening, officials from the Ministry of Disaster Preparedness, NEMA, security and

other agencies will brief the country on the further preparations for the storm.

We know from past and especially recent experience, that storms can change course quickly.

They can intensify rapidly as we saw with Hurricane Dorian.

So I ask all Bahamians and residents to take this storm seriously and to make preparations.

While we plan and model as best as we can to prepare for storms, hurricanes, natural disasters and other acts of nature, we know that such events are often unpredictable and that things can change very quickly.

In preparing for events such as hurricanes, we must act quickly and we must prepare for the worst just in case.

It is better to over-prepare out of an abundance of caution in order to protect and to save human life.

I know that the various changes to many measures may at times be frustrating and quite difficult for some.

But, I assure we are acting on the best advice from health, weather, security and officials.

My overriding priority is the safety and security of the Bahamian people and our residents.

The announcements I am about to make as well as a number of forthcoming announcements are based on:

- The location and nature of the hurricane;
- The number of deaths from COVID-19;
- The number of cases;
- The availability of ICU beds;

- The number of hospitalisations.

Please be advised that all Government offices will close at noon tomorrow to allow persons to prepare for the coming storm.

To prepare for Tropical Storm Isaias, this weekend's lockdown will be relaxed to allow for storm preparations and to respond following the passage of the storm.

Effective Friday, 31 July 2020, a curfew will be in place from 10 p.m. to 5 a.m..

This will remain in effect until further notice.

I also wish to announce that based on current indicators and data provided by health officials, a lockdown will still be necessary following the passage of the storm.

Current indicators and data reveal that much stronger protective and mitigating measures are absolutely necessary and will have to be implemented.

I note that in various countries and jurisdictions like The Bahamas, which initially contained the spread of COVID-19, that there is a dangerous surge in cases.

Like these countries, many of which are reinstituting lockdowns and other emergency measures, we must act quickly and resolutely.

We have to do what is right and necessary.

The Ministry of Health will provide a COVID 19 update during its press conference tomorrow afternoon at 3 p.m.

An announcement on the details of the future lockdown will be made as soon as practicable.

This weekend:

- Food stores, water depots, pharmacies and gas stations will be permitted to be open on Saturday, until 8 p.m.;

- Hardware stores will be permitted to be opened until 8 p.m. on Friday, as well as Saturday until 8 p.m.
- Persons will be permitted to move around for the purposes of storm preparations and to respond to any emergencies during and after the storm.

As we are in a surge in cases, especially on New Providence and Grand Bahama, and the spread of the virus to other islands and cays, it is now even more critical that everyone practices COVID-19 prevention guidelines during this hurricane.

I once again implore and ask you:

- Wear your masks
- Practice physical distancing
- Wash your hands

- Sanitize

I beg you, do not use this period for hurricane preparation to go socializing and visiting friends or family.

If you do not need to be out, please, please, **STAY AT HOME!**

We are in the midst of a pandemic and if we do not act responsibly, the consequences could be dire.

During this time, I ask you to be respectful, courteous and helpful to others.

The situation we are in is very fast-moving and fluid.

The full resources of the Government, including the Royal Bahamas Police Force and the Royal Bahamas Defence Force are mobilized.

The next several days and weeks especially will require a shared national commitment to work together.

These are especially difficult days. Let us join hands and hearts to face this time with resilience, determination and fortitude.

I have spoken with the Leader of the Opposition and made him aware of the current situation.

I have also informed him that following the passage of the Hurricane, the Ministry of Health will provide both the Government and the Opposition together a briefing on

measures we must take as a country to address the surge of COVID-19 cases in the country.

We need the spirit of love and unity as much as ever.

Let us continue to pray for God's guidance and His blessings.

And let us pray for each other.

I will speak to the country again over the coming days to update you on a number of matters.

Thank you.