

As the coronavirus disease 2019 (COVID-19) pandemic continues to impact business globally, Latin America has not been spared. As of the date of this alert, every country in the region had reported cases of COVID-19, and countries in the region are taking different approaches to combat the pandemic. As part of our Latin America team, the Caribbean and Central America Desk is tracking measures implemented in the Spanish Caribbean that affect business operations, commercial operations and employment. This alert discusses recent developments in the Dominican Republic, Puerto Rico and Cuba.

Dominican Republic

The first confirmed case of COVID-19 was reported on March 1, 2020. As of April 12, 2020, there had been 2,967 reported cases of COVID-19 in the Dominican Republic and 173 deaths due to COVID-19. Additional information is available on the [website](#) of the Ministry of Public Health.

The Dominican Republic is currently subject to a daily curfew, from 5 p.m. to 6 a.m. nationwide. Inbound and outbound passenger air and maritime transportation has been suspended and non-essential businesses have been ordered to close, with exceptions made for grocery stores, drug stores and banks. For more detailed information on measures adopted by the government, please see the [newsletter](#) produced by our Santo Domingo office.

Puerto Rico

The first confirmed case of COVID-19 was reported on March 13, 2020. As of April 12, 2020, there had been 897 reported cases of COVID-19 in Puerto Rico and 44 deaths due to COVID-19. Additional information and updated statistics can be found on the [website](#) of the Health Department.

Puerto Rico is currently subject to a daily curfew and a compelled closure of non-essential business activities until at least May 3, 2020. Exceptions to the curfew and the closure order are limited.

Filing deadlines in proceedings before the state courts of Puerto Rico were [extended](#) until April 27, 2020, and hearings were stayed. The US District Court for the District of Puerto Rico [announced](#) that it was suspending hearings until May 4, 2020, and extending filing deadlines originally until April 10, 2020.

- The Governor of Puerto Rico issued a new [executive order](#), effective as of April 13, 2020, that extended the curfew and the closure of non-essential business activities, but modified other previously adopted measures:
 - The limited window to access to roads for exempt purposes was expanded by two hours (from 5 a.m. and 9 p.m.).
 - The limitations on access to the roads by automobile based on license plate numbers were lifted.
 - Employees will be allowed to visit their places of employment on April 16, 2020, to collect materials and/or supplies to enable them to continue to work remotely.
 - Grocery stores will be allowed to operate from Mondays to Saturdays, from 5 a.m. to 8 p.m., but delivery services for grocery stores will be allowed to operate until 10 p.m.
 - Drug stores opening on Sundays will be limited to operating the pharmacy counters.
 - Gas stations that open on Sundays will be limited to selling fuel and medications.
 - Auto repair shops continue to be limited to operating on Wednesdays and Thursdays, but can now do so on expanded hours.
 - Hardware stores continue to be limited to operating on Fridays and Saturdays, but can now do so on expanded hours.
 - Certain textile manufacturing plants are exempt from the closure order.
 - Telecommunications providers will be able to operate certain customer service centers (to be determined in coordination with the state public utilities commission), by appointment only, to repair, deliver and replace telecommunications equipment and devices to their existing clients.
 - Corporations organized under the laws of Puerto Rico are exempt from certain notice requirements to their shareholders.
- On March 30, 2020, the governor issued an [executive order](#) expanding the curfew and closure of non-essential businesses. Below is a summary of the key provisions:
 - Effective March 31, 2020, there is a 24-hour curfew across the island. During the curfew, access to roads is allowed only between 5 a.m. and 7 p.m. for persons who need to access healthcare services and facilities; provide assistance and supplies to minors, dependents and those in need of care; acquire food, medicines and other essential goods; visit financial institutions (for emergency purposes); or provide or receive services that are exempt from the curfew and non-essential business closure order.

- Effective April 1, 2020, vehicular access for exempt purposes under the curfew is limited to certain days of the week based on the license plate number: even-numbered plates can transit on Mondays, Wednesdays and Fridays, while odd-numbered plates transit on Tuesdays, Thursdays and Saturdays. Vehicular access will be restricted to instances of emergencies, commuting to businesses exempt from the closure order or providing services exempt from the closure order.
- All government offices, except those providing essential services, are closed until at least April 12, 2020.
- The following businesses and organizations are exempt from the executive order: (1) grocers and businesses that sell food, including restaurants that limit their operations to take-out and/or delivery; (2) providers and manufacturers of medical equipment and supplies; (2) drug stores; (3) gas stations and fuel distributors; (4) banks; (5) senior care facilities; and (6) organizations that offer basic services to the economically disadvantaged, e.g., shelters and food banks.
- The following services and/or service providers are exempt from the non-essential business closure order: (1) plumbers, electricians, and providers of other services that are necessary to maintain homes, offices, and other properties; (2) roadside assistance service providers (but limited to emergencies); (3) parcel delivery services; (4) funeral homes; (5) auto repair shops (but only for emergencies, on certain days of the week, and by appointment); (6) hardware stores (but only on certain days of the week and by appointment); and (7) installation, repair and maintenance of critical telecommunications infrastructure.
- The following persons are exempt from the curfew: (1) personnel of private, federal and state public safety entities; (2) healthcare professionals; (3) personnel of entities involved in wholesale distribution and manufacturing of food and goods; (4) personnel working with utilities and critical infrastructure; (5) personnel of call centers; (6) personnel of airports and port facilities; (7) members of the press; (8) persons attending an emergency; and (9) officials of the executive, legislative and judicial branches of the government of Puerto Rico performing essential tasks.
- All elective medical procedures are suspended, and physicians must take measures in their offices and clinics to ensure that services are offered only by appointment and taking proper measures to ensure safety.
- Theaters, clubs, lounges, casinos, concert venues, amusement parks, fitness facilities, bars and all entertainment venues are closed.
- Construction work is allowed, but only for emergency purposes or to offer critical maintenance or repair services related to hospitals, potable water, electric power and communications.
- Meetings in a residence involving persons who are not immediate family members are prohibited.
- On March 26, 2020, the governor announced that the curfew and order to close all non-essential businesses would extend until April 12, 2020. She also announced that the daily curfew would start at 7 p.m.
- On March 23, 2020, the governor announced a US\$787 million financial package to help alleviate the economic impact of the COVID-19 pandemic. Among other things, the package calls for a moratorium on payments of mortgages and commercial loans, bonuses for public safety and public healthcare employees, financial assistance to small businesses and self-employed workers, and additional funds for the public education department to acquire tablets and other equipment to promote remote learning.
- On March 15, 2020, the governor issued an executive order imposing a curfew from 9 p.m. to 5 a.m. daily, during which time, access to roads is limited to emergency purposes or personnel involved in public safety, healthcare, wholesale distribution and manufacturing of food and goods, critical infrastructure and utilities, and the press. In addition, all non-essential business activities were ordered to cease until March 30, 2020.
- On March 12, 2020, the Governor of Puerto Rico [declared](#) a state of emergency due to the COVID-19 pandemic.

Cuba

The first confirmed case of COVID-19 in Cuba was reported on March 11, 2020. As of April 12, 2020, there had been 669 reported cases of COVID-19 in Cuba and 18 deaths due to COVID-19. Additional information and updated statistics can be found on the [website](#) of the Ministry of Public Health.

On March 31, 2020, the government announced that it was suspending flights in and out of the island. One week earlier, it had announced that it was closing schools and suspending classes until April 20, 2020. The government also ordered tourists and all persons who enter the country to remain in quarantine, and has instructed restaurants to reduce capacity by 50%. The government is promoting social distancing and has not issued an island-wide stay-at-home order; although, some municipalities, including Santiago de Cuba, have implemented stricter measures.

We will continue to update this alert as more information becomes available. You can also follow us on the [Latin America Legal](#) blog.

Contacts

Eduardo R. Guzman

Partner, Washington DC

T +1 202 457 6412

E eduardo.guzman@squirepb.com