

FILED
Clerk
District Court

JUL 24 2020

for the Northern Mariana Islands
By 
(Deputy Clerk)

**IN THE UNITED STATES DISTRICT COURT
FOR THE NORTHERN MARIANA ISLANDS**

IN THE MATTER OF
COURTHOUSE OPERATIONS IN
RESPONSE TO THE CORONAVIRUS
(COVID-19) OUTBREAK

GENERAL ORDER No. 20-00009

This General Order supersedes General Order No. 20-00007, which restricted access to the courthouse to the public effective May 15, 2020. This order is being issued in response to the status of the outbreak of COVID-19 in the Commonwealth of the Northern Mariana Islands (CNMI). While a threat continues to exist, it appears that the movement restrictions, home isolation and social distancing measures implemented across the CNMI have minimized the spread of the disease. With the availability of community testing, more than 11,338 persons have been tested to date. There have been 38 confirmed COVID-19 cases with two deaths. Due to the successful prevention of the large scale spread of the disease, the Commonwealth government moved the CNMI to Community Vulnerability Level Blue on June 15, 2020.¹ Passenger travel to the islands has resumed with strict testing and quarantine measures in place for travelers to minimize exposure and reduce the spread of COVID-19.

¹ Amendments to the CNMI COVID-19 Emergency Directives of 2020 moving the CNMI to Community Vulnerability Level BLUE, June 15, 2020 (available at <https://governor.gov.mp/news/executive-actions/amendments-to-the-cnmi-covid-19-emergency-directives-of-2020-moving-the-cnmi-to-community-vulnerability-level-blue/>)

Having weighed the right of public access to the court against the need to protect the health and safety of the public, and recognizing the continued need to take precautions to prevent the spread of COVID-19, the Court will take a phased approach to reopening the courthouse to the public. The Court accordingly orders as follows:

I. Access to the Court

Effective July 27, 2020, the court will resume regular business hours which are 8:00 a.m. to 5:00 p.m., Monday through Friday, except on legal holidays. The intake counter at the clerk's office closes during the lunch hour from 12:00 p.m. to 1:00 p.m. and at 4:30 p.m. each business day.

The courthouse in Gualo Rai is open to court employees, tenants of the building and individuals with business with the clerk's office or appearing for scheduled in-person court proceedings or for confirmed appointments with judges, the Office of Pretrial and Probation or other tenants of the building.

To maintain social distancing, a limited number of members of the public will be admitted to attend open court proceedings. Public access to the court proceedings will remain available in accordance with the procedures set forth in Section V below. Statutes of limitations, statutory deadlines and other required deadlines will not be tolled or excluded during this period unless specifically ordered by the Court.

II. Court Proceedings

The Court will resume normal operations subject to the following restrictions:

1. Attendance at in-court proceedings is restricted to parties, counsel, witnesses, interpreters, and other necessary persons and a limited number of members of the

public to maintain social distancing standards in the courtroom.

2. The Court will consider requests for proceedings by telephone or videoconference, as permitted by law. This includes civil, criminal, and bankruptcy hearings; criminal matters, such as initial appearances, arraignments, detention hearings, sentencing and revocation hearings; and the review and execution of warrants and complaints. Allowing for remote proceedings is at the discretion of the presiding judge.
3. Naturalization ceremonies will be restricted to the individuals naturalizing, USCIS officials, and other necessary parties.
4. The public will continue to be able to access all public court proceedings telephonically. See section V below.

III. Filings and Payments

1. The intake counter at the Clerk's Office will reopen to the public from 8:00 a.m. to 12:00 p.m. and 1:00 p.m. to 4:30 p.m., Mondays through Fridays, except legal holidays. Business with the Clerk's Office will continue to be available by telephone and email during those same hours. The public is encouraged to contact the clerk's office by telephone or email to conduct business before going to the intake counter at the courthouse.
2. Requests for court documents, including summons, subpoenas and federal records clearances, may be made in-person or by email to qcclerks@nmid.uscourts.gov or by calling the deputy clerk on duty at 670-237-1200.
3. Cash/Currency payments will NOT be accepted during this transition to normal operations. Only Checks or Money Orders will be accepted. Criminal debts, miscellaneous fees, or any other payments must be made out to "Clerk, U.S. District Court." Payments may be mailed to:

United States District Court
for the Northern Mariana Islands
P.O. Box 500687

Saipan, MP 96950

4. Filings will continue to be processed in all cases via the CM/ECF electronic system, except for case openings and sealed matters.
5. Email filings will continue to be accepted in accordance with LR 5.3.
6. Those who must make in-person filings or payments may go to the Clerk's Office intake counter on the third floor of the courthouse.

IV. Criteria for Entry into Courthouse

Anyone entering the building must wear a face mask, sanitize their hands upon entering and exercise social distancing (stay 6 feet apart from others).

Court Security will deny entry to:

1. Anyone who is not wearing a facemask;
2. Anyone who has been diagnosed with an active case of COVID-19, or has had direct contact with anyone who has been diagnosed with an active case of COVID-19, and has not subsequently tested negative for COVID-19;
3. Anyone who has been asked to self-quarantine or self-isolate by any doctor, hospital or health agency in the last 14 days and has not subsequently tested negative for COVID-19;
4. Anyone who has experienced any of the below symptoms that the CDC has identified as possible signs of COVID-19 in the last 14 days:
 - Fever or chills
 - Cough
 - Shortness of breath or difficulty breathing
 - Persistent Pain or pressure in chest
 - New confusion

- Inability to wake or stay awake
- Bluish lips or face
- Fatigue
- Muscle or body aches
- Headache
- New loss of taste or smell
- Sore throat
- Congestion or runny nose
- Nausea or vomiting
- Diarrhea

5. Anyone currently experiencing any of the symptoms listed above.

This entry protocol applies to the public as well as all tenants and employees working in the courthouse and notice will be posted at the entrance door of the building. Individuals prevented from entering the building will be provided contact information for the Court and all tenants of the courthouse so that they may attempt to conduct their business by phone or other remote means.

V. Public Access to Proceedings

Members of the public may call in to listen to any scheduled public hearing on the phone. Those interested in listening in may do so by dialing 1-877-336-1829 and entering the conference identification number 2729988# when prompted. This phone number will be also published on the court's website at <http://www.nmid.uscourts.gov/calendar.php>.

Recording or broadcasting any hearing in any manner is strictly prohibited. Violators of this prohibition may be found in contempt of court.

VI. Signing and Filing Certain Documents Remotely

Signatures required from any party including, but not limited to, consents to telephonic or video conferencing, financial affidavits, waivers of preliminary hearings, pretrial and probation

reports, and appearance bonds/orders for release will be performed electronically with the /s/ [name] format. Defense counsel may sign on behalf of the defendant, after receiving the defendant's consent, and file the document electronically. Parties will confirm e-signatures during a hearing.

SO ORDERED this 24th day of July, 2020.



RAMONA V. MANGLONA
Chief Judge