

Level 1 Covid-19 restrictions expanded over festive season

President Cyril Ramaphosa announced a slew of tighter level 1 Covid-19 restrictions last night in an attempt to mitigate the rise in second-wave infections during the festive season.

The country's cumulative number of cases stands at 866,127, edging closer to the 900,000 mark. In light of the rapid rise in infections, the president said it is essential that government take extraordinary measures to contain the second wave and save lives, while working to protect livelihoods.

“ President [@CyrilRamaphosa](#) addresses the nation on Government's response to curb the spread of the [#CoronaVirusSA](#) [#StaySafe](#) <https://t.co/ojBhf0gPZF>— Presidency | South Africa [🇿🇦🇿🇦🇿🇿🇦](#) (@PresidencyZA) [December 14, 2020](#) ”

New Covid-19 cases spiked with the daily average of new cases nationally over the last seven days at 74% higher than the previous seven days. In this time, the number of new cases has increased from a daily average of around 3,800 to just over 6,600 a day. The daily average of Covid-19 deaths has increased by nearly 50% over the same period from just over 100 deaths a day to just over 150 deaths.

Tighter enforcement of hygiene protocols

Under the tighter level 1 restrictions:

- Drivers and operators of any form of public transport must ensure that all passengers wear a mask.
- Managers or owners of buildings, places or premises – including retail stores, shopping centres, and government buildings – are obliged by law to ensure that all customers who enter their facilities or buildings wear a mask.

“This places a responsibility on all owners, managers and employers – and on all of us – to ensure that South Africans are safe whenever they are in any of these places,” he said.

“ Employers, managers or owners of buildings or premises, drivers and operators of any form of transport must ensure that everybody wears a mask [#COVID19](#) pic.twitter.com/e2l2SWVXNL— Department of Health (@HealthZA) [December 14, 2020](#) ”

Gatherings limited to reduce super-spreading events

To reduce the risk of super-spreading events, government has limited the current restrictions on the size of gatherings.

- Gatherings – including religious gatherings – may not be attended by more than 100 people for indoor events and 250 for outdoor events.
- The total number of people in a venue may not exceed more than 50% of the capacity of the venue
- Due to the potential for transmission, all post-funeral gatherings, including ‘after-tears’ parties, are prohibited.

Beaches closed

In areas with the highest rate of infection, beaches and public parks will be closed for the duration of the festive season

from 16 December 2020 to 3 January 2021.

This will apply to all of the Eastern Cape, as well as to the Garden Route district in the Western Cape.

In KwaZulu-Natal, beaches and public parks will be closed on what are traditionally the busiest days of the season, namely 16, 25, 26 and 31 December 2020 and the 1, 2 and 3 January 2021.

The beaches and public parks of the Northern Cape and the Western Cape – with the exception of the Garden Route – will remain open to the public over the festive season.

- Festivals, live music, and live performances at beaches are prohibited.
- Beaches and parks that are open to the public will only be open between 9am and 6pm.

“The situation will be monitored daily by local authorities to ensure compliance with the regulations on gatherings and the prohibition of alcohol. In instances, where there are large crowds or poor compliance with safety measures, specific beaches and recreational parks will be closed,” Ramaphosa said.

Curfew

To reduce super-spreader events, the curfew is adjusted, starting at 11pm and ending at 4am.

Non-essential establishments, including restaurants and bars, will have to close at 10pm so that staff and patrons can get home before the enforcement of the curfew. “The curfew is meant to prevent gatherings that go on late into the night, while enabling restaurants, bars and taverns to continue to operate and earn an income.”

Hours of curfew will also apply to Christmas Eve and New Year’s Eve.

“This means that we will all need to make changes to the way in which we celebrate these occasions.”

Restriction on alcohol sales

- The sale of alcohol from retail outlets will only be permitted between 10am and 6pm from Monday to Thursday. Registered wineries and wine farms may continue to offer tastings and wine sales to the public for off-site consumption over weekends.
- Alcohol consumption in all public spaces, such as beaches and parks, is strictly forbidden.

Sarah Baartmaan and Garden Route districts

In further tightening control on areas with a sharp rise in infections, the president declared the Sarah Baartmaan and Garden Route Districts as hotspot areas.

“This all means that the same additional restrictions that we applied to Nelson Mandela Bay will apply in these districts from midnight tonight and will continue until we see a clear and sustained decline in infections,” the president said.

These festive season restrictions will be reviewed in early January based on the state of the pandemic across the country.

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