COVID-19 Update: Travel Restrictions Announced Between the United States and Canada and Mexico

Monday, March 23, 2020

In light of the COVID-19 health crisis, the United States has reached agreements with both Canada and Mexico to limit travel across their respective borders to “essential travel” beginning March 20, 2020.

What is “essential travel”?

Pursuant to the agreements, essential travel includes but is not limited to:

- S. citizens and lawful permanent residents returning to the United States;
- travel for medical treatment;
• travel to attend school;
• travel to work in the United States;
• travel for emergency response and public health purposes;
• travel for lawful cross-border trade (such as trucking to move cargo);
• official government or diplomatic travel;
• members of the U.S. Armed Forces and their spouses and/or children returning to the United States; and
• military-related travel or operations.

Non-essential travel, on the other hand, is described as travel for tourism, including but not limited to sightseeing, recreation, gambling, or attending cultural events.

**What modes of travel are included in the restrictions?**

The travel restrictions apply to land ports of entry, passenger rail, and ferry travel. They do not apply to air, freight rail, or sea travel.

**How long will the travel restrictions be in place?**

The restrictions will remain in effect from 11:59 p.m. Eastern Daylight Time (EDT) on March 20, 2020, through 11:59 p.m. EDT on April 20, 2020. The termination date is subject to change “based on circumstances associated with the [COVID-19] threat.”

**What documentation is required when attempting to enter the United States?**

The U.S. Department of Homeland Security (DHS) has not yet provided any guidance as to what evidence, if any, individuals must present in addition to their normal travel documentation to establish that they are performing essential travel.

**Are there any exceptions?**

The Commissioner of U.S. Customs and Border Protection has the discretion to add other forms of travel, such as travel in furtherance of economic stability or social order, to the list of essential travel.
