

Level 4 to bring some economic reprieve

In an attempt to slow down the spread of the coronavirus, and ensure that health authorities are not overwhelmed, South Africa will embark on a staged reopening of the economy, starting with a Level 4 on May 1.

“I ask our residents not to look at the restrictions of Level 4 of our lockdown as punishment but rather as preventative measures. Our nation-wide lockdown has worked this far and the need to save lives and prevent the country’s health system becoming overwhelmed remains paramount,” said Knysna Deputy Executive Mayor, Aubrey Tsengwa. “I therefore urge all our residents to wear a face mask whenever you leave home and continue to adhere to Level 4 restrictions, including the 8pm – 5am curfew, which will ensure the lives of our vulnerable loved ones are respected and preserved.”

“Level 4 is also not a sign that residents may now leave their homes and socialise. All residents are still to remain in their homes unless they are essential workers. Level 4 still has extreme precautions to limit community transmission and outbreaks. Please stay home”, Tsengwa added.

Government's National Coronavirus Command Council addressed the nation on Wednesday, 29 April, giving details to the public on the regulations relating to the easing of South Africa's lockdown restrictions to Level 4. The Command Council confirmed that South Africans will still not be allowed to purchase alcohol or cigarettes under the country’s new Level 4 restrictions.

It was stated that alcohol attracts crowds and leads to misbehaviour, explaining that a ban on alcohol had also freed up hospital beds. With regards to the reversal on the original decision to lift the ban on tobacco, it was explained that government had received more than 2 000 complaints from the public and industry stakeholders outlining the serious health risks associated with smoking, which could exacerbate the ongoing health crisis.

Government wants to ensure people stay inside as much as possible, to avoid the risk of spreading the virus. To that end, they are imposing a curfew, between 8pm and 5am.

Essential services workers and staff working the night shift under Level 4 will obviously be exempt from that curfew.

Some of the other lifestyle changes announced by the government include:

- Essential goods will continue to be sold, joined by hardware supplies, winter clothing and heating, and other industry-related items;
- Certain industries will only be able to open at half capacity;
- E-mailing services are able to operate, while public transport is also limited;
- No concerts, cinemas or public gatherings will be allowed;
- Exercise will be limited to a 5km radius in own neighbourhoods and only between 6am – 9am, with public gyms remaining closed;
- Food delivery will be available, subject to the curfew.

Tsengwa explained that it is important to note that businesses that will be allowed to operate include 50% production of factories. Retailers that sell winter clothing, bedding and linen will be allowed to operate.

Stores that sell educational products and stationery will operate including the sale of information technology services. E-commerce will be allowed to operate but on a limited basis. Repair shops will be allowed to operate for emergency services. Vehicles sales will be allowed to a certain extent.

Businesses that will operate will need to follow strict measures on taking precautions. Hygiene measures will have to be followed and businesses will likely have to divide the time at which workers can operate to limit the number of people and ensure social distance.

“I agree with government that all business should ensure that they are Covid-19 ready, in order words, they should screen people, or else, sooner or later there will be a spread of the virus at the company. Spend a bit of money to ensure that you are Covid-19 ready. Workers should also come back in a phased manner. Have a proper plan that is known by the workers and you can keep in the company,” Tsengwa said.

Live-in domestic staff and child-minders in private households can return to work as part of Level 4 of the national lockdown. Staff employed by private households who care for the sick, mentally ill, elderly and people with disabilities will be allowed to work.

Food agriculture and services including livestock farming will be allowed to operate. The export of agricultural good would also be allowed.

Tsengwa concluded by saying, “Level 4 makes allowance for the resumption of some economic activity but still prohibits social gatherings, so it is important for Greater Knysna to adhere to these rules and regulations to ensure that our rate of infection remains as low as it has been over the Level 5 lockdown period. God bless Greater Knysna and all her people.”

The detailed Level 4 regulations can be access on the Knysna Municipality website <https://www.knysna.gov.za/news/covid-19-corona-virus/>

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