



6 June 2020

Dear Hotel and Vacation Rental Operators,

As we all know, the accommodations industry in The Bahamas has been severely impacted over the past several months by the COVID-19 pandemic. Everything we did before the pandemic has now evolved into a new paradigm with the health and safety of our destination, residents, and visitors now the priority as we begin the process of reopening the tourism sector on July 1, 2020.

On Tuesday, June 2, 2020, the Ministry of Tourism and Bahamas Hotel and Tourism Association along with other private stakeholders presented the Tourism Readiness and Recovery Committee (TRRC) plan. The TRRC plan outlines the basic safety protocols, procedures, and guidelines approved by the Ministry of Health to ensure the health and safety standards of all touchpoints of tourism, including the accommodations sector hotels and vacation rentals.

Links to the Tourism Readiness and Recovery Committee plan can be viewed at:

*Tourism Readiness and Recovery Committee's June 2<sup>nd</sup> Press Conference:*

<https://www.facebook.com/tourismtodaynetwork/videos/178182500275816/>

*Bahamas Tourism Readiness & Recovery Plan:*

[https://www.bahamas.com/sites/default/files/articles/trrc\\_plan\\_public.pdf](https://www.bahamas.com/sites/default/files/articles/trrc_plan_public.pdf)

The Bahamas' accommodations sector will undergo a Certification process as part of the "Clean and Pristine, Responding to Covid-19" program that touches all tourism front liners. Certification consists of:

- 1) A Property Assessment/Audit (pre-certification); followed by
- 2) An Inspection (full certification) that is necessary for creating and maintaining a healthy and safe environment for employees and guests alike and verifying that compliance has been maintained.

## **How does Certification work?**

- You are required to conduct a Self-Assessment of your property/properties and be governed by the Checklist and Guidelines in the TRRC plan that are pertinent to your property. Upon completion of the Self-Assessment, and on or before Monday, 15 June 2020, you must submit a "Clean and Pristine" health and safety plan for your property to the Ministry of Tourism, Hotel Licensing Department, at the following email address: [\*\*chieflicensingofficer@bahamas.com\*\*](mailto:chieflicensingofficer@bahamas.com).

Please note that an online questionnaire will also be required to be filled out as part of the process and will be forthcoming.

- On or before 15 June 2020 Property operators that are part of an international brand or grouping are requested to submit their international COVID-19 health and safety plans for their Bahamas property to email [chieflicensingofficer@bahamas.com](mailto:chieflicensingofficer@bahamas.com). We appreciate that these plans may be more substantial in scope than what is required in the TRRC plan.
- On or before 1 July 2020 all Operators' "Clean and Pristine" plans will be reviewed and approved by the Certification agencies, namely the Ministry of Tourism Hotel Licensing Department and Department of Environmental Health Services.
- Pre-certification will be granted to properties that are COVID-compliant and have met the country's health and safety standards. Pre-certification will allow properties to reopen and to be bookable by the travel industry as of July 1, 2020. Please note that notification of approved pre-certified properties will be sent to the Promotion Boards and to Vacation Rental Aggregators.
- Within 30-60 days of pre-certification, a physical inspection will be conducted to verify that properties are in fact meeting the minimum standards. At this point, if successful, a property will be certified as "Clean and Pristine" and thus achieve an insignia/decal to make Certification visible at the property level and in online marketing and sales and operational collateral. The Certification insignia/decal will be distributed to all certified properties commencing on August 1, 2020. The properties that do not meet the minimum health and safety requirements will be given an extension, and the respective authority will work with the properties to correct the deficiencies.
- We recommend that operators, especially small properties, include a liability waiver in their plans and in collateral to guests to the effect that "We have taken health and safety precautions but the potential for risk of exposure to COVID-19 exists in any space where persons gather".

Vacation rentals that are required to participate in the national COVID initiative are being asked to submit your "Clean and Pristine" health and safety plans along with the attached registration form for your property/properties. Over the past several months with Dorian and now COVID 19, we at the Ministry of Tourism have experienced first-hand the necessity of having such registration on file, especially with Embassies wanting to connect with citizens during times of health and/or weather crisis.

On or before Monday 15 June 2020, both documents are to be submitted to email address: [chieflicensingofficer@bahamas.com](mailto:chieflicensingofficer@bahamas.com).

On 8 June through 10 June 2020, a training exercise, “Tourism Business, Compliance Training” will be hosted by the Ministry of Tourism and the Department of Public Health and Environment, at the British Colonial Hilton Hotel. We invite all tourism front liners to participate in this virtual or in-person training. Registration details are attached if you are interested.

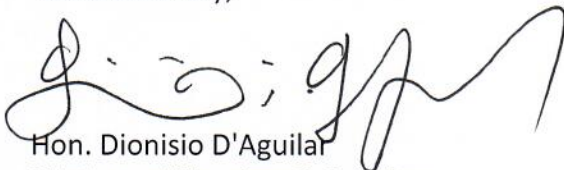
Please be advised that the Ministry of Health will be providing a list of public health providers for properties that do not have medical staff on site. Their team is currently working with the Ministry of Tourism on generating a list of vetted ‘private’ health providers to provide more options for the accommodations sector. A detailed list of both public and private health providers will be made available in a few days.

Similarly, a list of companies specializing in cleaning services and supplies for the COVID-19 environment will be made available to those properties that require such services.

As we begin our journey into a new way of thinking and operating in tourism, we know that compliance to policies and standards will be crucial in reopening the tourism industry. Each of us must do our part in growing the economy strong again.

I look forward to your full support in restoring our economy and making the health and safety of our tourism product a priority.

Yours sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'D. Aguilar', written in a cursive style.

Hon. Dionisio D'Aguilar  
Minister of Tourism & Aviation