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The United States and Mexico Reach A Joint Agreement to Impose Travel Restrictions on Non-Essential Travel

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On March 20, 2020, a joint statement released by the Department of Homeland Security announced an agreement with Mexico to restrict nonessential travel to prevent the spread of the COVID-19 virus. The restrictions commenced at 12:01 am Saturday, March 21 throughout the US-Mexico land border for a period of 30 days subject to extension upon review. No Federal Register notice has been issued to date.

U.S. and Mexican officials agreed that bilateral trade and essential travel are not to be disrupted at the border. Commercial goods arriving via rail and truck are exempt, as are U.S. citizens, lawful permanent residents and people with legal work permits.

"Both countries know the importance of working together to limit the spread of the virus and ensure the commerce that supports our economy continues to keep flowing," Secretary of State Mike Pompeo said during a White House press conference. "The United States is glad to have a friend that is working side-by-side with us in the fight." Acting DHS Secretary Chad Wolf assured that North American trade would not be affected by the U.S.' agreement with Canada and Mexico to partially close the border. Mexican Undersecretary for North America Jesus Seade said he spoke with U.S. Trade Representative Robert Lighthizer on Thursday to ensure any border measures don't affect trade.

This action is very similar to last week's Canada travel restrictions. President Trump has stated that 'We are treating the borders equally, the Northern Border and the Southern Border.'

What's non-essential travel?

Per a Joint Statement on US-Mexico Joint Initiative to Combat the COVID-19 Pandemic press release, non-essential travel means travel that is considered tourism or recreational in

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nature. It is expected that regular commerce will not be impacted by the new restrictions.

Who will be affected the most?

The restrictions only apply to tourism, not general trade of goods. Consequently, border towns will be hit the hardest. Most border town businesses rely on trade and tourism from Mexicans who cross the border. However, there are also concerns that this action could increase costs for commercial shipments. Congressman Henry Cuellar (D, Texas) noted that “We’ve already seen it get more expensive for truckers to take loads of goods up north.”

We will continue to update this alert as soon more details become available or the situation changes.

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