On March 20, 2020, the Department of Homeland Security (DHS) released a joint statement, together with the Mexican government, announcing a joint initiative restricting travel across the United States-Mexico border to help prevent the spread of COVID-19 (“COVID-19” is the disease which is caused by the virus, “SARS-CoV-2”). The joint initiative will commence at 12:01 AM on March 21, 2020 throughout the United States-Mexico land border.

Q: Who is covered by the travel restrictions?

The joint statement restricts all non-essential travel between Mexico and the United States.

“Non-essential” travel is defined as “travel that is considered tourism or recreational in nature” (e.g., sightseeing, recreation, gambling, or attending cultural events).

Q: Who is exempt from the travel restrictions?

The joint statement states that essential travel between Mexico and the United States must continue unimpeded. According to a regulation entitled “Notification of Temporary Travel Restrictions Applicable to Land Ports of Entry and Ferries Service Between the United States and Mexico” promulgated by the Department of Homeland Security, essential travel includes:

- U.S. citizens, lawful permanent residents, and individuals with valid travel documents returning to the United States;
- Individuals traveling for medical purposes (e.g., to receive medical treatment in the United States);
- Individuals traveling to attend educational institutions;
- Individuals traveling to work in the United States (e.g., individuals working in the farming or agriculture industry who must travel between the United States and Mexico in furtherance of such work);
- Individuals traveling for emergency response and public health purposes (e.g., government officials or emergency responders entering the United States to support federal, state, local, tribal, or territorial government efforts to respond to COVID-19 or other emergencies);
- Individuals engaged in lawful cross-border trade (e.g., truck drivers supporting the movement of cargo between the United States and Mexico);
- Individuals engaged in official government travel or diplomatic travel;
- Members of the U.S. Armed Forces, and the spouses and children of members of the U.S. Armed Forces, returning to the United States; and
- Individuals engaged in military-related travel or operations.
The travel restrictions do not apply to air, freight rail, or sea travel between the United States and Mexico. Entry for trade and business travel will continue to operate, subject to additional scrutiny. Cargo shipments will also be exempt from restrictions.

**Q: Do these travel restrictions apply to asylum seekers?**

Seemingly, these travel restrictions apply to individuals crossing the United States-Mexico border for any purpose not defined as “essential travel”.

**Q: Do these travel restrictions apply to individuals of non-Mexican nationality?**

These travel restrictions do not apply to U.S. citizens and permanent residents. However, they appear to apply to all other individuals, regardless of nationality, seeking to cross the United-States Mexico border for any purpose not defined as “essential travel”.

**Q: How do these travel restrictions apply to individuals who cross the border between ports of entry?**

A [fact sheet](https://www.whitehouse.gov/briefings-statements/president-donald-j-trump-taking-necessary-safety-measures-border-prevent-spread-coronavirus/) on these travel restrictions released by the President states that: “The United States will expeditiously return aliens who cross between ports of entry or are otherwise not allowed to enter the country, as the facilities in which these aliens would normally be held cannot support quarantine for the time needed to assess potential cases”.

**Q: What is the effective date of the travel restrictions?**

The travel restrictions will go into effect on 11:59 PM Eastern Daylight Time (EDT) on March 20, 2020 and will remain in effect until 11:59 PM EDT on April 20, 2020. The travel restrictions are subject to extension upon review.

**Q: What is the rationale for these travel restrictions?**

The joint statement explains that: “we agree our two countries, in response to the ongoing global and regional health situation, require particular measures both to protect bilateral trade and our countries’ economies and ensure the health of our nations’ citizens. We agree to the need for a dedicated joint effort to prevent spread of the COVID-19 virus and address the economic effects resulting from reduced mobility along our shared border”.

**Q: Where can I find more information?**

The President has issued a fact sheet on the travel restrictions: