

The Virgin Islands Consortium

Puerto Rico, With at Least 42 Coronavirus Deaths and 780 Confirmed Cases, Extends Lockdown Through May 3

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National Guard personnel who carry out bio screening on arriving passengers walk around the Luis Muñoz Marín Airport in an effort to detect and isolate the new coronavirus, in Carolina, Puerto Rico. By. ASSOCIATED PRESS

SAN JUAN, Puerto Rico — The Governor of Puerto Rico, Wanda Vazquez said over the weekend that the island commonwealth will remain on lock down until May 3, in an effort to curb the number of COVID-19 cases.

The announcement is one of the strictest measures taken in a jurisdiction of the United States.

According to the governor, non-essential businesses will remain closed and that people have to remain indoors from 9 p.m. to 5 a.m. (local time), only leaving to buy food, medicine or go to the bank.

However, she lifted all license plate restrictions and said hardware stores and car repair shops can operate twice a week on limited schedules.

Meanwhile, Health Secretary Lorenzo Gonzales reminded the public to continue wearing face masks on entering any business place as the peak of cases is not expected until early next month.

“We cannot lower our guard,” he said. “We have not seen the worst of it.”

The lockdown was first implemented on March 15, and the extension announced Saturday is raising concerns about its impact on an island struggling to recover from Hurricane Maria and from a string of recent strong earthquakes amid a 13-year recession.

Puerto Rico has reported more than 780 confirmed cases and at least 42 deaths, including that of a pediatrician and of a couple of people in their early 40s with no prior health conditions.

More than 1,300 test results are pending, and nearly 900 police officers have been placed in isolation after being exposed to COVID-19.