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CDC Allows No-Sail Order to Expire, But Cruise Travel Resumption Comes With Restrictions

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Caribbean Princess

The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention said Friday it would allow its no-sail order for the cruise industry to expire today, paving the way for cruise lines to resume service, though the major players have all canceled cruise travel through November.

The move comes as Covid-19 cases in the U.S. soared Thursday to the highest single-day number ever recorded, when 88,500 people were confirmed to be infected with the virus and total cases topped 9 million nationwide Friday. The U.S. is also seeing an increase in hospitalizations, which experts believe will be followed by an increase in fatalities.

Meanwhile, Europe, once the epicenter of the deadly pathogen, is again wearing the dreaded title as confirmed cases see exponential increases on the continent, with [both hospitalizations and deaths rising sharply](#).

The CDC's decision comes with restrictions. Cruise operators will have to host mock voyages to prove the safety of ships before setting sail with guests. Cruise travel remains one of the easiest ways to catch or spread the coronavirus because of duration, the older passenger population and cohabitation.

Additional to hosting mock voyages, the CDC said itineraries cannot be longer than one week, and all crew members and passengers must be tested before boarding.

Cruise lines will also need to sign agreements with port authorities to settle on how many cruise ships will be allowed to dock at a port of call, so as “to not overburden the public health response resources of any single jurisdiction in the event of a Covid-19 outbreak.”

The CDC's action sent stocks of the major cruise lines — Carnival Corp., Royal Caribbean and Norwegian Cruise Lines — trending higher in after-hours trading.

During a board meeting on Oct. 15, the territory's busiest port of call, the West Indian Company (WICO), said the company [could see cruise ships return as early as January, 2021](#).

"Conversations have been moving pretty rapidly over the past couple of weeks with the cruise lines, at least from my position in tourism," said WICO Board Chairman Joseph Boschulte, who also serves as the commissioner of the Dept. of Tourism.

WICO Interim CEO and President, Anthony Ottley, said, "In reviewing the request on schedule submitted, all show intent to start sailing in January 2021. Our final consolidated schedule has 150 WICO calls for the period starting from January 2 to September 23, 2021. However, WICO has not received any commitment for sailing to the territory from any cruise line before January 2021."