

For immediate release

Press Release

Monday, 30 March 2020

Social Security Board's Preparedness and Response Actions in the wake of COVID-19

The Social Security Board remains committed to safeguarding the health, safety and well-being of our staff, customers and other stakeholders. In light of this, the following measures have been put into effect:

- Unemployment Assistance:** We wish to inform the general public that while Social Security will support the unemployment initiative to facilitate payments where possible. The application form will not be available on the COVID-19 website until this Friday. Please continue to check the official website at www.covid19.bz for information, application forms and updates in this regard.
- Suspension of all Non-Essential Services:** Registration Service: new Social Security Card applications, replacements and renewals are temporarily suspended until further notice. SSB will continue to process benefit payments and contribution collections.
- New Office Hours:** Effective Tuesday March 31, 2020 SSB offices will be open from 8:00 am to 1:00 pm to offer essential services only.
- Branch Office Access Numbers:** You can continue to reach out to us via our Facebook page and email info@socialsecurity.org.bz; however if you wish to call, please note that **effective Tuesday March 31 2020**, the following numbers can be utilized to contact the respective branches:

Corozal 633-5693	San Pedro 604-1867	Punta Gorda 633-5952	Independence 608-1819	Dangriga 630-9196
Orange Walk 633-5695	Belmopan 623-0527	Santa Elena 633-5966	Belize City 633-5716	

- Claim Submission:** ALL completed benefit claims can be sent as a scanned document or as a picture to claims@socialsecurity.org.bz. Persons unable to do so can drop off claims through the Drop Box Service located directly outside of branch offices. Customers are strongly encouraged to use the email option to avoid delays and any non-essential visits to the office re: social distancing. Employers can also send the Salaries Sheet (SM2) to claims@socialsecurity.org.bz.

6. **Extended Deadline for Claim Submission:** Customers are free to submit their claims for processing at a later time but not exceeding six (6) months. Similarly, a late note will not be required when submitting claims during this six (6) month period with **no penalties** incurred.
7. **Two-month Waiver for Employers' Contribution Payment:** Employers are required to file a Statement of Contributions (FIN15A) for the months of March (due April 14, 2020) and April (due May 14, 2020). Thereafter, employers can opt to make payments with no penalties or arrange a payment plan. To submit the Statement of Contributions (FIN15A), Employers are encouraged to use the Online Contribution Portal via www.socialsecurity.org.bz.
8. **Advance Payment of Contributory Pensions (Retirement, Invalidity, Survivors', Disablement and Death):** Pensioners are advised that the pension periods March 16 to April 12 and April 13 to May 10 will both be paid in advance on Thursday, April 2, 2020. The one month advance payment will be deducted from future pension payments.
9. **SSB's Financial Aid to GOB's Relief Effort:** The Social Security Board has committed BZ\$5 Million toward the national effort to provide relief to those most affected by the COVID-19 pandemic.
10. **SI No. 43 of 2020: Amendment to the Benefits Regulation:** This measure is necessary in order to provide Sickness Benefit coverage to unemployed workers who become sick as a result of COVID-19.

These measures are all subject to change based on the current local situation of COVID-19.

Once more, SSB advises customers to avoid any non-essential visits to our Branch Offices and are asked to contact us for general queries through the following:

- Email: info@socialsecurity.org.bz
- Facebook Messenger: ssbbelize
- Customer Concerns: (501) 639-5745

The Social Security Board wishes to thank customers and the general public for their understanding and patience during this critical period. We continue to monitor and adapt new measures as they become increasingly necessary.

Ends