



## **National Address**

**The Most Hon. Dr. Hubert Minnis  
Prime Minister and Minister of Finance**

**Update on COVID-19**

**Sunday, 22 August 2021**

**8:00 P.M.**

Bahamians everywhere.

Residents,

Ladies and gentlemen.

Good evening.

Thank you once again for the opportunity to update you on a number of critical matters in our ongoing and comprehensive response to the current period in the COVID-19 pandemic.

As you are aware, there has been a global surge in cases in recent times driven by the highly contagious delta variant.

In her press briefing last Wednesday, Director of the Pan American Health Organization, Dr. Carissa Etienne noted that: “COVID infections and deaths are rapidly rising across the Caribbean.”

She also noted: “Over the last week, 1.4 million COVID-19 cases and nearly 20,000 deaths were reported in our region.”

These are difficult times for our region.

These are difficult times throughout the world.

Some countries have had to revert to all-out lockdowns.

In The Bahamas, my administration sought from the very beginning of the

pandemic to strike a balance between protecting and saving lives, and also protecting livelihoods and jobs.

We have put in place public health measures and guidelines to help slow the spread of the virus, while also allowing work to continue to save and to rebuild the economy.

Bahamians have endured financial and social hardships due to the pandemic.

We want our people to be able to earn a living while there are public health measures in place to help slow the spread of the virus.

It is vital that our people have access to work and to economic opportunities to take care of themselves and their families.

This has been the worst public health crisis in our modern history.

It has also been the worst economic crisis, by far.

We know that vaccinations are the primary means of ending the emergency stage of the pandemic, of saving lives and of getting our people back to work.

At her press briefing on Sunday, August 15th, Dr. Merceline Dahl-Regis, Chair of the National COVID-19 Vaccine Consultative Committee, provided information regarding the effectiveness of vaccines in The Bahamas.

For the Princess Margaret Hospital, from March 14, 2021 through July 31, 2021, no one who was fully vaccinated was hospitalized.

No one who was fully vaccinated died.

This is compelling real-time data, demonstrating why Bahamians need to get vaccinated now!

The virus has many of our citizens fighting for their lives.



It has killed more Bahamians in this wave.

We must continue to pray for those who have lost loved ones and for those who are ill at home or in hospital.

Let me again say to those who are still thinking about getting vaccinated:

You do not have time to keep thinking about whether or not you will take the vaccine.

You do not have time to keep researching.

You need to come forward now to get the life-saving protection that vaccination gives!

My administration knows that the only way out of the emergency phase of the pandemic is to vaccinate as many Bahamians as possible in as short a time as possible.

That is why we have launched the largest vaccination program in Bahamian history.

The Bahamas has secured more than half a million doses of some of the best vaccines in the world.

Supplies of the AstraZeneca, Pfizer and Johnson and Johnson vaccines are already in country.

More of the Pfizer vaccines are on the way.

Since our national vaccination campaign began in mid-March earlier this year, we have administered a total of **129,017** doses of the COVID-19 vaccine.

As of Saturday, 21 August, a total of **55,291** Bahamians and residents are fully vaccinated.

This includes those who have been fully vaccinated abroad and have registered their status on the [vax.gov.bs](https://vax.gov.bs) portal.

I am pleased to report that last week alone, from Monday, 16 August to Saturday, 21 August, **11,496** doses of the vaccine were administered.

The majority of these were first doses. On New Providence, 70 per cent of doses administered were first doses.

And on Grand Bahama, 53 per cent were first doses.

These are significant and very good numbers.

We are making progress though we still have much work to do.

I thank all Bahamians and residents who got vaccinated this week.

Dr. Dahl-Regis said last Sunday that the Committee hopes to fully vaccinate 60,000 people over a six-week period.

Please, help us reach this critical goal by coming forward to get vaccinated.

Fighting this virus has always been a partnership between the Government and the people.

I need you now to come forward, to get vaccinated so that we can end this wave and return to a greater sense of normalcy.

Fellow-Bahamians:

This past Thursday, August 19<sup>th</sup>, The Bahamas received **38,400** doses of the single-dose Johnson & Johnson vaccine.

The Johnson & Johnson vaccine is a one-dose regimen.

This means that after one dose you are considered fully vaccinated.

In the initial rollout of Johnson & Johnson, the vaccine will be used in the next phase of vaccinations in the Family Islands, for those residents who have not yet received a vaccine, and who wish to do so.



The Johnson & Johnson vaccine will also be used to vaccinate homebound residents who have not yet received the vaccine and who wish to do so.

For the homebound who have already received the first dose of the AstraZeneca vaccine, they will receive a second dose of AstraZeneca.

More information will be released about the administration of the Johnson and Johnson Vaccine at a later date.

Additionally, on Grand Bahama, the administration of COVID-19 vaccines, including Pfizer, will be ramped up this week.

This will include an additional center being opened, weekend hours and additional vaccination opportunities in

communities in the eastern and western areas of Grand Bahama.

Vaccination teams from New Providence are being sent to Grand Bahama, to assist local health teams.

During the course of the national COVID-19 vaccination program we have made vaccines available to residents of all islands and cays where people reside.

Because of our extensive archipelago, with many populated islands and cays, this has been an extraordinary logistical challenge.

Thankfully, with the help of many key partners and the hard work of our medical professionals, all islands and cays where people reside, have had the opportunity to receive at least one dose of the vaccine.

Doses of the Johnson & Johnson vaccine have already been sent to San Salvador.

Vaccination teams will be returning to the Family Islands, starting with mainland Abaco on Tuesday, Wednesday and Thursday of this week.

The following week, vaccination teams are expected to return to Exuma and Eleuthera.

On the Family Islands, second doses of the AstraZeneca vaccine will be

administered along with the single dose Johnson and Johnson Vaccine.

Pfizer will also be made available to residents 12 and over.

The full schedule of vaccinations for the Family Islands will be released in the coming days.

Residents should continue to monitor [opm.gov.bs](http://opm.gov.bs) and the Ministry of Health's and

the Office of the Prime Minister's social media platforms.

I also wish to inform you that the Government will partner with private health care providers to maximize the administration of the COVID-19 vaccine, in an effort to get as many people vaccinated as quickly as possible.

Private health care providers who can demonstrate that they have the

infrastructure and human resources and who can meet the criteria, to safely administer the vaccine and collect the data appropriately, will be able to administer government-procured vaccines.

May I encourage private sector businesses to allow employees a designated period of time on a given day of mutual agreement to get vaccinated.



I once again thank the National Consultative Vaccine Committee for their tireless efforts to help to save and to protect the lives of our people.

Dear Parents and Guardians:

May I remind you that the Pfizer vaccine is available to everyone over the age of 12-years-old.

The sooner a large number of appropriate-aged students and their families are fully vaccinated, the sooner we can

return to safe face-to-face learning, team sports, extracurricular programs and youth programs.

It is vital that we protect child, youth and family health.

We must get our children and youth back to school safely and as quickly as possible.

During the pandemic there has been an educational loss and gap for some children.

We have to get them back to school to give them the education that they deserve and that they need.

We need to get our children back to school and back to other youth programs as a part of their socialization, emotional and mental health, and their well-being.

We know that such socialization with peers, adults, mentors and coaches, are vital for child and adolescent development.

We must end the emergency stage of the pandemic for a better future and the good of our children and young people, including, children and youth with learning challenges, difficulties and disabilities.

Our children and youth need more opportunities for group sports and activities.

Moreover, by getting our children and grandchildren back to school we can free up

parents to get back to work as the economy improves and bounces back.

The Minister of Education the Hon. Jeffrey Lloyd will speak to the nation tomorrow evening on the upcoming 2021/2022 school year.

Ladies and Gentleman:

A critical element in the fight against COVID-19 is oxygen supply.

## Access to liquefied oxygen

internationally began to be restricted again, which in turn reduced the storage in country.

Working with the Governor of Florida, Ron DeSantis, and with the Director of Florida's Emergency Management Agency, I am pleased to advise, that we have been able to secure the necessary oxygen supply.

I am advised that 3,000 gallons of oxygen were delivered at the end of last week in

Grand Bahama and 2,500 gallons on New Providence.

Today, Princess Margaret Hospital has approximately 7,500 gallons of liquid oxygen.

Bahamas Welding & Fire also presently has 2,500 gallons of liquid oxygen to supply to the clinics and the South Beach Clinic.

Additional supplies are already in the delivery pipeline to restore normal supplies.

Next week, and each week thereafter, 12,000 gallons of liquid oxygen are expected to arrive in country, providing the supply needed.

Fellow-Bahamians:

I continue to call for volunteers in our national vaccination program.



Your help through volunteering is crucial in our campaign.

The more people who volunteer, the more vaccines we could administer daily.

There is another way that we need your help.

Tonight, I am asking all leaders in our country to unite behind the message of:

**Let's get vaccinated!**

I am asking religious leaders, media commentators, union leaders, political parties and candidates, businesses, civic groups and NGOs, to join us through your various platforms in strongly and continuously encouraging Bahamians to take the vaccines.

If we all, as opinion leaders, speak with one clear, determined and consistent voice, more people will be encouraged to take the vaccine.

Please, use your voices and platforms to spread the message, that vaccines prevent hospitalizations.

They prevent deaths.

And that by us taking the vaccines in large numbers we can go back to more openness.

Ladies and Gentlemen:

I wish to remind the country that effective Friday, September 3<sup>rd</sup>, 2021, that cruise lines operating passenger voyages will be permitted to enter a port in The Bahamas, including private destinations, only if all passengers 12 years of age and older are fully vaccinated.

This requirement will remain in effect until the 1st of November 2021, unless earlier rescinded.

The requirement will not apply to cruise ships attempting to call at a port in an emergency.

The vessel will not be prevented from making port if a cruise operator has provided passage onboard to unvaccinated guests who are ineligible for the COVID-19 vaccination due to medical contraindications.

I wish to offer a number of reminders, particularly as our country is preparing for the upcoming General Election.

The COVID-19 curfews throughout the country will be strictly enforced.

I wish to remind you that individuals traveling from New Providence, Grand Bahama, Eleuthera, Exuma, Abaco, and North and South Eleuthera, including Harbour Island, are required to present

negative COVID-19 test results prior to travel.

Fully vaccinated individuals may present a negative Rapid Antigen or RT PCR test results.

Those who are unvaccinated must present a negative RT PCR test result.

The public health measures governing the elections must also be adhered to.

I note again that the Emergency Orders, limit the number of people campaigning in groups to five, all of whom must be fully vaccinated.

I also note that Bahamians 65 years and older will be permitted to vote in the advance polls, for their further protection in the upcoming General Election.

In terms of public health measures, this will also reduce the number of Bahamians voting on a single day.



I want to assure Bahamians that the voting process will be safe.

I encourage all who are eligible to go out and vote.

Fellow-Bahamians and Residents.

Please continue to abide by the health guidelines.

Please be safe.

May God bless you and your families.

May God continue to guide and protect  
US.

Thank you and good evening.

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