

# East London, George and Kimberley airports resume operations

The East London, George and Kimberley domestic airports will resume operations on 21 July 2020, after getting the green light from the Department of Transport.



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"Following our announcement on 29 June 2020 on the domestic airports permitted to resume operations, I am happy to announce that the following additional airports have met all the requirements and will resume operations on 21 July 2020," announced Transport Minister Fikile Mbalula on Thursday.

The three airports received the go-ahead from the department as government continues to walk the tightrope of preserving human life while gradually resuming economic activity to ensure sustainable livelihoods.

Mbalula announced the reopening of the airports when he gave an update on government's further plans to combat the spread of Covid-19.

## Airline capacity

Responding to a question posed on the department's decision to allow airlines to load at full capacity, Transport Director General, Alec Moemi said he was informed by international standards and scientific evidence.

"We allowed them to operate at 100%. This has been a bit of a sore matter to other modes but we have reasons why we allowed this.

"The first is the fact that all airlines that were manufactured after 1980, which form the majority of South Africa's airline fleet, are fitted with the high-efficiency particulate arrestance (HEPA) filter.

"Depending on which study you read, the HEPA filter is quite efficient. It has efficiency levels of anything between 99.7 to 99.9%," he said.

The HEPA filter, Moemi said, removes dust particles as well as airborne contaminants, which include airborne viruses as well as bacteria.

"The filter also pushes a constant downward of air at a metre per second and reduces the risk of contamination. It actually captures the virus in a tiny microfibre in the filter and the carbon fibres that are there."

In addition to the HEPA filter, Moemi said the airline industry as compared to other modes of transport, is better at enforcement in relation to permits and adherence to industry protocols.

"They [airlines] also know all passengers and that makes it easy for tracking and tracing should any of the passengers test positive unlike in other modes.

"While other modes want to compare themselves with our decision for loading full capacity in airplanes, it has to be balanced against all these considerations," he said.

## **Operating licences extension**

Meanwhile, Mbalula also announced that public transport operating licences and accreditation certificates for tourist services that expired during the lockdown period will be deemed valid for a further period of 90 days.

This is to enable the Provincial Regulatory Entities (PREs) and the National Public Transport Regulator (NPTR) sufficient time to address the backlog and allow affected operators to renew their operating licenses and accreditation certificate for tourist services.

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