

EXIGENCY ORDER ISSUED

Fate whispers to the warrior, "You cannot withstand the storm" and the warrior whispers back, "I am the storm."

Every day since Hurricane Matthew has been a test of mettle because of the lack of electricity, telephone services, potable water, cable and internet services, and/or a secure house. However, everyday every resident of these islands and cays in The Bahamas, who is struggling to get their lives back to normal is saying to Hurricane Matthew, "I am the storm".

On 12th October, 2016 the Cabinet of The Bahamas signed an Exigency Order which will allow certain items to be purchased locally or imported into The Bahamas free of customs duties and value added taxes ("VAT").

There are three mechanisms for importing goods into The Bahamas. Persons travelling abroad to purchase qualifying items will be allowed to bring \$3,000 worth of qualifying items in their accompanied baggage without the prior approval of the National Emergency Management Agency ("NEMA"). However, upon return to The Bahamas they will be required to complete the NEMA form and submit it to a Customs Officer at the port of arrival along with the C18 Accompanied Baggage Customs form usually completed when returning to The Bahamas.

Persons who ship goods to The Bahamas are allowed to import up to \$10,000 worth of qualifying goods without the prior approval of NEMA. The NEMA form and the Customs Department C13 Home Consumption Entry form must be completed and given to the Customs Broker who is clearing the goods on their behalf. A Superintendent in the Customs Department will grant approval at the border and authorise the release of the goods. The prior approval of NEMA is required where there is going to be more than one shipment.

The prior approval of NEMA is required where a replacement motor vehicle or more than \$10,000 in qualifying goods is being imported into The Bahamas. The completed NEMA form must be delivered to the NEMA office on Gladstone Road. A site visit will be made to view the damage and then an approval letter will be issued.

Businesses must obtain the prior approval of NEMA before goods will be released.

There is a designated 'hurricane recovery period' of 180 days from the passing of Hurricane Matthew. In an effort to stimulate the economy, local businesses are being encouraged to register with the Customs Department so that they can sell qualified goods duty and VAT free during the designated hurricane recovery period. Customers will be required to complete the NEMA forms and provide copies of their identification before customs duty and VAT free sales are finalised.

The relevant forms are available on the Government's website www.bahamas.gov.bs.

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