



THE UNITED STATES VIRGIN ISLANDS
OFFICE OF THE GOVERNOR
GOVERNMENT HOUSE

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

July 9, 2020

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Governor Bryan Tightens Restrictions On Air Arrivals, Beaches and Bars

U.S. VIRGIN ISLANDS — Governor Albert Bryan Jr. said during his COVID-19 update on Thursday that beginning Wednesday, July 15, residents of 10 states that are hotspots for the COVID-19 virus must present test results showing they have tested negative for it or quarantine upon their arrival into the Territory.

Governor Bryan also issued an order closing bars and prohibiting sitting or standing at bars in restaurants, and he ordered beaches to close at 4 p.m. on the weekends.

“You are likely aware that there has been a significant uptick in positive COVID cases over the past few weeks in several states. We are now feeling the effects of that surge,” Governor Bryan said.

“For the last couple of weeks, the COVID task force and I have deliberated over the best way to keep our community insulated from what is happening stateside. We have considered several strategies to screen travelers from states that are experiencing a surge in active cases before they enter the territory,” Governor Bryan said. “Like most states facing this very same dilemma, we adopted what appears to be the consensus approach. It is the approach being used by the New England states like New York, New Jersey, Connecticut, and Rhode Island.”

The Government of the Virgin Islands will use data compiled and aggregated by Johns Hopkins University that is updated daily and has set a threshold of 10% positivity – 10 or more positive cases per 100,000 population – to determine which states fall under the new requirements.

Those states are: Alabama; Arizona; Florida; Georgia; Idaho; Kansas; Mississippi; Nevada; South Carolina; and Texas.

Passengers arriving in the Territory whose flights originated in any of those states will either have to self-quarantine for 14 days when they arrive in the territory or produce proof of a negative test for COVID-19 that was taken within 5 days prior to their arrival on island. If a test is administered after arrival into the Virgin Islands and the test result is negative, they can stop quarantining.

Other actions

Governor Bryan also ordered tighter restrictions on all bars throughout the territory, including bars within hotels and restaurants. All bars are closed and patrons are prohibited from sitting or standing at bars, although they can order a drink and take it back to their table. The goal is to avoid congregating at bar counters. The 11 p.m. “last call” and midnight closure remain in effect.

Additionally, beaches will be closed at 4 p.m. on weekends and holidays until further notice. Restrictions on mass gatherings remain in effect, and events or parties that will encourage large congregations of people are prohibited.

The Governor said the priority for his Administration, and for himself personally, is the health and well-being of the community. He also said he has a responsibility to try and sustain the businesses in the community.

“We have to look out for the small business owner who spent their life savings to start that business in our community; the small craft store owner; the taxi driver; the restaurant owner; the waitstaff in that restaurant; the fisherman; the seamstress; our tradespeople,” Governor Bryan said. “Finding the perfect balance between the public health and the livelihood of our community is no easy feat. It is a fine line and COVID changes it daily, but tread that line we must, if we are to make it to the other side of this pandemic.”

Limetree Bay Refinery

The Governor also has worked with Limetree Bay management to tighten requirements at the St. Croix refinery.

In addition to the temporary hold on incoming travel for Limetree contractors and tracking the movement of refinery workers, Limetree has locked down the Man Camp for two weeks and asked contractors living outside of it to self-isolate for 14 days. Following a meeting with Governor Bryan on Wednesday, Limetree management has volunteered to conduct testing of 100% of their employees on rotation moving forward.

Stimulus checks

- The Territory has received the list of Social Security recipients from the U.S. Treasury.
- The most recent issue of stimulus payments to the community included 3,122 checks totaling \$4,786,279. To date, we have issued 34,883 checks totaling \$56,353,313.92.
- To date, 34,883 checks totaling \$56,353,313 have been issued.

Unemployment benefits

- The Virgin Islands Department of Labor has completed its system programming for Pandemic Unemployment Assistance program and can begin processing applications.
- VIDOL has implemented the Pandemic Emergency Unemployment Compensation program, which allots an additional 12 weeks of unemployment assistance to individuals should it be necessary. To file an online application, visit the website at www.vidol.com or contact their call center at 1-877-374-0356.
- As of this week, the Department of Labor has issued 21,665 unemployment checks totaling \$16,393,851 and an additional 16,946 federal pandemic unemployment checks totaling \$27,646,200.
- A total of \$44,041,051 has been paid out to Virgin Islands residents who have lost employment as a result of the pandemic.

COVID-19 cases

- Currently tracking 57 active cases
- 3,610 individuals tested to date
- 3,370 of those tests were negative
- 144 tests came back positive
- 96 tests are pending
- 6 fatalities to date
- Two COVID-19 patients are hospitalized, and one of them is on a ventilator, at Juan F. Luis Hospital on St. Croix.
- No COVID-19 patients are hospitalized at Schneider Regional Medical Center on St. Thomas.

Governor Bryan's next COVID-19 briefing is scheduled for 1 p.m. Monday, July 13.

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