


New Policies to Serve and Safeguard During the COVID-19 State of Emergency – Virgin Islands Department of Labor

 vidol.gov/news/new-policies-to-serve-and-safeguard-during-the-covid-19-state-of-emergency/

New Policies to Serve and Safeguard During the COVID-19 State of Emergency

See information that varies by Division due to the current operational changes that have been made to accommodate social distancing.

USVI-March 20, 2020 – On March 13, 2020, Governor Albert Bryan, Jr. declared the State of Emergency. This has triggered access to additional resources to combat the outbreak. Our Agency is ready to assist your employees while using the recommended precautions from the Governor of the Virgin Islands, the Health Department, and the Center for Disease Control. We are implementing safety precautions to allow us to continue to assist the public while ensuring the safety of our internal staff. We are using the recommended social distancing feet, which was recently moved to 10 feet.

Unemployment Insurance

Any employer that needs to reduce hours give furloughs, layoffs, or a possible reduction in hours, the Virgin Islands Department of Labor is requesting that employers do the following:

1. Send a letter to the Office of the Commissioner that includes the names of the affected employees in advance of the reduction of hours to *twenty (20)* a week, discharge or layoff.
 2. Contact the Department of Labor directly at the following numbers:
 1. St. Thomas 340-776-3700 at the following extensions: 2094 or 2013
 1. St. Croix 340-773-1994 at the following extensions: 2152 or 2154
- Timely file your quarterly reports. *The filing of quarterly reports is necessary to assure persons receive the correct unemployment compensation.*
 - Send a notice to the employee with the reason for the separation before reducing in hours, discharge, or layoff.

Labor Relations:

Due to the recent developments with COVID19, effective immediately, the Division of Labor Relations, St. Croix & St. Thomas/St. John Districts would like to notify the community that we will be limiting our in-person interactions with the general public. To continue to serve the community, the Division will be communicating with customers via telephone and email, instead of coming into the Division. We will respond to all inquiries within 24 hours. Please make sure to leave your name, phone number, email, and reason for contacting the Division.

For information, inquiries, and concerns, contact Director Gwen Steele at 340-773-1994 ext. 2124 or via email at gwen.steele@dol.vi.gov on St. Croix and Ms. Rhonda Frazer Labor Relations Specialist at 340-776-3700 ext. 2028 rfrazer@vidol.gov on St. Thomas.

Workers' Compensation:

The Division of Workers' Compensation Administration, St. Croix and St. Thomas/ St. John District would like to notify the community that we will be limiting our in-person interactions with the general public. The Division will continue to serve our claimants and providers in our full capacity. We are asking the public to utilize our drop box located in the lobby of our main building and to contact us via telephone at (340) 713-3413 STX and (340) 715-5708 STT for general inquiries. We are also asking that our providers continue to contact us via email and fax (340) 713-3421 STX and (340) 715-5743 STT. The Division will respond to all inquiries, concerns, and correspondence within 24 hours.

OSHA:

Due to the recent COVID-19 events, VIDOSH is requiring employees File a Safety and Health Complaint online at <https://www.osha.gov/pls/osha7/eComplaintForm.html>

You (or your representative) have the right to file a confidential safety and health complaint and request an OSHA inspection of your workplace if you believe there is a serious hazard or if you think your employer is not following OSHA standards. The complaint should be filed as soon as possible after noticing the hazard. A signed complaint is more likely to result in an onsite inspection

How to File a Whistleblower Complaint

You have the right to file a whistleblower complaint with OSHA if you believe your employer retaliated against you for exercising your rights as an employee under the whistleblower protection laws enforced by OSHA. In states with OSHA-approved State Plans, employees may file complaints with <https://www.osha.gov/whistleblower/WBComplaint.html>

Hearings & Appeals:

As a result of the recent developments with COVID-19, [CORONAVIRUS] effective immediately, the VIRGIN ISLANDS DEPARTMENT OF LABOR, HEARINGS & APPEALS UNIT, St. Croix & St. Thomas/St. John Districts are notifying the community that we will be holding all hearings telephonically as per the instructions to be provided to all noticed parties. On the date of your hearing, parties must: Call in from your residence or office to the number that appears on your mailed/mailed DEPARTMENT OF LABOR HEARING NOTICE.

Please make sure to leave your name, phone number, email, and any questions with the numbers provided. For all information, inquiries, and concerns, contact Chief Administrative Law Judge June Austin Director at 340-773-1994 ext. 2107 or via email at

jaustin@dol.vi.gov on St. Croix and Administrative Law Judge James Kitson at 340-776-3700 ext. 2036 on St. Thomas.

For information on COVID-19, visit the Virgin Islands Department of Health's website at: doh.vi.gov/coronavirus

or text COVID19USVI to 888777 or contact the Department of Health at 340-712-6299 on St. Croix or 340-776-1519 on St. Thomas.