



**THE UNITED STATES VIRGIN ISLANDS
OFFICE OF THE GOVERNOR
GOVERNMENT HOUSE**

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

April 17, 2020

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Governor Bryan Plans to Reopen Beaches on Monday

U.S. VIRGIN ISLANDS — During Friday’s COVID-19 update at Government House in Christiansted, Governor Albert Bryan Jr. said he plans to reopen the Territory’s beaches on Monday, April 20, and cautioned residents who plan to go to a beach to remain mindful of social and physical distancing guidelines and to have plenty of space between families at the beach.

Governor Bryan also gave his condolences to the family and friends of the St. Thomas woman who became the second person in the Territory to succumb to COVID-19. The victim was 72 and had underlying health maladies and contracted the virus through community spread.

As of Friday morning, 458 individuals have been tested for COVID-19 in the Territory, with 373 tests coming back negative, 51 testing positive and 34 tests pending. Of those testing positive, 46 persons have recovered and two people have died. The Virgin Islands Department of Health currently is tracking three active cases.

Regarding the reopening of the beaches, Governor Bryan said water quality testing will not become available until later next week.

“Beachgoers will be swimming at their own risks. We ask that you be especially cautious in the waters that have been recently visited by boaters,” Governor Bryan said. “As soon as they are able, DPNR will provide a beach update.”

The Governor also reiterated that the prohibition of congregations of more than 10 still is in effect.

“I am encouraging you to keep your family as far away as possible from everyone else’s family,” Governor Bryan said. “If we are unable to self-regulate our use of the beaches, I will have no choice but to order them closed again. In order to limit mass gatherings at our beaches, beach bars and restaurants are to remain closed.”

The Governor also addressed current discussions the White House is having with U.S. governors about developing a plan to reopen the country.

“This guidance provides a very useful framework for us as we contemplate those decisions locally,” he said. “We will provide more information on those decisions in the coming days.”

The plight of elderly and disabled residents was also addressed by the Governor, who said he has heard many complaints from them about the difficulty in finding transportation to run daily errands.

“We are mindful of this concern, and we are looking at two possibilities: opening up VITRAN services or contracting with private taxi companies,” he said.

Governor Bryan concluded his remarks by taking the opportunity to implore the community to take an active part in helping stop the recent spate of violence by reporting, anonymously if preferred, any criminal activity to law enforcement.

“We had a spate of violent crime on the island of St. Thomas,” the Governor said. “At a time when the community needs to work together to fight against a common enemy, this is a sad and disappointing turn of events.”

Governor Bryan asked the community to help identify the perpetrators, their co-conspirators and their motives.

“If you know something, say something,” Governor Bryan said. “If you are unwilling to contact the VIPD directly, then call Crime Stoppers at 1-800-222-8477.”

Governor Bryan’s next COVID-19 briefing is tentatively scheduled for Monday, April 20.

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