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Press Contact

Richard Motta

340-474-2399

www.vi.gov

richard.mottajr@go.vi.gov

USVI Officially Enters ‘Open Doors’ Phase of Territory’s Plan to Safely Resume Operations in Response to COVID-19

U.S. VIRGIN ISLANDS — Before giving his weekly update on the status of the COVID-19 virus in the Territory, Governor Albert Bryan Jr. took a few minutes to address the riots across the United States and condemned racism, social inequities, and violence, while asking Virgin Islanders to support the Virgin Islands Police Department.

“I know that our officers who are of this community do their utmost best to serve and protect the citizens of our Virgin Islands in a manner that respects the rights and dignity of Virgin Islands residents,” Governor Bryan said. “They have nowhere to commute to, they go to bed every night in these very same neighborhoods. They know our people, and they know our issues, and they deserve our support, cooperation, and respect.”

However, the Governor underscored that racism and social inequity did not play a part in a recent gun battle at Oswald Harris Court housing community or the murder of a young man in Downtown Christiansted, and he called on residents to step up and report criminal activity and help root out the violence plaguing the community.

“We must have a dual plan of action that motivates young people of color to run for leadership opportunities in their community and implement policy that curbs police brutality, recruits the right officers, and provides economic access to a better way of life,” Governor Bryan said. “We must also recognize that ultimately we are all responsible for the communities that we live in, and we should be called to action, in the same way, to notify police of suspicious and criminal activity, correct our family and neighbors when they do wrong and constantly support our civil servants, like teachers, nurses and, yes, law enforcement officers.”

“Open Doors” phase of the path to a “New Normal”

- Monday marked the first day of the blue phase of the Territory’s recovery from COVID-19
- All restrictions against leisure travel are no longer in place.
- Guidance has been developed for restaurants, bars, hotels, taxis, and safaris on how to conduct their businesses while protecting the public’s health.
- Thermal scanners are being installed at the airports, and other measures are in place to track visitors and their health.

“Let me be clear. It is inevitable that individuals who are positive with COVID-19 will enter the Territory,” Governor Bryan said. “If they are asymptomatic, our thermal scan will not pick them up. And all the questionnaires in the world will not identify someone who doesn’t even know that they are infected.”

The Governor also said that every time the Territory crosses a new threshold of openness, there is an understandable level of anxiety in the community.

Diligence and vigilance have been our partner throughout this crisis, and that is what continues to make us successful,” he said. “I ask each of you to continue those practices that have now, for the most part, become habits in our community.”

Stimulus checks

- The Department of Finance completed another run of stimulus checks on Saturday of 6,169 checks totaling just less than \$10 million.
- To date, almost 25,000 stimulus checks totaling \$39.9 million.
- The total represents about half of the CARES Act funds allotted to the Territory by the U.S. Treasury for stimulus funds.

YES credits

- To date, 33,737 residential customers received a \$250 credit, and 6,221 commercial ratepayers have received a \$500 credit.
- A total of just less than 40,000 ratepayers have received YES credits.
- The YES Credit Program is nearing completion

Unemployment benefits

- As of April 7, the Virgin Islands Department of Labor has issued 9,058 unemployment insurance checks.
- The Labor Department has issued 4,380 Federal Pandemic Unemployment Compensation checks totaling \$16,692,922.
- The Department of Labor has secured a contract with InTouch Call Center, and the public can get information about any COVID-19-related employment security issues and unemployment benefits by calling 1-877-374-0356.
- The call center is available 24 hours a day, seven days a week.

COVID-19 cases

- Currently tracking 2 active cases
- 1,815 individuals tested to date
- 1,741 of those tests were negative
- 70 tests came back positive
- 63 recovered
- 4 tests are pending
- 6 fatalities to date
- No COVID-19 patients are hospitalized at Juan F. Luis Hospital on St. Croix.
- One COVID-19 patient is hospitalized on a ventilator at Schneider Regional Medical Center on St. Thomas.

Governor Bryan's next COVID-19 update is scheduled for 1 p.m. Monday, June 8.

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