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# Governor Bryan Delays Reopening of Territory's Schools

*Limetree Bay and Virgin Islands Department of Health*
*Significantly Increase Testing and Tracing of Refinery Workers*

U.S. VIRGIN ISLANDS — During his COVID-19 update on Monday, Governor Albert Bryan Jr. said he is delaying the reopening of the Territory's schools until at least September 8 as the virus pandemic continues to surge in the Virgin Islands.

Governor Bryan also said that the outbreak at Limetree Bay Terminal on St. Croix continues and that his Administration was informed just prior to his update of an additional 16 positive cases of COVID-19 at the refinery.

The Governor said that opening schools on August 10 would require 100% online learning, which is less than optimal, and that there are three primary benefits of delaying the start of school until at least September 8:

- Children have a better chance of having a school year with less virtual classes of there is a vaccine late this year or early next year.
- The Administration anticipates having a flatter curve and less community spread by or after September 8 as more states move to masking policies and the national surge dies down.
- Education officials will gain the benefit of lessons learned from those school districts that have opened up early and will be able to avoid the same mistakes.

"This is an active conversation happening stateside and locally as every school district in the country is debating the safest way to proceed with the reopening of schools during the pandemic surge without compromising the education of our children or their health and the health of the

school faculty," Governor Bryan said. "The Department of Education has drafted its school reopening plan that complies with the Department of Health and CDC guidelines issued last week. Public discussions of that plan will start this week as they move to gather stakeholder input."

**Limetree Bay**

Limetree Bay and the Virgin Islands Department of Health have significantly increased testing contract workers at the refinery and ramped up contact-tracing to test everyone who may have come into contact with the COVID-positive individuals. These measures are in addition to a moratorium on more contract workers traveling to the Territory, temperature scans at the gates and a two-week restriction on the Man Camp and contract workers.

The Governor said he has a follow-up meeting scheduled with Limetree management to determine what further measures, and he gave a breakdown of the testing of Limetree workers:

- 2,685 total workers
- 985 live inside the Man Camp and 1,700 live outside, half of whom are locals
- 1,386 tested, with 69 positive cases – 40 outside the Man Camp and 29 inside the Man Camp
- 59 of the 69 positive cases exhibited no symptoms and do not feel sick
- Limetree is testing more than 300 people per day

"Besides Limetree, there have been a few isolated incidents on all three islands of community transmission. As a result, from time to time we have ordered the closure of a public office or a private business out of an abundance of caution to contain the spread of the virus while we conduct our contact-tracing," Governor Bryan said.

"This is not necessarily cause for alarm; we should understand that this is part of the new normal in the COVID era and these 'flare-ups' and 'scares' will occur," The Governor said. "I also assure you that if we have any reason to believe that you have been put at risk for exposure to the virus, the Department of Health will be reaching out to you. Ninety percent of the people we are testing are asymptomatic."

**Travel restrictions**

There currently are 11 states and territories under travel restrictions into the Virgin Islands: Arizona; Florida; Georgia; Idaho; Kansas; Mississippi; Nevada; Puerto Rico; South Carolina; Texas and Utah. Travelers from those states and territories must present test results showing they have tested negative for COVID-19 within 5 days of their arrival into the Territory.

"While the data has not shown a significant increase in travel-related COVID positives, we have nonetheless decided to take a proactive posture given what is taking place on the U.S. mainland," Governor Bryan said.

**Unemployment benefits**

- 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 22,295 unemployment checks totaling $16,884,428 and 17,575 federal pandemic unemployment checks totaling $28,560,780.
- A total of $45,445,208 has been paid out to Virgin Islands residents who have lost employment as a result of the pandemic.

**COVID-19 cases**

- Currently tracking 120 active cases
- 4,296 individuals tested to date
- 4,084 of those tests were negative
- 206 tests came back positive
- 6 tests are pending
- Since Friday, 617 people have been tested and 49 were positive
- Of those positive cases, 3 are on St. Thomas and 46 on St. Croix (41 directly related to Limetree Bay)
- 6 fatalities to date
- One COVID-19 patient is hospitalized and on a ventilator at Juan F. Luis Hospital on St. Croix.
- One COVID-19 patient is hospitalized at Schneider Regional Medical Center on St. Thomas.

Governor Bryan's next COVID-19 briefing is scheduled for 1 p.m. Thursday, July 16.

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