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Governor Bryan Orders Beaches Closed Early This Weekend, Bars to Stop Serving at 11 p.m. Until Further Notice

U.S. VIRGIN ISLANDS — In an effort to mitigate the growing spread of the COVID-19 virus in the Territory, Governor Albert Bryan Jr. has ordered all beaches to be closed at 4 p.m. for the Fourth of July holiday weekend, and all bars are ordered to stop serving, and alcohol sales Territory-wide are to end at 11 p.m. until further notice.

The Governor also has instituted stricter measures for travelers who enter the U.S. Virgin Islands and his Administration and the Virgin Islands Department of Health are working with Limetree Bay CEO Brian Lever to institute more aggressive health protocols for contract workers arriving from the mainland to work at the facility on St. Croix.

This long weekend presents a real and very valid concern for us, as it is traditionally a time where Virgin islanders get together at the beaches and at community events to celebrate Emancipation Day on July 3 and Independence Day on July 4,” Governor Bryan said. “We continue to have instances of individuals not following the social distancing guidelines issued by the Department of Health, not adhering to the restrictions on mass gatherings and not wearing their facial coverings in public places.

“Just one errant carrier can wreak havoc on our delicate health care system by creating dozens of infections,” the Governor said. “Going into this long holiday weekend, we have taken some pre-emptive measures to help reduce the recurrence of these types of incidents, particularly at our bars and at the beaches.”

Beaches

Effective Friday, July 3, through Sunday, July 5, all beaches in the Territory will be closed at 4 p.m. daily and must be vacated by then. The beaches will reopen at 6 a.m.

The Governor advised residents not to wait until 4 p.m. to leave and to start packing up by 3 p.m. He also said he is mindful of residents who exercise at the beaches and who go there for a respite from the stress and depression caused by the COVID-19 spread and resurgence.

“This is almost the fourth month now that we’re dealing with this virus. People are starting to get depressed and being locked up all weekend, that’s not either in terms of mental health,” Governor Bryan said. “That was the logic behind 4 o’clock, to give families an opportunity to take their kids to the beach, get a little dip and go home.”

Bars and Alcohol Sales

Starting Thursday, July 2 – and until further notice – all bars must close by midnight until 6 a.m. the following day. They also are restricted from serving any drinks after 11 p.m. until 8 a.m. the following day.

Also until further notice, stores are prohibited from selling alcohol after 11 p.m. until 6 a.m. the next morning.

“This is not for the weekend; this is until further notice. That means until we start to see a decrease in the spread of what is going on in the states,” Governor Bryan said. “As a reminder, wear your mask when you go into an establishment. Wear your mask when you’re not taking a drink. This is for your safety. We all know how alcohol has an effect on the inhibitions of humans. Please, wear your mask.

Travelers and Visitors

Governor Bryan also is instituting a 14-day quarantine for people who are arriving from high infections rate states, such as Texas and Florida.

Visitors will have to produce COVID-19 test results that were taken within 72 hours of their arrival that show they are negative. If they don’t do that, they will have the option of taking a COVID-19 test upon their arrival and must stay in quarantine until they get results that they are negative. Visitors who don’t take the test must quarantine for 14 days.

“We’re putting together the list of states that will be there, most definitely Texas is one of them, and Florida, as they are certainly starting to spike at this point,” Governor Bryan said.

Limetree Bay Facility

The Governor said this past week has been a challenge regarding COVID-19 and the Limetree Bay facility.

“As our largest private employer, there are thousands of Virgin Islanders who are employed within that facility. An outbreak of the virus within that work environment would immediately put many local families at risk,” Governor Bryan said during a press conference Thursday at Government House on St. Croix.

In addition to protocols already in place at Limetree Bay – including temperature scans at the gates, mandatory facial coverings and weekly reporting of all contractors traveling to St. Croix – all contractors arriving from the mainland are immediately placed into a 72-hour quarantine.

After the three-day quarantine, the workers are tested for COVID-19 to determine if they have traveled with the virus or have become infected during transit, and if their test results are negative for the virus, they are cleared to work. If they test positive, the contractors must remain in quarantine until they are fully recovered.

“These protocols have been relatively effective in reducing the transmission of the virus within the Limetree facility. In fact, it is the very same protocols that are identifying individuals before they have access to the Limetree facility and our residents and guests who work there,” Governor Bryan said. “However, circumstances have evolved since we first put these protocols in effect. We are now seeing a resurgence of the virus. Particularly in the states where many of the contracted refinery workers are traveling from.”

The Governor also thanked Mr. Lever and his team for their understanding, collaboration and cooperation in addressing the public health concern.

“We all can agree that the work at the refinery has kept many Virgin islanders gainfully employed during this pandemic, and we do not wish to see it slowed down or halted,” the Governor said.

COVID-19 cases

- Currently tracking 11 active cases
- 3,055 individuals tested to date – 3% of the population
- 2,924 of those tests were negative
- 92 tests came back positive
- 39 tests are pending
- 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.
- Both patients are in stable condition.

Governor Bryan’s next COVID-19 update is scheduled for 1 p.m. on Monday, July 6 and will be livestreamed at [facebook.com/GovernmentHouseUSVI](https://www.facebook.com/GovernmentHouseUSVI).



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