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Governor Bryan Warns Residents to 'Mask Up' For Long Fourth of July Weekend

U.S. VIRGIN ISLANDS — Governor Albert Bryan Jr. said during his weekly COVID-19 update that at this point he is not planning to close the beaches for the long July 4th weekend, but he warned residents to "Mask Up" if they plan to celebrate the holiday at the beach or elsewhere.

"The only thing that is giving me pause to shut down the beaches is that we only have four active cases and the other 50% of cases we found other than food service workers are travelers," Governor Bryan said. "We would have seen these traveling cases no matter what we did. I am also given some level of comfort knowing that we have a 'No Mask, No Service' policy in place.

"I would be disingenuous if I did not share with you that the virus is very much alive in our community, and the place that you are most likely to get it is anywhere you don't have your mask on, so Mask Up," the Governor said.

Governor Bryan said the Territory has seen a 20% increase in COVID-19 cases from May and that 50% of the people who have contracted the virus have been associated with the food service industry.

"In fact, the most vulnerable place that you can be is a bar or restaurant, as this is the only place that you don't have to wear a mask," Governor Bryan said. "Ironically, though, it is the workers who are turning up with the virus. Please, if you work in a bar or restaurant, please keep your masks on and wash your hands frequently."

School Reopening Survey
Governor Bryan also asked residents – parents, students and teachers – to take the Virgin Islands Department of Education survey about the reopening of schools, which can be found on the department's website at www.vide.vi.

The Department of Education currently is considering three options for conducting the 2020-2021 school year in the public schools: in-person learning; long-distance or online learning; or a combination of the two.

The Department also has convened a school reopening advisory board that includes local and national health and safety professionals and other key stakeholders to ensure the Territory can safely reopen schools in August.

"This is a matter of great concern and high priority for us at this moment as we continue to monitor the spread of the virus on the mainland and here in the Territory," Governor Bryan said. "What we do concerning the reopening of the schools in August is solely dependent on what happens with the virus in June and July."

Stimulus checks

- To date, the Virgin Islands Department of Finance has issued 31,761 CARES Act stimulus checks totaling $51,567,034.

Unemployment benefits

- To date, the Virgin Islands Department of Labor has received 11,075 applications for unemployment benefits.
- The department has processed 8,222 applications.
- As of Friday, June 25, the Department of Labor has issued 17,800 unemployment insurance checks totaling more than $13.4 million.
- The department has issued 13,090 Federal Pandemic Unemployment Compensation checks totaling $22.2 million.

COVID-19 cases

- Currently tracking 4 active cases
- 2,863 individuals tested to date
- 2,778 of those tests were negative
- 81 tests came back positive
- 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 has recovered from the virus but still is hospitalized at Schneider Regional Medical Center on St. Thomas.

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