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Governor Bryan Eases Some COVID-19 Restrictions For Restaurants, Taxicabs and Beaches

Community Vaccination Centers Open in Each District to General Public

U.S. VIRGIN ISLANDS — During Monday’s Government House weekly press briefing, Governor Albert Bryan Jr. announced that, beginning March 8, some COVID-19 restrictions are being adjusted in an effort to support the local business community.

Beginning next week, beaches can remain open until 5 p.m. on weekends and holidays, and taxis can transport more than the 50 percent capacity limit if all the passengers are part of the same family or group.

In addition, restaurants can now seat up to 75 percent of their approved seating capacity, and they can seat more than six people at the same table if they are all in the same party.

Masking requirements and social distancing remain in effect.

“All other guidelines remain in effect, Governor Bryan said. “However, as we move forward with our vaccination strategy and toward herd immunity, we will also consider easing those as well.

Weekend shootings

Governor Bryan also addressed the violence that occurred on St. Croix during the weekend that left 13 people injured by gunfire and five people dead.

“There are few words to express the outrage and hurt our community feels this morning because of the callous and reckless actions of those who chose to reign terror on our streets over the weekend,” the Governor said. “But if we are honest, this weekend is emblematic of a culture that we, as a community, have for more than 30 years allowed to snowball into this avalanche of violence.”

The Governor said that the community enables the violence by expressing shock and addressing anger at everyone except for those people who pull the triggers.

“When we make their heinous acts less about what they have done and more about our police and first-responders, we absolve them of responsibility and embolden them to inflict more pain in the community,” Governor Bryan said. “I resolve to remember a time in our Virgin Islands when the village meant more than me and mine, and when it was ‘all ah we.’ I have faith that we will get there again. We just have to do our part and take ownership of our place in this village.”

The Governor urged any residents who have any information about the shootings to call the Virgin Islands Police Department at 340-778-4950 or Crime Stoppers at 1-800-222-TIPS (8487).

Community Vaccination Centers

As of Monday, March 1, the Territory entered Phase 3 of its vaccination strategy with the opening of the Community Vaccination Centers in each district. Access to the COVID-19 is open to Virgin Islanders who are 16 and older.

“This is our latest step toward our goal of having half the population, or 50,000 people, vaccinated by July 1,” Governor Bryan said. “I know there are many in our community who, in the words of Vice President Kamala Harris, have a ‘righteous skepticism’ toward these and other vaccines, but it is the best shot you can take to protect yourself and the best shot we have as a community toward normalcy.”

On St. Thomas, the Community Vaccination Center is at the University of the Virgin Islands Sports and Fitness Center, and on St. Croix, is at UVI’s Great Hall. The Centers are open Monday through Friday from 8 a.m. to 5 p.m., and residents can schedule an appointment by calling the VITEMA vaccination hotline at 340-777-VACS (8227)

Schools reopening

The Virgin Islands Department of Education is phasing on the reopening of public schools, starting in the St. Croix District for students in pre-K, first grade, special education and Career and Technical education students, beginning Tuesday, March 2.

On Tuesday, March 9 second- and third-grade students on St. Croix will resume their in-class education. The schedule is as follows:

- **8:15 a.m. to 1:15 p.m.**
 - Pearl B. Larsen
 - Juanita Gardine

- Eulalie R.R. Rivera
- Arthur A. Richards
- **8:30 a.m. to 1:30 p.m.**
 - Ricardo Richards
 - Lew Muckle
 - Alfredo Andrews
 - Claude O. Markoe
- **8 a.m. 3:30 p.m.**
 - Career and Technical Education Center

Temperature checks will be conducted before students enter the campus and masks are to be worn at all times. General education studies for students in grades 4-12 will remain virtual until further notice.

Private and parochial schools funding

Governor Bryan has designated authorized CARES Act funding to help offset the financial hardships of the Territory's private and parochial schools, many of which have been conducting virtual learning since the beginning of the school year in August.

The funding will be based on the school's student population and will amount to approximately \$1,300 per student. More details will be available as the implementation of the program moves closer.

Stimulus checks

Governor Bryan also said that the Department of Finance and the Bureau of Internal Revenue continue to mail out stimulus checks.

Residents who have not yet filed a 2019 income tax return have until Monday, March 15 to do so to be eligible for a stimulus payment. Residents who are not tax filers can file a 2019 form 1040 and annotate \$1 on the interest line of the form.

Social Security recipients who received the first stimulus payment do not need to file anything further or do anything else, and the second round of stimulus payments will be mailed to them automatically.

The Bureau of Internal Revenue also has established a hotline – 340-714-9325 – to assist in responding to the high volume of calls by residents with questions about the stimulus checks.

Vaccinations administered

- 14,221 first doses
- 6,786 second doses
- 21,007 total doses administered

Anyone who thinks they may have contracted COVID-19 can call the Epidemiology hotline at 340-712-6299 or 340-776-1519. For more information, visit [covid19usvi.com](https://www.covid19usvi.com).

For information about the COVID-19 vaccines, call the VITEMA hotline Mondays-Fridays from 8:30 a.m. to 3 p.m. at 340-777-VACS (8227).

Pop-Up testing sites

This week, pop-up testing sites will be at the following locations:

- **Home Depot** on St. Thomas on Tuesday, March 2, from 1 to 3 p.m.
- **Canegata Rec Center** on St. Croix on Tuesday, March 2, from 10 a.m. to 1 p.m.
- **The V.I. Port Authority Gravel Yard** on St. John on Wednesday, March 3, from 1:30 to 4:30 p.m.
- **Buddhoe Park** on St. Croix on Thursday, March 4, from 10:30 a.m. to 1:30 p.m.
- **Fort Christian parking lot** on St. Thomas on Thursday, March 4, from 1 to 3 p.m.

COVID-19 cases

- Currently tracking 110 active cases.
- 47,981 individuals tested to date.
- 45,225 of those tests were negative.
- 2,646 tests came back positive.
- 2,511 people have recovered.
- 25 fatalities.
- Four COVID-19 patients currently are hospitalized, with one patient on a ventilator, at Juan F. Luis Medical Center on St. Croix.
- One COVID-19 patient is currently hospitalized at Schneider Regional Medical Center on St. Thomas.

The Bryan/Roach Administration continues to be committed to transparency, stabilizing the economy, restoring trust in government and ensuring that the disaster recovery is completed as quickly as possible.

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