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Coronavirus Effect: Port Authority Provides Update on Airports, Seaports, Cargo, BVI Ferries and More

USVI Ports HUB / **Published On March 25, 2020 06:41 AM /**

Staff Consortium **March 25, 2020**

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As Governor Bryan was holding a press conference last Thursday to announce an escalation to his administration's coronavirus response, aircrafts of major carriers landed at the Cyril E. King Airport. By. ERNICE GILBERT/ VI CONSORTIUM

The Virgin Islands Port Authority has provided a detailed update on port operations in the territory. Port Authority Executive Director, Carlton Dowe, said the temporary operational changes have been implemented as part of the territory's effort to combat the coronavirus, the deadly pathogen causing the Covid-19 disease.

Airports: Both the Cyril E. King and the Henry E. Rohlsen Airports are open. However, VIPA has noticed a marked drop in travelers. With the recent suspension on new hotel bookings issued

by Governor Albert Bryan Jr., effective Wednesday, March 25, VIPA expects to see fewer travelers arriving in the territory in the upcoming weeks.

As a territory of the United States, the USVI's airports operate under the guidelines set by the Federal Aviation Administration (FAA). VIPA said it cannot close the territory's airports without federal authorization. "It should be noted that Puerto Rico has made several requests to close its airports to no avail, the authority said.

Moreover, at the arrival of COVID19 in the territory, there were thousands of guests in the U.S. Virgin Islands. Had the airport been closed, these guests would have been stranded in the territory, the Port Authority explained.

As of March 22, over 400 guests have departed from the USVI. Hundreds of passengers traveling through St. Thomas destined for the BVI have also returned to the mainland due to the BVI's port closures, VIPA said.

Flights: American Airlines, Delta Air Lines, Seaborne and Cape Air have reported reduced schedules or cancellations of flights to and from St. Thomas. No airline cancellations have been reported for St. Croix. Travelers are encouraged to contact their airlines directly for flight information prior to arriving at the airport.

Cruise Seaports: All cruise lines have voluntarily suspended their operations for at least thirty days. VIPA acknowledges the serious economic impact the cancelation of cruise activity may cause for our tenants and the territory's economy. "We are hopeful that a resolution to this very serious matter will be reached soon. At this time, safety is of paramount priority, the authority said.

Inter-Island Car Ferries: All three car ferry companies are operating between St. John and St. Thomas - Global Marine, Love City Car Ferries, and the Todd G. Global Marine and Love City Car Ferries have published modified ferry service schedules.

Inter-Island Passenger Ferries: The St. John/St. Thomas passenger ferries are operating as normal. The QE IV ferry which services the St. Croix/St. Thomas route is not operating until further notice.

The Edward Blyden Terminal: Ferry operations at the Blyden Terminal ended at 12 noon today and will be closed until further notice. However, Customs services will be available at the Blyden Terminal from 8 a.m. to 4 p.m. daily.

British Virgin Islands Ferries: VIPA asked that concerned persons confirm schedules directly with the BVI ferry companies concerning travel in the British Virgin Islands.

Cargo Operations: Cargo operations in the territory will continue as normal, VIPA said. The authority reminded the public that all its seaports and mariners operate under the rules and regulations set by the United States Coast Guard.

U.S. Customs and Border Protection: CBP has adjusted its hours of operations at VIPA's St. Thomas/St. John district's ports to reduce staffing in response to COVID-19. There are no changes to CBP's hours of operation in the St. Croix district at this time. She changes [here](#).

Port IDs: The VIPA ID Office will be closed to the public until further notice. IDs will not be processed for marine or aviation employees. All police reports including lost badge reports should

be made over the phone by calling the VIPA Dispatch Office 340-714-6659.

SIDA Classes: All Security Identity Display Area (SIDA) classes have been canceled until further notice.

Administrative Offices Closure: VIPA has implemented a work-from-home program for most of its administrative employees territory-wide. The administrative offices closed as of Tuesday, March 24, through April 17, 2020. A list of contact numbers and e-mail addresses for VIPA staff can be found on the authority's [website](#).

Port Operations Continue: Per the mission of the authority, travel and commerce must continue, VIPA said. As such, some VIPA employees have been asked to report to work to keep our facilities open and to facilitate safe port operations. "Our employees will be properly equipped with the materials to keep them safe as they carry out their duties and help keep our ports functional," VIPA said.

Parking Lots: All of VIPA's airport and seaport parking lots are open normal hours.

Communication: The public can communicate with VIPA staff by calling (340) 774-1629 on St. Thomas/St. John or (340) 778-1012 on St. Croix, or via e-mail info@viport.com. Updates will be posted on VIPA's Facebook, Twitter and Instagram social media pages as well as its website www.viport.com. Follow @usviports.

"We remain committed to the health and safety of our employees, tenants and partners," the authority said.