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Covid-19 Infiltrates Dept. of Health, Other Gov't Arms

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V.I. Dept. of Health on St. Croix By. VI CONSORTIUM

The coronavirus, which has been spreading throughout the U.S. Virgin Islands community, has infiltrated the V.I. Department of Health — the branch of government leading the charge against the virus — along with other government arms.

On Thursday, Health Commissioner Justa Encarnacion in a [letter](#) addressed to employees confirmed a positive infection at the department and said several other government agencies had recorded infections.

"Department of Health family, it has come to our attention that one of our employees have tested Covid-19 positive at the Department of Health, St. Croix location. Our exposure to COVID-19 increases daily as the territory's numbers increase; thus, several of our local agencies have

experienced a number of positive cases. Unfortunately, one of our staff is now affected," she said. "We want to provide support to them and their family as this of course is a difficult time. Please note that the person is stable and recovering at home. Also, all close contacts have been notified to ensure their safety. The Department's Division of Epidemiology will test all VIDOH team members and a testing schedule will be arranged through Division Director. "

The virus has also affected the V.I. Legislature, with Senator Alicia Barnes postponing a committee hearing scheduled for Thursday because of the exposure. "Unfortunately the coronavirus has impacted our office family, as such we are left with no choice but to postpone the committee meeting," she wrote in release issued to the media.

D.O.H. on Thursday night announced nine new coronavirus cases, bringing the territory's total confirmed cases to 153, with the health department tracking 60 active cases. There were 53 cases pending as of Thursday, and D.O.H. said 87 individuals had recovered from the deadly virus.

To date, 3,679 tests have been performed, 3,370 of which returned negative. Six people have died territory-wide, and two persons were hospitalized at the Juan F. Luis Hospital as of Thursday, with Governor Albert Bryan confirming one requiring ventilator assistance.

On St. Croix, three infections were community spread-related, three through travel, and one close contact. On St. Thomas, there was one case related to travel and the other close contact, according to D.O.H.'s latest infographic.