

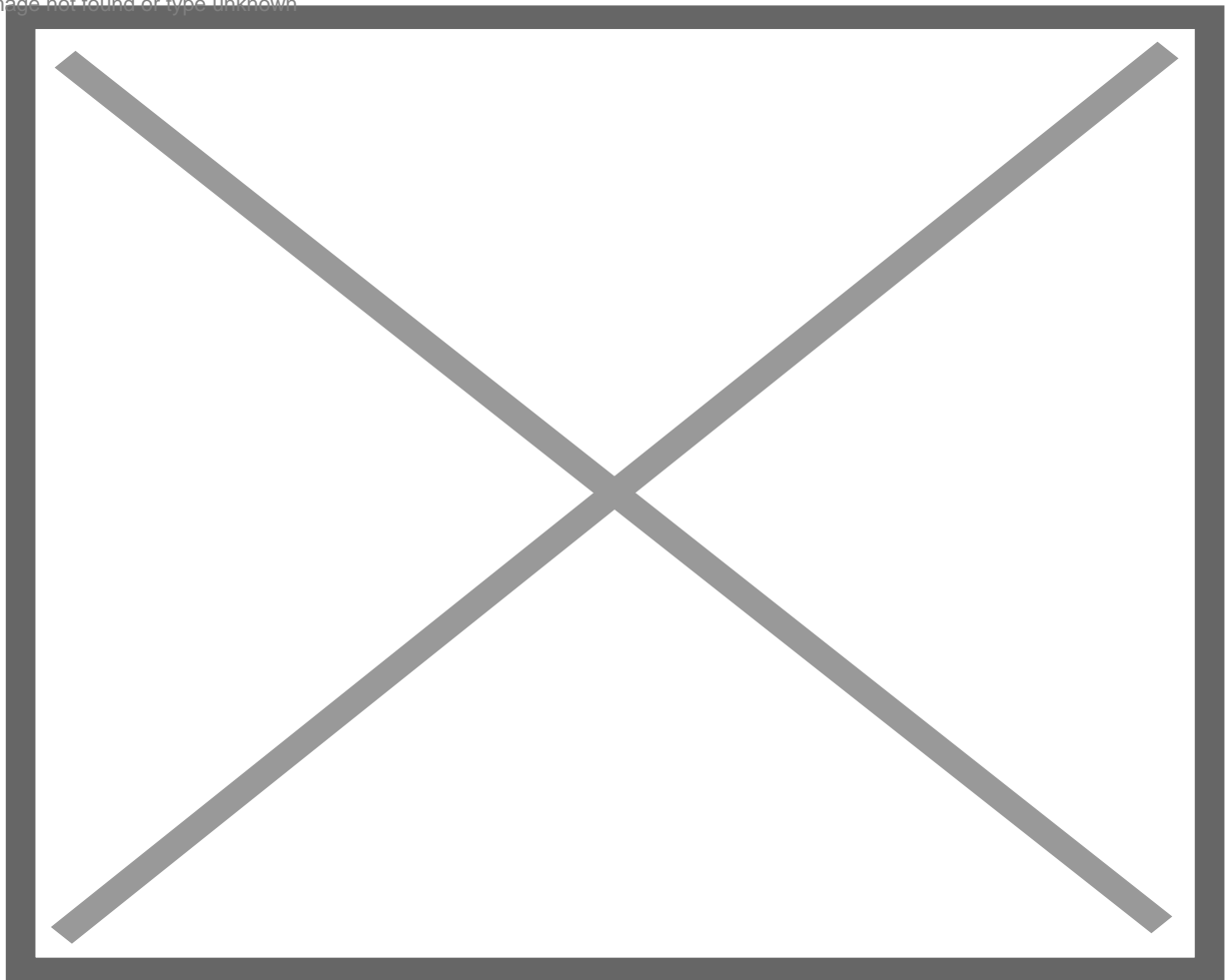
# VIPD to Crackdown on Loitering to Boost Public Safety

**VIPD focuses on gas stations, convenience stores, and nightclubs to prevent crime**

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The V.I. Police Department has announced a focused enforcement campaign on loitering statutes, particularly around establishments such as gas stations, convenience stores, nightclubs, and locations selling alcoholic beverages. This initiative aims to enhance public safety and compliance with existing legislation, the VIPD said.

## **Enforcement Focus on High-Risk Areas**

VIPD Commissioner Ray Martinez stressed the importance of this initiative. “It is imperative that strict enforcement measures are applied to uphold public safety, mitigate potential risks and ensure compliance with the legislation. This directive is crucial in maintaining order within our

community,” he stated. “Our main goal remains to increase public safety and awareness for all residents and visitors of the territory.”

The enforcement will focus on investigating suspected criminal activities more effectively, particularly in areas where loitering is prevalent and poses potential risks.

### **Crime Prevention Tips Provided**

The VIPD provided several tips for property and business owners to help prevent crimes associated with loitering:

- Maintain well-lit exteriors and hallways during nighttime.
- Avoid confronting suspicious persons directly—instead, contact the police immediately if unusual behavior is observed.
- Display clear signage such as “No Trespassing” or “Business Hours” to deter loitering.
- In the event of an incident, try to remember and describe the violator's appearance and the direction of travel if they flee before police arrive.

### **Loitering Law Overview**

Under the Virgin Islands loitering statute, loitering is defined as being dilatory, lingering, delaying, or wandering about in a public place in a manner that engages in prohibited activities such as gambling, prowling around schools, engaging in prostitution, drug use or possession, unlawfully consuming alcohol, and other disruptive or criminal behaviors.

Important factors for determining loitering include unusual behavior upon sighting law enforcement, endeavoring to disguise oneself, or taking flight.

### **Legal Framework and Penalties**

Before making an arrest for loitering, officers are required to give individuals the opportunity to identify themselves and explain their conduct. Defense against a loitering charge is possible if the officer did not provide this opportunity or if the individual’s explanation at trial is deemed truthful and would have alleviated any concerns at the time of the incident.

Loitering is classified as a misdemeanor, punishable by a fine of up to \$5,000 or imprisonment for up to one year, or both.

For more information, the VIPD encourages visiting their website or contacting their offices at the AAF Justice Complex in St. Thomas or the Administrative Services Building in Frederiksted, St. Croix.