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Second Case of Coronavirus Confirmed in U.S. Virgin Islands

Coronavirus / **Published On March 16, 2020 10:23 PM /**

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A second case of coronavirus (COVID-19) has been confirmed in the U.S. Virgin Islands, the Department of Health (D.O.H.) announced Monday evening.

The latest case involves a patient from the St. Thomas-St. John District, according to a health department statement released about 9:40 p.m.

The first COVID-19 patient was confirmed last week on St. Croix.

Health officials released no additional information about the patients' medical condition or how they might have contracted the fast-spreading, deadly virus.

To date [21 residents have been tested in recent weeks](#). Three people tested negative. Two are positive for COVID-19. D.O.H. said it is awaiting results from testing of eight suspected cases, called “Persons Under Investigation”; nine more lab samples have been sent to the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention.

On Friday Gov. Albert Bryan [declared a State of Emergency](#) in the territory as part of the effort to mitigate the spread disease.

He announced early in the day Monday at a press conference in St. Thomas that all public schools, including Head Start programs will close for [at least three weeks beginning Wednesday](#).

Carnival VI on St. Thomas, slated to begin in April, was [postponed indefinitely](#) by the central government, Mr. Bryan also announced at the press conference.

The governor announced a ban on gatherings of groups or individuals of more than 50 persons, following guidelines provided by the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention. He later told the Consortium that if residents were not adhering to the ban, a curfew would be put in place.

Health officials are urging residents experiencing flu like symptoms and have traveled to one of the five countries posted previously (China, Iran, South Korea, Europe or Japan) or more recently to the United Kingdom, Ireland or any of the following U.S. states (New York, California, or Washington state) in the last 14 days, to self-quarantine and call (340) 712- 6299 or 340-776-1519.

D.O.H. said its Epidemiology Division continues to conduct testing for cases that meet the Person Under Investigation (PUI) criteria, conduct contact tracing and assist healthcare providers and the public with up-to-date education as to what to do to prevent additional cases.

The current risk of transmission in the V.I. remains low for most residents, the Dept. of Health said, but precautions should still be taken to avoid transmission within the community.

A person may also get COVID-19 by touching a surface that has the virus on it and then touching their own mouth, nose or eyes.

To avoid the virus and help prevent its spread, Department of Health officials recommend these steps:

- Avoid close contact with sick people.
- While sick, limit contact with others as much as possible.
- Stay home if sick.
- Cover your nose and mouth with a tissue when coughing or sneezing and discard the tissue. Wash hands immediately. Avoid touching your eyes, nose and mouth.
- Clean and disinfect surfaces and objects that may be contaminated with germs.
- Wash hands often with soap and warm water for at least 20 seconds. If soap and water are not available, use an alcohol-based hand rub with at least 60 percent alcohol.

The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention currently recommend avoiding non-essential travel to any of the locations listed above as well as no cruise ship travel. Older adults and those with underlying health issues are particularly vulnerable and should avoid crowded places and non-essential air travel to decrease their risk for virus transmission.

COVID-19 symptoms reported include fever, cough and shortness of breath. It spreads mostly between people who are in close contact via respiratory droplets when an infected person coughs or sneezes.

Persons who have contracted COVID-19 are most likely to spread it when they are most symptomatic. This means they are more likely to spread it to others when they are sick.

“If you or a loved one are showing coronavirus symptoms and have recently traveled to an area with person-to-person spread, or been in contact with someone with coronavirus, you should contact the Department of Health at 340-712-6299 or 340-776-1519. You will be given instructions on what to do next and that may include isolating yourself from others,” the health department statement said.

If you have a medical emergency, call 911 and let them know if you have been infected or you believe that you may be.

For more information, visit: doh.vi.gov/coronavirus or text COVID19USVI to 888777.

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