

## VIPD Bans Ski Masks at Carnival Events, Enhances Security Measures and Provides Safety Tips

**Acting Police Chief Deborah Hodge outlines critical Carnival safety advice, including designated driver guidelines, child supervision, counterfeit bill alerts, and detailed parking restrictions, emphasizing security and enjoyment for all attendees.**

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“It's Carnival, baby!” declared Acting Chief of Police for St. Thomas, Deborah Hodge, enthusiastically on Monday as she addressed critical safety measures and logistical reminders ahead of the festive season. Speaking during the Government House press briefing, Chief Hodge underscored the VIPD's commitment to ensuring a safe and enjoyable carnival experience for all participants.

Chief Hodge offered practical advice to the public, urging everyone to remain alert to their surroundings, promptly report any suspicious activities to the authorities, adhere strictly to traffic laws, and choose well-lit parking areas. “I strongly recommend not only to get a designated driver, but a designated person that will be with you, if you intend to come to consume any alcoholic beverages,” she advised.

Addressing parental responsibilities, Chief Hodge stressed the necessity for attentive childcare. She explicitly advised parents attending events to keep their children within sight at all times, cautioning against leaving children unattended in separate areas of Carnival Village. “Paying close attention does not mean you're on the adult side and that your child is at the Children's village while you're consuming alcoholic beverages,” she stated clearly. Additionally, Chief Hodge recommended ensuring that a responsible adult accompanies children if parents choose to remain at home.

The VIPD also issued specific guidelines regarding attire for carnival events, notably J’ouvert. The department explained that ski masks and full-face coverings would be strictly prohibited for security purposes. Anyone wearing such coverings will be required to remove them immediately or face removal from the premises. However, masks mandated for Covid-19 protection, as directed by Governor Albert Bryan Jr. and the Department of Health, remain acceptable.

Regarding traffic management, Chief Hodge alerted drivers to specific parking restrictions, despite generally relaxed parking rules during carnival festivities. Restricted parking areas include Norre Gade, from Nouveau Lounge to Grand Hotel Square; the left side of Main Street, from Cardow Jewelers to Enid M. Baa Library; Beltjen Road from stoplight to stoplight; and the eastern side of Hospital Gade, from the old Jarvis school to the Moravian school intersection. Parking along the promenade remains strictly prohibited. Chief Hodge warned motorists that the VIPD's two wreckers are operational and vehicles parked illegally will be promptly towed.

Further cautioning the public, Chief Hodge revealed the circulation of counterfeit \$20 bills, which are prop notes marked “for motion picture purposes only” but could easily be mistaken for authentic currency amidst carnival activities. Attendees and vendors are urged to exercise caution when handling cash transactions.

Reiterating the seriousness of security efforts this carnival season, Chief Hodge assured residents and visitors that extensive surveillance measures, including drone-mounted cameras monitored continuously, are in place. “All with the intent to keep our island, our residents, and our visitors safe,” she concluded.