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No Business Outside? Stay Home, Governor Urges. All Bars Ordered Closed, Taxis Limited to Half of Capacity; 'Essential Business' List Updated

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St. Croix residents practice social distancing at the Kings Hill Post Office on Monday, March 23. By. ERNICE GILBERT/ VI CONSORTIUM

During Governor Albert Bryan's Monday press briefing, the territory's leader urged residents who have no business outside to shelter in place. This group includes residents whose businesses or workplace are not considered essential. A recently signed executive order provided the governor with the authority for the following actions. The governor did not announce a curfew.

Below is the updated essential business list (These businesses are to remain open after Wednesday, March 25):

- Places that sell food or produce
- Places with medical purposes
- Core life services, such as gas stations, banks, laundromats, and shipping companies
- Places that provide shelter
- Media outlets

Mr. Bryan's executive order also suspends portions of the V.I. Code, including:

- Sections relating to landlord-tenant actions and establishing the right of actions to recover possession of real property and demand for rent
- Provisions prohibiting Government retirees in certain professions from receiving their annuities if they return to the workforce

The executive order prohibits all bars within the territory effective Monday, March 23 and restricts dine-in eating at restaurants. And it limits all taxis and safaris to one half of their previously allowable capacity.

The order also prohibits all hotels, guest houses, villas, bed and breakfasts, Airbnb, and charter vessels from accepting new bookings or new guests for 30 days.

Previous measures to limit mass gatherings remain in effect, Government House said. Last week, Mr. Bryan ordered all non-essential government employees to stay home or telework and have closed schools and head start facilities throughout the Virgin Islands. The governor has also ordered the closure of senior centers and restricted visitation to eldercare facilities.

All government operations are restricted to essential services until at least April 6, 2020, and all schools will remain closed through at least April 14, 2020.

"To date, we have investigated 74 persons suspected of carrying the virus, and 55 of those cases tested negative, 17 positive, and we have two tests currently pending," the governor said during the weekly press briefing. "Sixteen of the 17 positive individuals are quarantined and thankfully recovering at home without any need for hospitalization."

He added, "I am happy to announce that our first positive case, reported a couple of weeks ago, has now fully recovered and has tested negative for the presence of the virus."