

The Virgin Islands Consortium

BVI Extends 24 Hour Curfew to April 16, Implements Measures to Monitor Quarantined Persons

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Tortola, British Virgin Islands – In an effort to continue to stem the spread of COVID-19 in the British Virgin Islands, government on Tuesday evening announced an extension of the 24-hour mandatory curfew for another 14 days until April 16.

A phased curfew was implemented on March 25 from 8pm to 6am going forward and from March 27 from 8pm for 24 hours, except for essential services workers. That curfew was scheduled to end on April 2 at 6am.

This was in addition to other measures previously mandated, including limited gatherings, social distancing, ordering businesses to reduce operating hours and closing the

territory's borders on March 22.

The BVI has 3 confirmed cases of COVID-19 to date. The first two cases were announced by government on March 27 as a 56-year-old male who traveled from Europe, and a 32 year-old-male who from traveled from the United States. The third case was confirmed on March 30 as a 26 year-old-male. One of the territory's largest law firms, Harneys, announced on its website on March 30 that the 3rd case was one of its employees.

"We still do not have confirmation of community transmission and need to do everything possible to keep it that way," United Kingdom Governor Augustus Jaspert said during the live Facebook stream.

He acknowledged that an around-the clock-curfew is difficult and brings with it different challenges, but maintained that minimizing public interaction is necessary to help break the chain of this disease and protect the population.

The governor declared that under the Curfew Act 2017, "For the 14 days from this Thursday, there will be a curfew in place; from 6pm to 6am, overnight, night times, it will be an absolute curfew. Everyone, apart from those in essential services, should be at night time in their homes. During the day time, 6am to 6pm, a limited and managed curfew will be in place to allow access to key supplies. On Thursday at 6am, the transition to the new daytime curfew will begin and will continue to 6pm that evening. From 6pm until 6am the following day, the territory will revert to the current hard curfew, the absolute conditions where no one must leave their homes."

He said this pattern of daily limited managed curfew and an absolute hard night time curfew will be repeated for a period of 14 days until the measures are reviewed approaching 16 April. He emphasized that people must adhere to the basic rules of social distancing and remain preferably 6 feet apart and businesses should ensure that numbers within their premises are limited.

The managed curfew will allow for limited basic and essential services such as pharmacies, supermarkets, banks, gas stations, private medical facilities, fisher folk, farmers and a limited list of approved wholesale distributors.

"Businesses that are allowed to open during this next curfew period are mandated to maintain the protocols for social distancing and implement sanitization measures," he stated. "Nobody, no one under mandatory quarantine will be allowed to leave his or her home or place of quarantine during this period and measures will be implemented as to how they will receive essential supplies at home."

Persons in vulnerable categories must also remain at home and receive their essential and basic supplies through home deliveries, he added.

In addition, he said household curbside garbage collection will be implemented on designated days and a new validation approach for issuing curfew passes will be implemented as the number of passes has outweighed expectations.

Governor Jaspert also announced that enhanced plans have been put in place for surveillance and monitoring of the 143 persons subject to quarantine.

“They will, under new legislation, be mandated to stay at home for the full quarantine period,” he stated. He said the Health Emergency Operations Center HEOC will institute measures to ensure compliance and violators could face penalties.

Governor Jaspert pointed out that the vast majority of people under quarantine have been complying, but warned that those who don’t comply put others at risk.

He reminded residents that even with the limited curfew regime, the BVI is not yet back to normal and persons will be expected to remain at home unless they are essential workers on the way to and from work or persons venturing out for essential business.

“If we want to beat this virus and return to normal life as quickly as possible, this limited curfew must not be taken as a license to gather or ignore COVID-19 prevention or hygiene measures,” he concluded.

The governor was joined in making the announcement by Premier Andrew Fahie, Health Minister Carvin Malone, Education Minister Dr. Natalio Wheatley and Transportation Minister Kye Rymer.