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Coronavirus Effect: Three Patients Hospitalized and in Stable Condition; No DSNAP Yet; No Curfew for Now; Businesses Urged to Take Advantage of \$349 Billion in Forgivable Loans

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Juan F. Luis Hospital By. ERNICE GILBERT/VI CONSORTIUM

Governor Albert Bryan during his press briefing on Friday to address the public on his administration's coronavirus response, said that three individuals were hospitalized as of Friday: one at the Juan F. Luis Hospital and two at the Schneider Regional Medical Center. "All of these patients are in stable condition and none of them are using ventilators at this time," Mr. Bryan said.

The Department of Health, through VITEMA's alert system, has provided the territory with its latest coronavirus update, revealing that there were 40 confirmed cases as of Friday night territory-wide.

There were no coronavirus-related deaths as of Friday, D.O.H. said.

According to VITEMA, the cases territory-wide are as follows: 26 in St. Thomas, 12 on St. Croix and 2 on St. John.

So far 184 cases have returned negative, 42 cases pending and 34 patients have recovered, according to the Dept. of Health. Relative to community spread, two cases have been transmitted in this manner on St. Croix and 10 in St. Thomas, [including a family of 8](#).

The governor said the Army Corps of Engineers (USACE) visited the territory this week to look at sites where temporary hospitals would be built if a surge of hospitalized cases were to exceed the territory's capacity. USACE will most likely provide an update to the administration next week relative to locations identified and how long it would take to erect the temporary facilities, Mr. Bryan said.

"In the meantime though, we have already began the initial surge overflow preparations at both the Roy Lester Schneider Hospital and the Juan Luis Hospital," Mr. Bryan said, adding that the arrangements, which will allow the hospitals to facilitate more patients, will be completed by Monday.

President Donald Trump has authorized the use of the National Guard under the Stafford Act to help the territory prevent, mitigate and respond to the Covid-9 crisis, with all the costs associated with the efforts being borne by the Federal Emergency Management Agency.

The territory's leader urged local businesses to take advantage of the \$349 billion in forgivable loans being provided by the federal government through the \$2 trillion stimulus package. The loans, for businesses with 500 employees or less, represented 95 percent of the territory's private businesses, the governor said. Application process opened Friday, and you can start by going [here](#).

Mr. Bryan, reminding the community that the territory is under a state of emergency and a stay-at-home order, warned non-essential businesses flouting the order that they face being shutdown and losing their license altogether.

"We're going to shut down businesses. We're going to shut you down. And if we have to shut you down permanently we're going to do that as well if you're going to have people congregating outside your business or being in groups of more than 10 inside the establishments and not paying attention to our order," Mr. Bryan said. He said as of Friday one citation was issued on St. Croix while four businesses on the island were closed. In St. Thomas, 11 businesses have been closed.

Relative to a curfew, Mr. Bryan said, "There is no real plan for the immediate future to put in a curfew. We have found that in this instance a curfew is counterproductive to achieving the goals that we want in the Covid-19 containment strategy." The governor [pointed to the situation in neighboring British Virgin Islands](#), where residents there participated in frenzied shopping ahead of an impending curfew.

The governor did say, however, that a curfew was not off the table altogether, but it would only be instituted if residents were not adhering to the orders. "Work with me so I could work with you," he said.

Relative to the Disaster Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (D-SNAP), the governor said it was not made available in President Trump's major disaster declaration for the territory. The declaration "didn't really change our designation much," Mr. Bryan said, adding that other parts of the declaration, including the portion that would enable DSNAP, are under review by the Trump administration.

The governor thanked residents for doing their part in exercising social distancing among other measures to blunt the disease's spread. And he urged residents to continue taking the pandemic seriously. "Imagine how you would feel if you're the one who brings this home to your family; if you're the one that causes the first death in the Virgin Islands. So stick to your homes, stick to your houses; you could go out in your hard, take a walk but avoid people. Take a drive, but avoid people."

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