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No Limin' on the Beach: Residents Forbidden to Soak in Territory's Waters Until April 20 Amid First Coronavirus Death in USVI

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Robert Moore **April 07, 2020**

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Thanks, in part, to the party people who chose socializing at the beach against government orders, all the beaches in the Virgin Islands are closed until April 20th.

In an attempt at curbing the COVID-19 virus and discouraging some residents from ignoring the stay-at-home order, the beach closings are effective immediately, Gov. Albert Bryan announced Monday.

The Virgin islands National Guard, V.I police and the Department of Public Works and Natural Resources are enforcing the beach shutdown.

“We have a considerable way to go before we reach our peak (cases), which is projected not to be here for another two to three weeks,” Mr. Bryan said during Monday’s press briefing at Government House in Christiansted.

The death of an 85-year-old St. Thomas man this weekend marked a turning point in the fight against the coronavirus. To date, there are 43 confirmed cases in the territory. Thirty-six of those people who tested positive have been deemed recovered by public health officials.

Six cases are active and being closely watch by the Department of Health. One patient is hospitalized at the Juan F. Luis Hospital on St. Croix and two are patients at the Schneider Regional Medical Center on St. Thomas.

Overall, 283 people have been tested for the Coronavirus, with 222 testing negative. Twenty test results are still pending.

Despite the escalating number of infections, crowds of people have been hanging out at territory beaches. The photos are ubiquitous on social media.

“For the most part, we have done good as a community in following the Department of Health and CDC guidance to help contain the spread of the virus, but we still have some in our community who are not taking this seriously enough,” Mr. Bryan said.

Easter Holiday

Easter Sunday is days away, however, all places of worship must remain closed during the stay-at-home order, which is in effect until April 30.

“We applaud the churches and houses of worship that have found creative ways to allow the members of their congregations to continue practicing their faith during this time of great tribulation,” the governor said.

Face Masks

During the press briefing, Health Commissioner Justa Encarnacion said the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention is now recommending the use of face covering when out in public.

“The use of face coverings is a voluntary public health measure. We currently have no mandates to wear masks,” Ms. Encarnacion said. “We do recommend that you utilize a face mask if you are ill or if you will be in close contact with someone who is elderly or has a compromised immune system.”

Stay at Home

“The White House is referring to the next two weeks as the nation’s next 9-11 or Pearl Harbor moment,” Mr. Bryan said. “We can’t afford a 9-11 or Pearl Harbor here in the territory, so I am appealing to you, tell your friends, your family and your loved ones to do the right thing and to stay at home.”