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Violate Coronavirus-Related Executive Orders and Directives and You Could Face Criminal Consequences, Attorney General Says

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Anyone who willfully violates emergency executive orders and directives during the COVID-19 state of emergency can face criminal consequences, according to V.I. Attorney General Denise George.

Penalties can include arrest and prosecution under Virgin Islands law.

“These executive orders carry the weight of law and must be obeyed,” Ms. George said.

The commissioner of Health, as the designated Incident Commander, has the power and authority to enforce health regulations providing for quarantine, isolation and other appropriate measures.

Persons known to have the virus who willfully violate the directives as determined by the Health commissioner can be criminally charged under Title 14 of the V.I. Code, according to the attorney general.

Title 14, subsection 886 states “[w]however willfully exposes himself or another afflicted with any contagious or infectious disease in any public place or thoroughfare... shall be fined not more than \$200 or imprisoned not more than 1 year, or both.”

During this emergency, all territorial peace officers have been deputized and are operating under the direction of both the Governor and the Incident Commander. Title 14, subsection 883 of the V.I. Code states, in part, “Whoever disobeys the lawful orders of any police officer... shall be fined not more than \$200 or imprisoned not more than 1 year, or both.”

“Orders or commands to individuals or business owners given by peace officers relating to the containment of COVID-19 shall be considered orders given directly by either the Governor or the Commissioner of Health,” A.G. George said. “They must be strictly obeyed.”

Additionally, any business operating outside of the requirements imposed by the Executive Orders may face administrative fines imposed by the Department of Licensing and Consumer Affairs, as well as revocation of their business license.