

The Virgin Islands Consortium

VIPD to Step Up Check-Points to Remind Motorists That a Stay-at-Home Order is in Place

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Authorities are stepping up enforcement of the territory's stay-at-home order with random police check-points at normally busy intersections and roadways, V.I. Police Commissioner Trevor Velinor said in a Saturday morning interview.

Motorists should expect to encounter "more frequent, spontaneous" check-points at what Mr. Velinor called "access points" to communities on all three islands. "The approach is to communicate, to educate. Truly, do not be out unless you have to."

Violators of the stay-at-home order issued by Gov. Albert Bryan on March 25th are, on paper, subject to fines or other misdemeanor penalties. Given the uneven response from

the public, the order has been, by and large, viewed as a well-intentioned suggestion for avoiding contracting or spreading the coronavirus (COVID-19).

The V.I. Department of Health reported to the 51st confirmed case of COVID-19 on Saturday morning. Negative test results are now at 299 with 20 tests results outstanding. The sole fatality in the territory – an 85-year-old St. Thomas resident – died at home last weekend. The deceased was tested for the COVID-19 disease post-mortem, meaning his positive status was unknown to public health officials.

"We know the numbers are higher than 51 (confirmed cases)," said Mr. Velinor, "so we are getting the message out there to stay at home."

On Friday evening a police check-point along Raphune Hill left traffic leading into the Havensight area in gridlock. Half a dozen police cruisers lined the road as officers stopped each car descending the hill to ask where motorists were headed. Officers in military fatigues reminded drivers that a stay-at-home order was in place. "Go home, stay home," police warned.

Around the country, law enforcement is taking a variety of steps to enforce local stay-at-home orders. Most of the measures involve some form of public education and outreach to remind people to stay indoors. The Virgin Islands police is no different.

Some jurisdictions are being more aggressive in compelling people to heed stay home orders. For example:

- In Hawaii, the Honolulu Police Department is employing drone teams to scan popular beaches and deliver public announcements to stay off the beach. "Aloha, the stay at home order is in effect. Please do not gather or sit on the beach. Water activities are permitted, but please leave immediately after" state the announcements.
- The Hawaiian island of Oahu also turned to a night-time curfew to keep people from going to gatherings during Easter weekend.
- After learning that people who tested positive for COVID-19 in one small California town were breaking quarantine to go buy food, the police department and local non-profits stepped in and are delivering groceries and other essentials to people infected by COVID-19.
- Police departments around the country are also informing citizens that violating stay-at-home orders could result in fines or even jail.