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# No Cruise Ships In Territory or Anywhere in U.S. Until at Least July, According to CDC's No Sail Order Extension

Tourism / **Published On April 15, 2020 06:33 AM /**

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**Havensight has been a ghost town since cruise ships stopped coming and non-essential businesses were ordered closed by Governor Albert Bryan. By. ROBERT MOORE, VI CONSORTIUM**

In mid-March, cruise lines announced a 30-day halt on cruise travel because of the novel coronavirus. One month later, with the global pandemic wreaking widespread havoc on countries and their economies the world over, the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention has announced an extension to it's No Sail Order that pushed any possibility of cruise ship travel well into the month of July.

The order bars operators from disembarking or reembarking crew members, and has left an estimated 80,000 crew workers stranded aboard about 100 ships still out at sea on the West Coast, Gulf Coast and East Coast of the U.S., according to the CDC (via [Wall Street Journal](#)).

If the current situation holds for a few more weeks, these cruise ship employees will no longer receive pay. Instead, they would be given only room and board for their time on the ship.

Back in the U.S. Virgin Islands, whose main product is tourism, the halt in cruise travel has rendered St. Thomas — the territory's main tourism hub — and especially the West Indian Company Limited and Crown Bay ports as ghost towns. This in turn has greatly impacted the wider food chain: taxi drivers, vendors, store owners and restaurants, among others.

In March and April alone, a total of 92 ship calls with a capacity of more than 275,000 passengers were scheduled to pass through St. Thomas, with an occasional ship calling on St. Croix. With July and August being the peak months for cruises, the VI Port Authority and WICO were bracing for another bruising set of cruise line-related losses.

This, among other coronavirus-related shutdowns, and the extension of the tax-filing deadline pushed to July 15, has caused financial hardship for a government that was already only getting by on days cash on hand. Governor Albert Bryan has said cash flow for the territory could become a problem in weeks in a worst-case scenario.

"In terms of the government's finances we're about 9 days cash [on hand]," Mr. Bryan said last Wednesday. He said although government revenue slowed, expenditures also went down because of decreased activity, and that has helped with liquidity.

On the government's Revenue Anticipation Note loans, Mr. Bryan said the administration was awaiting a term sheet from the lender for review before terms could be agreed to.

He then added, "We think we're going to be in trouble in another two or three weeks [in a worst-case scenario, and another month and a half [in a] best case scenario."

Mr. Bryan urged residents to continue paying their taxes now even though the deadline has been pushed to July 15. He also thanked residents for paying their WAPA bills in light of the authority's 60-day billing strategy that has invited the ire of Virgin Islanders. The governor said his administration was putting its best foot forward to get payments owed to roofing contractors and territory-wide projects out in an effort to keep some level of economic activity flowing.

On the No Sail Order extension, CDC Director Robert Redfield said the move was necessary to keep Americans safe.

"The measures we are taking today to stop the spread of COVID-19 are necessary to protect Americans, and we will continue to provide critical public health guidance to the industry to limit the impacts of COVID-19 on its workforce throughout the remainder of this pandemic," said Mr. Redfield.

According to the CDC, in recent weeks, at least 10 cruise ships reported crew or passengers that tested positive or experienced respiratory symptoms or influenza-like illness. There are several public health concerns when crew members become ill while onboard the cruise ships. "As we have seen with the passenger illness response on cruise ships, safely evacuating, triaging, and repatriating cruise ship crew has involved complex logistics, incurs financial costs at all levels of government, and diverts resources away from larger efforts to suppress or mitigate COVID-19.

The addition of further COVID-19 cases from cruise ships also places healthcare workers at substantial increased risk," the CDC said.

The CDC, the U.S. Coast Guard, and the Department of Homeland Security have been working with the industry to determine the most appropriate public health strategy to limit the impact of COVID-19 at cruise ship ports of entry in the United States, the CDC said.

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