

The Virgin Islands Consortium

De Jongh Executive Order Creates Occupational Safety and Health Council

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Two days before Christmas, Governor John P. de Jongh, Jr., by Executive Order, created the Virgin Islands Public Sector Occupational Safety and Health Council within the Office of the Governor.

The Governor met with U.S. Department of Labor Occupational Safety and Health Administration officials on Oct. 30, where the creation of a safety council was recommended to provide oversight of the territory's Division of Occupational Safety and Health program.

According to Executive Order No. 472-2014, the Council will "act as a catalyst to promote and improve occupational health and safety conditions within the public sector" by offering advice, information and assistance to the Governor and the Department of Labor, Division of Occupational Safety and Health.

The Council has as its goals to ensure and provide public sector employees with safe and healthy working conditions, reduce the number of hazards within places of employment, and recommend initiatives to the Occupational Safety and Health program.

"The Virgin Islands government must provide a workplace free from serious, recognized hazards and comply with local and federal standards under the OSH Act for all public sector employees," de Jongh said. "By emphasizing the protection of our employees, we can reduce or avoid injuries that can be devastating to workers and their families, as well as minimize the loss of productivity to an agency or department."

The Executive Order became effective immediately.

The Council is required to meet twice per month, and submit quarterly reports of its activities and accomplishments to the Governor. Appointees will consist of the following: Commissioner of Labor, Director of Division of Occupational Safety and Health, District Administrators for the Office of the Governor, Director of Office Management and Budget, Director of Virgin Islands Territorial Emergency Management Agency, Executive Director of Water and Power Authority, Commissioner of Education, representative of the Central Labor Council, Commissioner of Public Works, Commissioner of Natural Planning and Natural Resources, Commissioner of Health, or designees selected by each department head.

In addition, all departments, agencies and entities of the Virgin Islands government are required to appoint a contact person for occupational safety and health matters.