

# The Virgin Islands Consortium

## Five Frontline Healthcare Workers Were Infected By One COVID-19 Patient in the Territory; Two New Cases Bring USVI Total to 68

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A single COVID-19 patient infected at least five healthcare workers and first responders with the deadly respiratory disease, and led public health investigators to test more than 70 others in the novel coronavirus outbreak.

Each of the frontline workers is recovering without a need for hospitalization, according to V.I. Department of Health Commissioner Justa Encarnacion. It was unclear how many of the five test-positive persons were nurses or physicians at the Juan F. Luis or Roy Lester Schneider Hospital. And there is no indication those healthcare workers and first

responders in turn infected anyone else.

“That is a risk healthcare workers – nurses, doctors, first responders – take ...,” Ms. Encarnacion said. “That is one of the reasons we stress the importance of having an appropriate and adequate supply of PPE (personal protective equipment).”

The territory has received thousands of medical gowns, face shields, gloves, N95 masks, other masks and coveralls from the Strategic National Stockpile over the past month. Private companies have stepped up to donate tens of thousands of masks and other protective gear for use by front-line medical workers. Viya provided 20,000 masks to hospitals on St. Thomas and St. Croix, and to the Virgin Islands Police Department. Financial services firm Brisa Max donated 14,000 KN95 masks and five ventilator machines to Virgin Islands hospitals and first responders.

As of Thursday evening, 1,128 individuals in the U.S. Virgin Islands have been tested for exposure to the novel coronavirus. Positive tests results climbed to 68, up from 66 on Wednesday. Of the two new cases, one was confirmed on St. Croix (total confirmed cases now 28) and one on St. Thomas (total confirmed cases now 38), according to Dept. of Health data. Negative test results are now at 1,006. Thirty-six test results are pending. Fatalities resulting from COVID-19 disease remain at four. Two people are hospitalized at Juan F. Luis Hospital on St. Croix. One person is on a ventilator.

From the time the health department confirms a positive test, the epidemiology staff quickly began contact-tracing steps - identifying those with whom the patient had extended, close contact in order to control any further spread. Seventy-eight people were identified and tested for the coronavirus. Five frontline health workers tested positive.

“That’s the reason it’s so important to follow the guidance we are giving you,” Ms. Encarnacion said during Thursday’s regular COVID-19 response update. “That one person created over 70 contact tracings.”

Fortunately, the positive tests as a result were limited. “We have to make sure – wear your mask, wash your hands, and stay away from those that are sick. And take care of yourselves. The guidance given to you are given for your safety and for the safety of the people around you.”