

The Virgin Islands Consortium

Even as Bryan Administration and Limetree Bay Vow to Ensure Adequate Screening of Contractors Coming to Territory, Other Travel Risks May Exist

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Shuttles await Limetree Bay workers who arrived via plane to St. Croix on Wednesday, May 6, 2020 By. VI CONSORTIUM

ST. CROIX - The Bryan administration touted its close work recently with Limetree Bay terminals to enforce protocols in place to ensure new contract workers and workers returning to St. Croix from the U.S. Mainland are properly screened and monitored for COVID-19.

“We have been successful in reducing air travel to the territory by banning leisure travel bookings at our hotels, but we still have contractors and other emergency and essential personnel coming in daily, and having these protocols in place has proven successful thus far in protecting against the spread of this virus in our community,” the governor said in a press release Friday evening.

Gov. Bryan gave no indication of exactly how many contractors arrive on St. Croix on a daily, weekly or monthly basis. New and returning contractors are required to have their temperature taken daily when they get to work at the Limetree facility. Their temperatures are recorded in a log each day.

When those workers first arrive — or return — to St. Croix, the protocols include pre-approval for travel by Limetree and a requirement to provide the V.I. Department of Health with their on-island address and flight itinerary prior to arrival.

But not all contract workers are arriving by air. For example, World Oil Magazine wrote extensively last year that supertankers laden with millions of barrels of West Texas crude oil stop for terminal visits at Limetree Bay before sending the cargo on to China. The China Petroleum and Chemical Co. — known as Sinopec — has an agreement with Limetree Bay Terminals to store millions of barrels of crude oil destined for markets around the globe. Contractors from Texas and Sinopec representatives are frequent travelers to St. Croix.

In April 2019, Sinopec acquired a massive refinery in Wuhan, China, to produce gasoline, kerosene, jet fuel, light diesel and other petrochemical products. The novel coronavirus is believed to have been identified first in Wuhan.

Additional pandemic protocols require contractor employees to wear a facial covering while at work for 14 days after arrival, to report any symptoms or illnesses when they first occur immediately, and to stay at home if they feel ill. If a contractor employee tests positive for Covid-19, they are to be sent immediately to Limetree’s quarantine wing, or local address listed. A letter of release from DOH is required before they can be released from quarantine and return to work.

The majority of the workers will be isolated within the Limetree Bay Village, according to the Government House press release.

Based on public health data, the territory’s airports remain the most vulnerable point of entry for the coronavirus, noting that all but one of the territory’s 23 travel-related COVID-19 positive patients have arrived through the territory’s two airports. “With the overwhelming majority of our travel-related Covid patients having arrived in the territory by air, our airports remain our most vulnerable point of entry,” Mr. Bryan said.