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Bryan Announces Mandatory Covid-19 Tests For Travelers From Certain States; Beaches to Close at 4p.m. During Holiday Weekend; Bars to Shut Down at Midnight Until Further Notice

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Governor Albert Bryan on Thursday afternoon announced changes to the territory's Covid-19 protocols put in place to stall the virus's spread. The move, announced during the governor's coronavirus response update at Government House on St. Croix, follows a surge in Covid-19 infections in the territory in the past two weeks, when the administration moved from its "Safer at Home" to the "Open Doors" phase of reopening.

Travel to the USVI

The biggest of the four announcements was the administration's decision to require travelers coming into the territory to produce a negative coronavirus result from a test performed within the last 72 hours. If visitors fail to perform a test within the last 72 hours before arriving to the USVI, they will be given the option to be tested locally, or face a mandatory 14-day quarantine. The governor said a list of states on which the restrictions apply was being organized. "Most definitely Texas is one of them, and Florida, as they are certainly starting to spike at this point," Mr. Bryan said. The governor later on Thursday told the Consortium that the full list of states will be announced Monday.

Earlier this week, Puerto Rico implemented [selfsame measures](#).

New rules for Limetree Bay

On Limetree Bay, Mr. Bryan said while protocols, including temperature scans and mandatory facial covering have been effective, "Circumstances have evolved on a national level... and we're now seeing a tremendous resurgence of the virus on the mainland and especially in states where many of these contractors for the refinery come from."

In light of the new developments, the administration along with Limetree Bay have introduced more stringent rules: From today and until further notice, Limetree Bay contractors must be tested at their destination of origin prior to traveling to the USVI. And even when they arrive on St. Croix, they will still face a mandatory 72-hour quarantine. Thereafter, the contractors will be tested again before being allowed to work at the refinery.

"We believe that this extra step will reduce the number of positive [Covid-29 cases] that are inbound to the island of St. Croix and ultimately the refinery," Mr. Bryan said.

Early beach closure during July 4/Emancipation Day weekend

Mr. Bryan announced the early closure of beaches during the long holiday weekend, fearing the traditionally festive break could lead to people organizing parties on beaches and by doing so becoming potential spreader gatherings.

Beginning Friday, beaches will close at 4:00 p.m. and reopen at 6:00 a.m. every morning through Sunday, July 5. The governor said beachgoers should not wait until 4:00 p.m. to start packing up; instead, that process should begin at 3:00 p.m. so that beaches are cleared by the 4:00 p.m. deadline.

The governor said whether to close beaches or keep them open was the cause of much debate amongst his team, "But I felt, and some of the team felt that we shouldn't shut the beaches and deny everyone the access [because of] some few."

He warned, however, "If we have to we will. Because your health and safety, and the health and safety of your family, is much more important to us than the level of enjoyment at any beach in the Virgin Islands."

Asked by the Consortium why he didn't close the beaches altogether, the governor said, "This is the fourth month now that we're dealing with this virus, [and] people are starting to get depressed. Being locked up all weekend, that's not good either in terms of mental health." He also said the closure of beaches at 4:00 p.m. would discourage the consumption of alcohol. "We all know we West Indians don't reach on the beach until one o'clock," he said, adding that by the time alcohol consumption starts, it's time to leave the beach.

Bars/Nightclubs

Effective immediately, all bars and nightclubs in the U.S. Virgin Islands are to close at midnight until further notice, Mr. Bryan announced. Additionally, all bars and nightclubs, and all other retail outlets in the territory, are to halt the sale of alcoholic beverages at 11:00 p.m. until further notice, the governor said.

Mr. Bryan encouraged patrons of bars and nightclubs to wear masks when entering the establishments, and when they're not consuming drinks. "This is for your safety," he said. "We all know how alcohol has an effect on the inhibitions of humans. Please, wear your mask, keep it on at all times except when you're consuming food or beverages."

Bars and nightclubs have proven to be establishments where the coronavirus spreads. Last month, the Dept. of Health [shut down "Hangovah Daiquiris"](#), a popular nightspot on St. Croix located in the United Shopping Plaza that has garnered buzz for its unique daiquiri drinks. A sign posted on the establishment's entrance doors at the time, read, "Due to high public health concern this establishment has been closed by the Virgin Islands Department of Health, Division of Environmental Health."

Covid-19 by the numbers

The V.I. Dept. of Health said 3,055 Covid-19 tests were performed as of Wednesday, with 2,924 returning negative and 92 positive. The department said it was only tracking 11 cases as of Wednesday — the same amount of individuals prior to the two new confirmed cases reported Tuesday — which means D.O.H. now considers two additional individuals recovered, for a total of 75 recoveries.

Six people have died from the virus in the territory, with one hospitalization at the Juan F. Luis Hospital as of Monday, and another at the Schneider Regional Medical Center as of Thursday, according to Governor Bryan. Though both patients were in stable condition as of today, Mr. Bryan said the patient at JFL is on a ventilator.