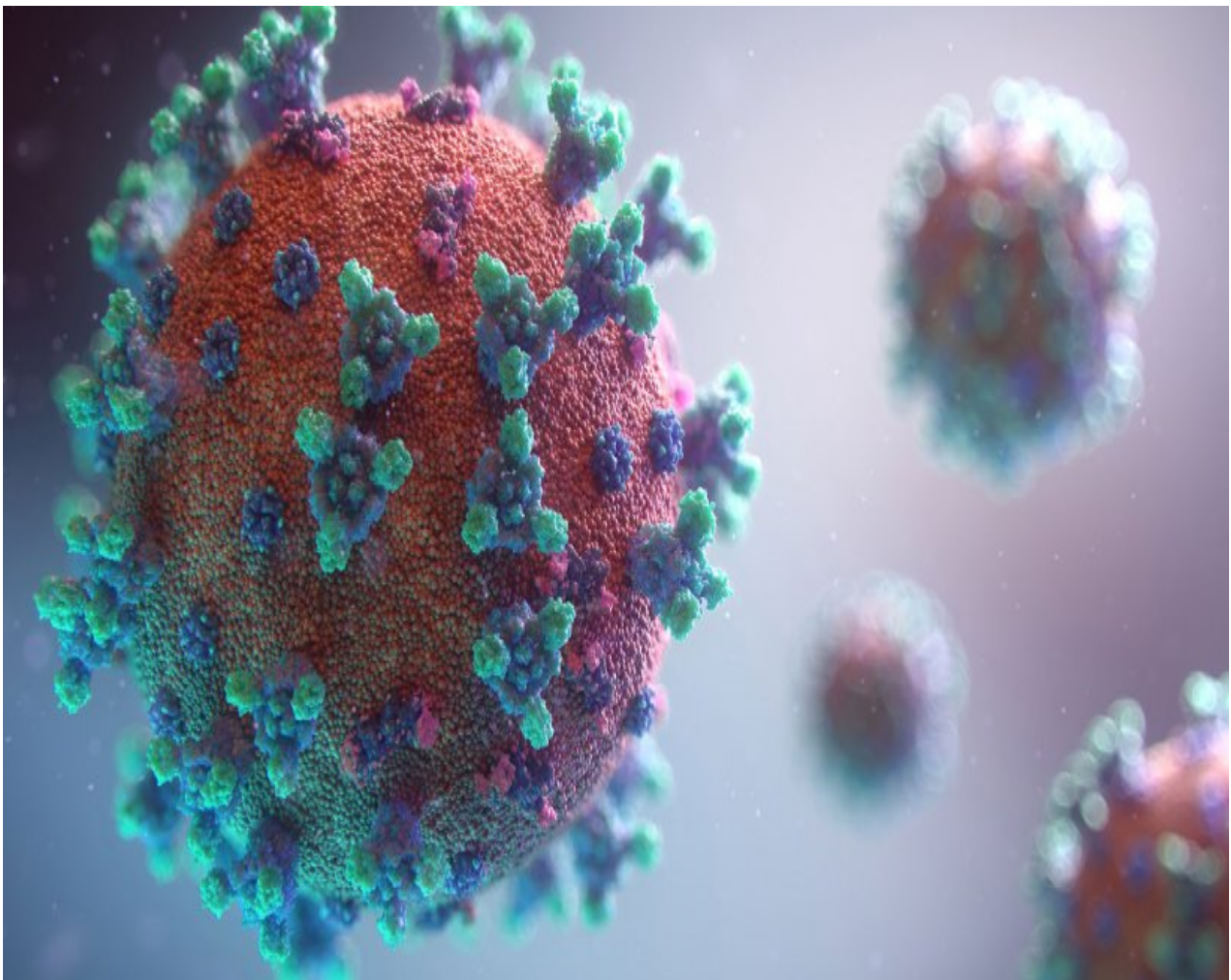


The Virgin Islands Consortium

Dept. of Health, Election System, Now Human Services is Impacted by Covid-19

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Within the past week, several government arms have been impacted by the surging coronavirus, to include the V.I. Legislature, the Election System of the V.I. in the St. Thomas-St. John District, the V.I. Department of Health and most recently the V.I. Department of Human Services — as this branch revealed yesterday to its staff and the public. Additionally, there have been reports of the virus infiltrating the Department of Finance as well, but the department has issued no formal statement to confirm or deny those reports.

The D.H.S. letter to its employees did not state which office or location was directly impacted, but it did say that testing of employees and those in close contact within the

affected area will be conducted through the Dept. of Health. Professional sanitation and cleaning of the affected area is expected to be done this week.

In a release issued Monday morning, D.H.S. Commissioner Kimberly Causey-Gomez addressed the matter. "Though the Department of Human Services has implemented COVID-19 practices to help prevent the spread of the virus, we know that the risk of contracting the infection exists, especially as our exposure to COVID-19 increases daily as the territory's numbers increase," she said. "The reality that we all now have to face is that several of our local agencies have positive cases and we must all follow best practices in order to protect ourselves and others while we continue operations. We are working in close connection with the Department of Health to ensure availability of prompt testing and in tandem with the testing, we have implemented enhanced sanitizing and additional prevention measures."

The department said all staff and close contacts of the affected unit have been notified to ensure their safety within the parameters of HIPAA guidelines to protect the individual's identity. Additionally, D.H.S. said it is working to provide support to the impacted staff member and their family.

The individual is in stable condition and recovering at home, D.H.S. said.

Current Actions Being Taken by D.H.S.

- Specific staff members of the impacted unit have been advised of the current status and of detailed next steps.
- A notification was sent to all staff advising of the COVID 19 positive result of one of our team members.
- DHS has arranged for testing of all impacted persons within the auspices of DHS through the Department of Health.
- Professional sanitization and cleaning (of the impacted area) is being conducted this week.

A release from the Elections System of the V.I. on Sunday stated that early voting continues to be suspended until further notice in the St. Thomas/ St. John district. Elections staff and officials are scheduled to be tested today. The Charlotte Amalie High School Temporary Cafeteria that housed the St. Thomas Elections Office and Early Voting Center was sanitized. The St. John office is scheduled to be sanitized on Tuesday. In addition, the St. Croix office is scheduled to be sanitized as a precautionary measure.

Twenty-four of the 25 new coronavirus cases reported in the territory Sunday night were recorded on St. Croix, as an outbreak that started last week on the island continues to expand its reach.

According to the Dept. of Health's latest infographic, two of the cases on St. Croix were transmitted through close contact, while 22 were still under investigation as of Sunday

night.

The single case on St. Thomas was transmitted through close contact.

Total confirmed cases on St. Croix was 138 as of Sunday, while total cases on St. Thomas and St. John stood at 62 and 6 respectively. D.O.H. said it was tracking 104 active cases.

To date, 4,296 tests were performed, of which 4,084 returned negative and a total of 206 positive. Six people have died as a result of the virus.

Governor Bryan is anticipating that testing capacity will to 200-300 daily. As of Sunday, that marker was reached as 201 tests were conducted.

Last Thursday, Mr. Bryan reminded residents that results are received between 24 to 72 hours, given current testing capabilities. As the demand for testing continues to increase, the territory will need to supply its testing centers with additional machines so as not to delay the turnaround time for receiving results.

"It's not just the test. You have to put [the test] in the machine and the machine runs. There's a testing capacity per day at this time. We're getting more machines, but we don't have a shortage of tests," he said.

Governor Bryan is expected to hold a press event this afternoon to update the territory with current stats and his administration's Covid-19 response.