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Bryan Shuts Down Non-Essential Businesses, Hotel Reservation System, Churches, and More in 'Stay at Home' Order

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Restaurant employee carries meals packaged for take-out. Governor Bryan on Thursday, Aug. 13 2020 restricted restaurants to takeout, drive-thru, or delivery service. (New York Times Photo)

Governor Albert Bryan on Thursday took bold steps to beat back the rise of novel coronavirus in the U.S. Virgin Islands, which has been spreading briskly through the community — infiltrating [the Queen Louise Home for the Aged](#) and [the Alexander A. Farrelly Criminal Complex](#) — both of which are in St. Thomas. Mr. Bryan said when he first announced that the territory would move to its Open Doors phase on June 1, he stated at the time that his administration would revert to a more restrictive phase if cases of the virus surged.

"Unfortunately we have arrived at the point this week," the governor said during his press briefing.

[As of Wednesday](#), 682 people tested positive for the virus: 346 on St. Thomas, 314 on St. Croix, and 22 on St. John. D.O.H. said it was tracking as of Wednesday 197 active Covid-19 cases: 165 on St. Thomas, 27 on St. Croix and 5 on St. John.

[\[Read: Governor Bryan's 13th Supplemental Executive Order, which returns the Territory to "Stay at Home" status.\]](#)

Here's what you need to know

Effective Monday, August 17, the territory will revert to the Stay at Home or orange alert phase of the administration's Covid-19 response. "This means that effective 6:00 a.m. Monday all non-essential businesses are ordered closed," Mr. Bryan said. "Non-essential public sector workers are also to remain at home. This phase of alert will continue for at least the next two weeks at which time we will re-evaluate whether it is safe to advance again to the yellow alert: Safer at Home."

- Hotels, Airbnb, guest houses and villas have been ordered to cease accepting new reservations effective immediately.
- Reservations are only to be accepted for business -related travel, government workers and emergency workers.
- Effective Wednesday, August 19, hotels are barred from checking in any guests aside from business-related travelers, government workers and emergency workers.
- Virgin Islanders at home and abroad are encouraged to restrict travel to essential and urgent business only.

"While we're taking these measures, keep in mind that we do not have the full authority to close neither our airports or our seaports, nor is that a desirable outcome," the governor said, adding that the territory must maintain a certain level of commercial and airline traffic to allow for emergency travel and transport of medical supplies and other essential items such as mail and packages.

- The governor ordered all public, private and parochial school campuses closed for students.
- Virtual learning is allowed to continue.
- Churches are to remain closed for the next two weeks during this Stay at Home period.
- All beaches have been ordered closed on weekends and holidays from noon, meaning residents are allowed to go to the beach on holidays and weekends in the morning time.
- Restaurants have been restricted to takeout, drive-thru, or delivery service only.
- All essential business must operate within the existing mass gathering restrictions and promote the recommended social distancing requirement of 6 feet or more between individuals, along with the mandatory use of facial covering, the governor said.

"That restriction is no more than 10 people in any establishment other than the [big] box stores and grocery stores," said the governor.

Mr. Bryan reminded the public that the territory is still under a state of emergency. "Everyone is getting tired, but we have been dealing with this virus now for almost 6 months; we must continue to be diligent," he said. "We're doing the things now that will allow us to do better in the future."

Mr. Bryan said the actions were taken today to ease the strain in the St. Thomas-St. John District, and to "ease the anticipation of a major surge that could affect both islands."

The governor said his aim from the onset has been to balance what he said is public health, economic wellbeing, and personal freedoms of residents.

"But at this time the public health concerns trumps all of those," he said.

Mr. Bryan further stressed that the goal of the order is to stop "all movement in the territory [and] all gatherings in the territory until we can get this virus beaten back to a manageable state."

He said all movement, except if absolutely necessary, must stop. "This is not a test; it's not an experiment. We have done this before and it proved effective in slowing the spread," Mr. Bryan said.

And while the government has a role to play in addressing the Covid-19 crisis, Mr. Bryan said members of the community have a part to play as well. "We are doing our best to do our part, and I ask you in turn that each of you do your best to do your part," he said.

Mr. Bryan said the administration would assess active cases, trends in the positivity rates and how many of the active Covid-19 positive cases require acute medical care. "Those will be the determining factors as to how long we continue in this phase," he said.

"However, at this point it is clear that we will not get back to the Open Doors phase again for at least another month," the governor added.

The administration in March issued the following list and descriptions of essential businesses:

Places that sell or produce food:

- Grocery stores, convenience stores, and pet supply stores. This includes stores that sell groceries and sell other non-grocery products, and products necessary to maintain the safety and sanitation of homes.
- Restaurants that prepare and serve food or beverages, but only for delivery, drive-through, or carry out.
- Food cultivation, including farming, livestock, and fishing.

Places with medical purpose:

- Home-based care for seniors, adults, people with a disability, or children.
- Residential facilities and shelters for seniors, adults, people with a disability, and children.

Media outlets:

Newspapers, television, radio, and other media services.

Core life services:

- Gas stations, and auto-supply, and auto-repair.
- Banks and credit unions.
- Hardware stores and building supplies.
- Laundromats, dry cleaners, and laundry service providers.
- Plumbers, electricians, custodial/janitorial workers, handyman services, funeral home workers and morticians, carpenters, landscapers, gardeners, property managers, private security personnel, and other service providers who provide services to maintain the safety, sanitation, and essential operation to properties and other essential businesses.
- Businesses that supply office or computer products needed by people who work from home.

Businesses that supply other Essential Businesses with the support or supplies necessary to operate.

- Businesses that ship, truck, provide logistical support or deliver groceries, food, goods or services directly to residences, essential businesses, healthcare operations, essential infrastructure.
- Airlines, taxis, and other private transportation providers providing transportation services necessary for activities of daily living.
- Businesses that provide parts and services for essential infrastructure.
- Professional services, such as legal or accounting services.

Childcare for essential workers:

- Childcare facilities providing services that enable employees exempted to work.

Places that provide shelter:

- Hotels, shared rental units, and similar facilities.
- Homeless shelters and social services for economically disadvantaged people