

The Virgin Islands Consortium

All Incoming Travelers to USVI Must Provide Negative PCR Test Upon Arrival or Face Mandatory 14-Day Quarantine Under New 'Safer-at-Home' Order

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A person walks past a sign explaining a new state health mandate requiring COVID-19 testing for travelers entering Alaska on Friday, June 5, 2020 at the Ted Stevens Anchorage International Airport. By. LOREN HOLMES/ ANCHORAGE DAILY NEWS

Governor Albert Bryan has said all incoming travelers to the U.S. Virgins Islands must produce a negative polymerise chain reaction (PCR) test upon arrival or face a mandatory 14-day quarantine. The news came as part of Mr. Bryan's weekly Covid-19 response update Tuesday, where he announced the territory's transition back to the "Safer-at-Home" phase of the administration's pandemic response plan. Previously, only

travelers from states with a positivity rate of 10 percent or higher were mandated to a provide negative test result.

The USVI is now below the 5 percent positivity rate, which Mr. Bryan said was a critical marker in the administration's decision to move to the Safer-at-Home phase. He said the Covid-19 crisis that once plagued the Queen Louise Home for the Aged had subsided, and although the situation at the correctional facility in St. Thomas had not been completely resolved, progress had been made.

During the Safer-at-Home phase, most non-essential businesses will be allowed to open. As part of the plan, no more than 50 people can gather at a time in any place. Restaurants will also be allowed to resume dining services. However, restaurants must adhere to the following guidelines. (All bars territory-wide will remain closed, the governor said.)

- No serving alcohol at bar counters at any restaurant or business
- No seating more than six (6) persons per table
- All tables must be six (6) feet apart
- All employees must wear proper facial coverings at all times.

Customers must wear a mask or proper facial covering when entering the restaurant. However, they can take off the mask while eating and drinking. "Once you are seated, you can take off your mask, but once you get up to move around, your mask must be on," said Mr. Bryan

Mr. Bryan also stated that the Department of Health (D.O.H.) has gone around and deemed some restaurants safe to use glassware and silverware. "That is a big plus because customers can now have their wine in glasses again," he said.

Starting on September 19, casinos and gaming establishments are permitted to open. They are not allowed to serve alcohol at bar counters and they must follow the protocols established by D.O.H. and the Casino Control Commission. Hotels, Airbnbs and other lodging businesses are prohibited from accepting any leisure travel guests until September 19, the governor said today.

Mr. Bryan said the administration is awaiting testing equipment to be installed at the airports for guests who do not provide proof that they had recently tested negative for the virus. The equipment is expected at the end of the month, he said.

Also, during the Safer-at-Home phase, nursing homes and assisted living facilities for seniors will remain closed to visitors. Churches and places of worship can reopen but to a maximum of 50 people and must follow the guidelines provided by D.O.H. when partaking in communion. Churches must also follow social distancing guidelines. Private school campuses are now allowed to reopen, providing they follow the public health guidelines. Furthermore, beaches will be allowed to stay open until 4:00 p.m. on the weekends and holidays. There will be no restrictions during the week. Moreover, it is still prohibited to raft boats at beach and for boat parties, Mr. Bryan said.

Dr. Esther Ellis, D.O.H.'s territorial epidemiologist, said that based on recent epidemiology reports, the department has continued to increase testing and have seen a decrease in positive cases. However, while close contact is still the highest means of transmission, community transmission has also increased. Dr. Ellis also stated that reports had shown a rise in positive cases throughout the construction industry. Elsewhere, she clarified that there is no need to get tested a second time before returning to work. One can return to work 10 days after experiencing symptoms or 24 hours after fever recovery, whichever one is longer.

As of Tuesday, D.O.H. reported the territory's 18th death due to the virus. The deceased is [a 68-year-old woman from St. Croix](#).

As of Tuesday, the territory had tested 17,459 people, with 1,191 of them testing positive and 16,253 negative. There are currently 103 active cases of Covid-19: 17 on St. Croix, 79 on St. Thomas, and seven (7) on St. John. D.O.H. was awaiting results of 15 tests.