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# First Week of USVI Reopening 'Extraordinarily Successful'; Tourism Commissioner Urges Strict Compliance With Covid-19 Protocols

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**Dept. of Tourism Commissioner Joseph Boschulte. By. DEPT. OF TOURISM**

While the first week of the return of leisure travel to the U.S. Virgin Islands has been “extraordinarily successful”, according to V.I. Department of Tourism representatives, the territory continues to urge compliance with the stringent protocols and guidelines that have been established to help curb the spread of Covid-19.

Tourism Commissioner Joseph Boschulte believes the new guidelines are the critical factor in protecting public health. “Together with our colleagues in the Department of Health, the Virgin Islands Port Authority, the VI National Guard, and the Office of the Governor, we have gone to

great lengths to invest in public awareness, training, technology and implementation to ensure that visitors and residents are as protected as possible from COVID-19 infection,” he stated.

Echoing weekly messaging from Governor Albert Bryan, the commissioner restated that vigilance must be maintained at all times: “Now, more than ever, we need our industry partners - taxi operators, accommodations providers, tour guides, restaurants and activities - as well as every Virgin Islander to stay diligent in practicing and enforcing the rules that have been set forth,” he emphasized.

Since September 19, when hotels and other accommodations providers were permitted to accept new check-ins, hundreds of guests, the majority of whom were prescreened through the Department of Tourism’s Travel Screening Portal, have arrived through the territory’s air and sea ports. The prescreening process now requires that all travelers aged five and older, without regard to the COVID-19 positivity rate in the visitor’s state of residence, submit evidence of testing for the virus, according to the release.

As the territory continues to experience a decline in active COVID-19 cases, tourism, health and other officials are mindful that spikes or surges can quickly and easily occur if front line workers and other stakeholders become relaxed in enforcing compliance, both among employees and visitors, D.O.T. said.

Seeking to avoid the uptick in positive cases that forced the territory’s August 17, 2020, return to the “Stay-at-Home” phase of its COVID-19 response, which included barring leisure travel for the second time since the beginning of the pandemic, Mr. Boschulte and his colleagues are reminding their tourism partners of that unwelcome possibility should complacency set in.

According to D.O.T., Mr. Boschulte expressed his gratitude to residents of the Virgin Islands for their overwhelming support, patience and cooperation over the past six months as the territory has sought to find the delicate balance between “protecting lives and re-injecting life into our tourism-dependent economy”.

Stakeholders are encouraged to ensure their practices are in accordance with the published standards and proper procedures for operating reception and concierge facilities; cleaning and housekeeping; managing dining rooms; and providing technical and maintenance services. Specific guidance has also been developed for taxi, van, safari and limo services; restaurants; and lodging facilities, according to the release.

The online “Toolkit for Service Providers”, available at [www.usviupdate.com](http://www.usviupdate.com), offers additional resources for the Territory’s hospitality industry.

“We value our partners immensely and we are confident they will continue to cooperate with us to ensure our guests experience the best we have to offer in the U.S. Virgin Islands, including sun, sand, sea and safety,” said Commissioner Boschulte.

To date, the Department of Health has tested 19,835 individuals, with 18,534 negative results and 1,290 positives. There are currently 63 active COVID-19 cases in the territory.