

The Virgin Islands Consortium

USVI Preparing Coronavirus Vaccination Strategy Along With Trump's 'Operation Warp Speed' Initiative

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The U.S. Virgin Islands through the Dept. of Health is making preparations for the eventual arrival of a coronavirus vaccine, according to D.O.H. Commissioner Justa Encarnacion.

Speaking during a Tuesday hearing in support of Governor Bryan's 60-day state of emergency declaration extension request, Ms. Encarnacion said the department has established a vaccination task force which is presently processing applications for permits to provide Covid-19 vaccinations whenever a safe Food and Drug Administration-approved vaccine is made available. Along with D.O.H., the VI National Guard has also engaged with U.S. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention and federal partners in

"Operation Warp Speed" — a public-private partnership initiated by the Trump administration to facilitate and accelerate the development, manufacturing, and distribution of COVID-19 vaccines, Ms. Encarnacion said.

According to the World Health Organization, about 172 Covid-19 vaccines [are in development](#) around the world, with nearly a dozen in final stage testing. Based on the results, some companies are expecting vaccines to be available this year.

Among the frontrunners are vaccine candidates being developed by the University of Oxford and AstraZeneca, another from Moderna, and a candidate from Pfizer Inc. and its partner BioNTech.

While President Trump has said he expects a vaccine to be available this year, the White House on Tuesday said it supported the FDA's vigorous testing guidelines before a Covid-19 vaccine is considered safe for general use.

Soon after the White House announcement, the FDA [issued the guidelines](#). Mr. Trump subsequently [said on Twitter](#), "New FDA Rules make it more difficult for them to speed up vaccines for approval before Election Day. Just another political hit job!"

Drugmakers have said they support efforts by regulators to make sure vaccines are safe before mass distribution. The FDA guidelines outline a much faster pandemic approval process compared to approval timelines under normal circumstances.