

The Virgin Islands Consortium

Effectively Immediately Churches are Allowed to Seat 50 Percent of Capacity at a Maximum of 100 People; Same Order Takes Effect Nov. 9 Everywhere Else Except Nightclubs

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Governor Albert Bryan, citing progress the territory has made in managing the spread of Covid-19, announced during his coronavirus response update Tuesday a number of protocol changes aimed at allowing greater capacity at gatherings.

Effectively immediately, churches will be allowed a maximum of 100 individuals to gather inside facilities, but no more than 50 percent of a building's capacity. "That means if you have a church that has seating capacity of 800 people, half of that is 400, the max you

would be able to (seat) is 100," Mr. Bryan said. "It means that if you have a house of worship that the maximum [capacity] is 150, 50 percent of that will be 75 people. That would be your maximum. So it's up to 100 or 50 percent of your capacity, whichever is less."

Mr. Bryan also announced that effective Nov. 9, the exact same protocol that became effective today for churches, will take effect for all other mass gathering establishments, except nightclubs.

He announced that bars will be allowed to open beginning Nov. 9, however there will be only sit-down service. "No bar-side service, no leaning over the bar, no congregating at the bar at all. If you're in the bar you have to be seated at a table, and that bar has to have table service with a waiter or waitress," Mr. Bryan said. Patrons are allowed to play pool at establishments with them, however only the two people that are engaged in the game are allowed at the table, and those persons should always be wearing masks.

"All other rules are exactly like restaurants: when you get up you have to wear your masks," the governor said.

Bars that don't have table capacity will remain closed, Mr. Bryan said. And he also warned against congregating outside establishments. "People who do that will be shutdown immediately," he said.

Nightclubs are to remain closed. Eleven o'clock curfew for alcohol remains in place, meaning establishments are prohibited from selling alcohol after 11:00 p.m.

"We just want to make sure that we keep everybody safe as we move along this continuum towards normalcy," Mr. Bryan said, adding that the rules could change at anytime to be more lenient or stringent, depending on the territory's performance in combating the disease.

The governor said restaurants from Oct. 13 will no longer be required to use disposal cutlery, ending an order that had [caused ire](#) in the food service industry.

Restaurants are also now allowed to host live bands.

According to Dept. of Health Commissioner Justa Encarnacion, the territory as of Tuesday had 16 active Covid-19 cases: 5 on St. Croix, 8 on St. Thomas and 3 on St. John. Twenty people have died from the virus in the USVI. The commissioner said four Covid-19 patients were receiving care at the Schneider Regional Medical Center, with one of the four on a ventilator. The Juan F. Luis Hospital as of Tuesday had no coronavirus patients, Ms. Encarnacion reported.