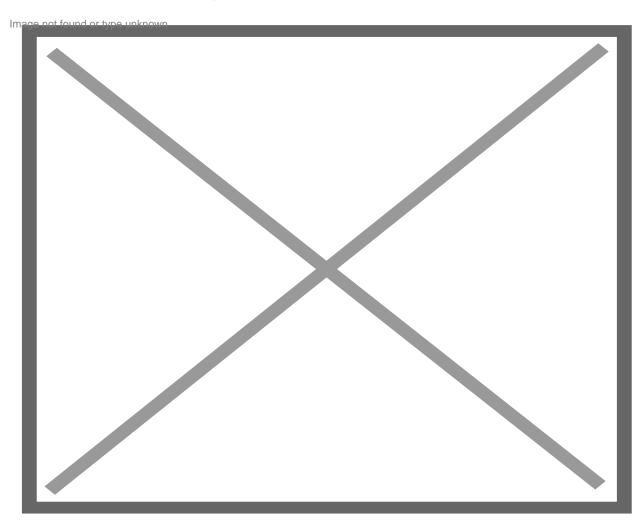# V.I. Dept. of Health Encouraging Residents to Avoid Nonessential Travel as Covid-19 Cases Trend Higher in U.S.

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Information panel with Covid-19 wording at an international airport, symbolizing the global spread of the coronavirus through global air travel. By. iStock/Getty Images/ VI CONSORTIUM

With Covid-19 cases increasing in the U.S., and with a surge expected during the winter months, V.I. Dept. of Health Commissioner Justa Encarnacion is urging Virgin Islanders to avoid nonessential travel.

According to the Wall Street Journal, total U.S. cases fell below 60,000 on Saturday, the lowest count in four days, "after a recent surge in which daily infections approached the outbreak's July

peak. Despite the decrease, 42 states showed signs of increased spread and hospitalizations reached their highest number since late August," WSJ said.

D.O.H. said travel increases the chance of getting COVID-19. "Staying home is the best way to protect yourself and others. While residents are strongly discouraged from non- essential travel at the moment, the department acknowledges that there are some individuals who must travel for essential reasons. If you must travel, you will be referred to a local lab for testing 3-5 days after your return and you will be placed in quarantine until you receive your test results," said the department in a release issued Sunday.

According to Johns Hopkins University, the U.S. reported 57,519 new Covid-19 cases on Saturday, down from 69,156 a day earlier. Friday's total was the highest since July 29, and the U.S. has reported more than 8.1 million infections and over 219,000 deaths.

As of Saturday there were 18 active Covid-19 cases in the USVI: 9 on St. Croix, 6 on St. Thomas and 3 on St. John, according to D.O.H. The department reported the territory's 21st Covid-19 related death Thursday as a 76-year-old woman from St. Thomas.

D.O.H. encouraged residents to put safety first if they must travel. "Wear a mask to keep your nose and mouth covered when in public settings. Avoid close contact by staying at least 6 feet apart from anyone you do not live with. Wash your hands often with soap and warm water. Avoid contact with anyone who is sick and avoid touching your eyes, nose, and mouth," D.O.H. urged.

All travelers to the U.S. Virgin Islands aged 5 and older must produce either a negative COVID-19 antigen (molecular/PCR/rapid) test result from a test taken within five days prior to travel or a positive COVID-19 antibody test result taken within four months prior to travel to the USVI. Every traveler aged 5 and older must use the travel portal before travel. D.O.H. said children 4 years of age or younger are exempt from this testing requirement. It is critical that testing is conducted before arriving to the Virgin Islands as the safety of residents and visitors to the territory is our highest priority.

There is a five-day window to take a test prior to travel. The availability of tests varies from location-to-location, so prospective travelers who are required to present test results are encouraged to plan their testing to meet the required five-day window prior to travel to the USVI, D.O.H. said Test results from a test taken outside of the five-day window do not meet the requirements. If for some reason travelers are unable to produce the required test result, they will be subject to quarantine for 14 days or until they are able to receive the required test result while in the territory.