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## Dept. of Health Halts Soccer Restart, Saying Soccer Association Misunderstood Conversation

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**DC United vs Bermuda game at the USVI Soccer Association's soccer stadium in Estate Bethlehem in November 2019. By. VI CONSORTIUM**

The USVI Soccer Association on Thursday held a press conference [to announce the restart of soccer](#) at its Bethlehem Stadium on St. Croix, while listing guidelines it expected would guide the restart — including having no spectators at the games.

But in a release issued Sunday evening, the V.I. Dept. of Health said it would not allow the restart to take place, stating that the association had misunderstood a conversation.

"An announcement by the Virgin Islands Soccer Association that the season will begin results from a misunderstanding that led them to plan the season, thinking that permission had been

granted," the V.I. Dept. of Health said in its statement Sunday. According to Health Commissioner Justa Encarnacion, the restart had not been approved. D.O.H. said it respected the work that had gone into Sunday's restart so it allowed the game to continue "under strict precautions and monitoring."

In response to the misunderstanding this created about which sports activities are permitted in the territory, the Department of Health issued new guidance, "Public Health Pandemic Order No. X," portions of which are listed below. At this time, only low-risk sports and sports-related activity are permitted, D.O.H. said.

Excerpt from Public Health Pandemic Order NO. X:

The Centers for Disease Control has determined that the risk of COVID-19 spread can be different, depending on the type of activity categorized as:

- Lowest Risk: Performing skill-building drills or conditioning at home, alone or with members of the same household
- Increasing Risk: Team-based practice
- More Risk: Within-team competition
- Higher Risk: Full competition between teams from the same local geographic area (e.g., city or county)
- Highest Risk: Full competition between teams from different geographic areas (e.g., outside county or state)

Only low-risk sports are permitted. (Examples include: baseball, softball, bowling, golf, cross country, swimming, tennis, table tennis, pool, track and field, competitive cheerleading, and training exercises for higher risk sports that do not include player contact or actual games.) High-risk sports are prohibited. All organized team sports, to include leagues, "pick-up games," scholastic athletic associations, but not exclusive to those named, are prohibited from conducting games and organized group activities.

Violators may be penalized as follows:

- \$1000 per participant for violation of the mass gathering prohibitions
- \$5000 per organizer of any mass gathering that violates the prohibitions
- The immediate closure of the event.