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Bryan Orders 'Soft' 2-Week Shutdown For Government Agencies, Grants Administrative Leave Friday, and Suspends Permits for Large Gatherings

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Governor Albert Bryan on Tuesday announced a "soft two-week" shutdown that calls for government departments and agencies to perform remote work as much as possible. He also announced administrative leave for non-essential workers Friday and declared it a day of reflection and prayer.

Additionally, Mr. Bryan urged Virgin Islanders to take Covid-19 precautionary measures for the Thanksgiving holiday, reminding that cases are surging on the U.S. mainland, a situation that could affect the USVI because of its ease of access to all Americans.

"We have to keep up our guard in order to survive this holiday season with no lockdowns," said Mr. Bryan during his Covid-19 press briefing.

Mr. Bryan said Lieutenant Governor Roach and himself reflected on the year and the tremendous impact the tragedy of the pandemic has had on the community. Because of this, the governor granted non-essential government employees administrative leave for a day of reflection and prayer. Mr. Bryan urged residents to utilize the time off to spend at home with their families, reflecting on the many blessings they received this year.

Another reason for the administrative leave is because of the record-shattering surge of Covid-19 cases on the mainland, which is projected to worsen because of holiday travel and family gatherings.

"Like most governors and public health officials across the country, I am nervous about the spread of the virus over the Thanksgiving Holiday," he said.

As a result, Mr. Bryan has implemented a soft, two-week shutdown. As part of the effort, the governor has directed all agency heads within the executive branch to reduce in-person work as much as possible for the next two weeks. The governor has also recommended employees be given time off, or work on staggered schedules. He urged all private employers to do the same.

Lastly, Mr. Bryan issued a moratorium on all permits given for large events. "We have to control the virus as much as possible," he said. Mr. Bryan stated that there were some exceptions made for some sporting events such as flag football. However, from yesterday and forward, there will be no special arrangements made for anyone throughout the holiday season.

Anything that attracts a large group of people in a public space, including sports tournaments and food sales, are all discontinued until further notice, the governor said. "There will be no exceptions to this because this is not a time to be out." In lieu of the in-person events, Mr. Bryan encouraged virtually affairs.

The governor also provided Thanksgiving celebration guidelines:

- Move meals outdoors if possible
- If celebrating indoors, open windows and doors to keep fresh air flowing
- Limit the number of guests to 10 or less and do not attempt to have a mass gathering
- Limit the number of people going in and out of the kitchen
- Don't be embarrassed to ask people dropping by to wear their masks
- Keep 6 feet away from people you don't live with
- Encourage guests to wash their hands and use hand sanitizer