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Renew Business License Within 90-Day Moratorium Period or Face \$500 Fine, 30-Day Imprisonment Thereafter, DLCA Warns

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The Department of Licensing and Consumer Affairs (DLCA) on Thursday encouraged persons with expired business licenses to immediately contact the department and arrange to make their license current.

“DLCA is willing to work with persons who have experienced economic hardship due to COVID-19 related setbacks and have been unable to renew their license that has expired on or after March 13, 2020,” said department commissioner Richard Evangelista.

DLCA also encouraged persons with licenses that expired prior to March 13, 2020, to contact the department within 90 days to enter into a payment agreement to make their license current.

Although there is a penalty assessed for each month that a license is expired, the Office of the Commissioner has the discretion to waive some of the incurred penalty fees, according to the release. To request a waiver of accrued penalty fees, one simply needs to submit a letter addressed to the Office of the Commissioner to request a waiver of penalties and to explain what setbacks caused one to fail to renew on time.

After 90 days of the instant moratorium, if necessary, DLCA shall begin to issue citations, hold administrative hearings and refer persons to the Department of Justice for prosecution, the release states.

Whoever willfully fails or refuses to comply with the provisions of the DLCA statute shall be liable to a fine not to exceed \$500 and imprisonment not to exceed 30 days or both, the department said.

“DLCA wants to issue a current license to everyone who is operating a business. Compliance is simpler and more cost efficient than enforcement,” stated Mr. Evangelista.

As a reminder, DLCA may still be contacted by using its main telephone lines at 340-713-3522 on St. Croix, 340-714-3522 on St. Thomas, and 340-474-2800 on St. John, according to the release. The department's receptionists no longer have use of multiple lines and at times calls may be delayed. "If you are experiencing these delays, DLCA has an employee cellphone listing to contact your representative directly," DLCA said. "You may view this listing by visiting our website at www.dlca.vi.gov click on contact then employee directory."