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Territory Crosses 50 Percent Vaccination Mark For First-Dose Recipients; New Surge Affecting St. Thomas Among Unvaccinated; 10,000 Checks Go Out; B.I.R. Suffers Covid Outbreak at Red Hook Office

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Kyle Murphy **May 25, 2021**

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The Bryan administration made a number of announcements during its latest Monday press briefing, including a new Covid-19 surge affecting St. Thomas among the unvaccinated, a milestone in first-dose vaccinations, the recent release of a new batch of \$1,400 stimulus checks, and a Covid-19 outbreak at the Bureau of Internal Revenue's Red Hook office.

Dr. Esther Ellis, the USVI territorial epidemiologist, declared that 50.2 percent of Virgin Islanders, or 39,871 individuals that are eligible for Covid-19 vaccination have received at least their first shot, while 39.9 percent (31,645 individuals) have been fully vaccinated. She also said a

new surge of the virus has been occurring in St. Thomas among individuals who are unvaccinated, with the latest increase in cases disproportionately affecting people in the accommodation and food service industries.

Dr. Ellis said the territory as of Monday had 77 active cases, with St. Thomas accounting for sixty-four, St. Croix eight, and St. John five. The territory's seven-day positivity rate has risen to 3.23 percent, "due to a surge in cases among unvaccinated individuals on St. Thomas," she said.

Dr. Ellis said there were 68 new positives between May 14-May 20, with 61 of those cases being on St. Thomas, 4 on St. John and 3 on St. Croix.

There were four Covid-19 hospitalizations on St. Thomas as of Monday, with none of the patients being on ventilators and no Covid-19 hospitalizations on St. Croix.

Governor Albert Bryan said the numbers in St. Thomas and St. John are "trending in the wrong direction, and if the numbers are trending in the wrong direction on any one of our islands, there's a potential for them to trend in the wrong direction on all of our islands." He urged Virgin Islanders to remain vigilant and continued to encourage wearing of masks, social distancing and the avoidance of mass gatherings. Also "take the vaccine now," he said.

Another 10,000 Stimulus Checks Released; B.I.R. Experiences Covid Outbreak

Mr. Bryan made known that another batch of 10,000 checks was released last week from the American Rescue Plan, bringing total batches released so far to three. This means all eligible Virgin Islanders remain on track to receive their payment by the end of May.

The governor also provided an update on the Bureau of Internal Revenue office in Red Hook, which has been closed due to a Covid-19 outbreak, though he said the office was rescheduled to reopen Wednesday.