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36-Year-Old Woman Among Two Latest Covid-Related Deaths in BVI; Government Plans Large Vaccination Drive at Festival Grounds This Weekend

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The government of the British Virgin Islands has planned a large vaccination drive for Saturday and Sunday as Covid-19 continues to [overwhelm the BVI](#), with health officials reporting 1,602 active cases Thursday.

Also on Thursday, the BVI Ministry of Health and Social Development [confirmed](#) two additional Covid-related deaths, bringing the total since the pandemic began to eight, seven of which have occurred in less than two weeks.

The deceased are an 83-year-old female, and a 36-year-old female who were both patients at the Dr. D. Orlando Smith Hospital at the time of their passing, the health ministry said.

Minister for Health and Social Development Carvin Malone, said, "Expressing condolences to the many bereaved families is getting harder and harder."

He added, "The road to the other side of this surge will not be without challenges but I remain steadfast in knowing that if we all do our part, we will get through this. Let us continue to pray, adhere to established Covid-19 protocols and guidelines, follow curfew orders and get vaccinated."

Acting BVI Chief Medical Officer Dr. Ronald Georges stated, "Given that the BVI is experiencing high community transmission, all symptomatic persons should immediately assume that they are Covid positive. Therefore, we need persons to adhere to isolation and quarantine orders."

Large Vaccination Effort

The government is encouraging unvaccinated members of the BVI community to take advantage of two vaccination drives Saturday and Sunday at the BVI Festival Grounds from 9:00 a.m. to 5:00 p.m. to get vaccinated.

"The more people we can get vaccinated the less the mortality rates," stated Dr. Georges. "Persons who are being severely impacted from Covid-19 have preexisting medical conditions. We are making a special appeal to our vulnerable population to get vaccinated today to save your life tomorrow."

Travel Restrictions Between USVI and BVI

Governor Albert Bryan [announced](#) during a press briefing Thursday that effective Monday, anyone entering the USVI from the BVI must submit a negative Covid test within 24 hours of departure. USVI Health officials will also accept positive antibody tests. "We're going to be taking extra caution, and please don't try to game the system. We've already made one arrest and we'll make others for people trying to forge their way into the U.S. Virgin Islands," the governor said.

The governor also offered free vaccinations to "anyone who makes it to our shores."

Mr. Bryan said the administration gave thought to reducing the ferry load coming from the BVI, "but we thought better of it because all the people who are coming should have had a test within 48 hours of their departure," he explained.

For Virgin Islanders wanting to travel to the BVI, Mr. Bryan said, "We're not encouraging people to go over to that situation."

Mr. Bryan said the Covid situation in the USVI was not encouraging, and he issued a new plea aimed at residents experiencing Covid fatigue. "Right now our situation in the Virgin Islands is not optimal, and I know a lot of you have gotten used to having the virus and going about your regular business — not wearing your mask, not paying attention, hanging in places with people," he said. "We are against a new enemy with this Delta variant. Although I cannot confirm that it is in the territory, I cannot imagine that it is not with all that we're seeing going on in the BVI as well as what is going on in the United States, as non-vaccinated people continue to contract this variant."

Mr. Bryan said five people were at the Juan F. Luis Hospital receiving care for Covid as of Thursday. "That is high," he said. At the Schneider Regional Medical Center, seven people were

hospitalized with the illness as of Thursday, with two on ventilators, according to the governor.

The territory's leader said the goal has never been to eradicate Covid. "The goal has been to manage it and make sure that our hospitals and health resources are available to people who get sick," he said.

"Yet seven people are in the hospital already in St. Thomas, and over 120 cases today active in the Virgin Islands. We've got to work to drive that down. We got to work to get that under fifty for the entire territory," Mr. Bryan stressed.

The governor concluded, "Please, I am asking you, I am begging you for your cooperation so that we continue to enjoy the prosperity that we've had because we've managed the crisis well. Not just me, not just Health, not Just VITEMA, but us as a community managing to get through."

He encouraged residents of all faiths to pray for the British Virgin Islands. "It is not an easy thing to deal with," the governor said.

As of Thursday, there were 124 active Covid-19 cases in the U.S. Virgin Islands: 63 on St. Thomas, 57 on St. Croix, and 4 on St. John, according to data provided by the V.I Dept. of Health.