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Halloween Event Planners Must Submit Special Request Form, D.O.H. Announces; Unapproved Gatherings Will Be Shut Down

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The V.I. Dept. of Health announced Saturday that any entity planning to conduct an event for Halloween must submit a special event request form no later than 5:00 p.m. Friday, October 22 to D.O.H.'s mitigation team for review and approval.

According to the release, considering the rapidly approaching date of this year's Halloween recognition, D.O.H. has made an exception to its mandatory two-week advance submission requirement. The department urged only "low risk events" and reminded businesses and the public that unapproved gatherings will be shut down by the Covid-19 Task Force.

The department said that due to the high amount of community spread, especially on the island of St. Croix, D.O.H. is requiring event coordinators to submit and adhere to a thorough Covid-19 safety plan to stop the virus' spread during their event.

As of Saturday there were 179 active Covid-19 cases territory-wide: 149 on St. Croix, 29 on St. Thomas, and 1 on St. John.

To begin the plan approval process, visit the DOH website at www.covid19usvi.com and complete the "Special Event Request Form." There is a blue rectangle on the webpage with the words "For Event Planners: Special Event Request Form" to help you quickly locate it. The website also contains additional up-to-date information on event planning requirements.

The department suggested that planners should consider low-risk Halloween events such as "Drive-By" and "Trunk or Treat" style events, where the children remain in the car and the people handing out candy pass it to the children through the car window.

D.O.H. said basic Covid-19 safety practices must be adhered during all events. This includes facial coverings or masks being worn by everyone and sanitizer must be used by the person handing out the candies. It is recommended when pre-packaged candies are used, they must be handed out by a designated person who uses hand sanitizer, is wearing a mask, and is practicing proper social distancing. Event planners are reminded that the DOH opposes Halloween mask wearing because those masks do not provide protection from Covid-19 and wearing two masks can inhibit breathing.

The department also reminded that the event request forms must be filled out entirely and the entity that owns the property where the event is held must also sign the form.?

All events, regardless of size, must be approved by the VI Department of Health's Covid-19 mitigation team, per the government of the U.S. Virgin Islands Supplemental Executive Orders (EO) modifying the conditions of "Safer at Home" <https://www.vi.gov/executive-orders/>. D.O.H. said this conforms with the 27th EO which states that the department must approve all gatherings, regardless of size, and limits the maximum number of people in a gathering to 50.

D.O.H. reminded the public that gatherings of 50 or more people (staff, guests, hosts) in attendance are considered "mass gatherings" and vaccination status of these guests must be verified by the D.O.H. prior to event approval.