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Biden Mandate: Workers Employed at USVI Companies With Over 100 Employees Must Be Vaccinated By Jan. 4 or Test Weekly

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A Virgin Islander gets vaccinated on St. Croix at one of the island's vaccination centers.
By. VI CONSORTIUM

Large employers by Virgin Islands standards such as Home Depot, Plaza Extra East, the Market St. Croix and St. Thomas will have to require that their employees are either vaccinated or must test on a weekly basis by January 4, a Biden administration mandate that the president says is aimed at curbing the spread of Covid-19, even as the mandate has come under immense Republican criticism.

The new requirements, issued by the Occupational Safety and Health Administration (OSHA) on Thursday, covers roughly 84 million workers across the U.S. and its territories. The mandate applies to employers with 100 or more employees. Companies subject to the requirements must ascertain that employees who are not vaccinated are tested weekly. Employers are not required to provide or pay for the tests, although there may be exceptions based on varying collective bargaining agreements.

Companies that do not adhere to the new policy could face penalties of up to \$13,600 per violation. Typically, OSHA responds when it receives a complaint, but in regards to the new mandate, it will check for compliance through planned inspections, according to senior Biden administration officials speaking to the Wall Street Journal.

The mandate does not apply to employees who work exclusively outdoors, from home, or where other individuals are not present, the Biden administration said.

"While I would have much preferred that requirements not become necessary, too many people remain unvaccinated for us to get out of this pandemic for good," Mr. Biden said Thursday. He added that vaccination mandates are "nothing new."

[Late September](#), Governor Albert Bryan said he was prepared to enforce portions of Mr. Biden's mandate. During its weekly Covid-19 press briefing, the administration showed a slide presentation that read, "Governor Bryan is prepared to enforce the federal mandates passed down by President Biden as they apply here in the territory, and continue to urge Virgin Islanders to take advantage of the availability of vaccines."

According to federal officials, employers subject to the new rules must require each vaccinated worker to provide proof of vaccination status. Acceptable documents include a record of immunization from a provider or pharmacy; a copy of a CDC Covid-19 vaccination card (seen in feature image); medical records; immunization records from public health, state or tribal immunization information system; or a copy of other official documentation that contains the type and dates of vaccination, according to WSJ.

A signed and dated statement from the employee attesting to his or her vaccination status is permitted when documentation can't be obtained.

The Biden administration has separately required vaccinations for federal employees and federal contractors by the Jan. 4 deadline. Additionally, more than 17 million workers in health facilities that receive Medicare and Medicaid reimbursement must get vaccinated under the new federal requirement. The USVI's two hospitals fall under the latter category.

Delegate to Congress Stacey Plaskett lauded the Biden decision in a statement issued in September. "Since President Biden took office, he has pulled every lever to save lives and stop the spread of the virus. Since January 20, our nation has gone from 2 million fully vaccinated Americans to more than 175 million. And since early July, we have seen a consistent trend of increasing vaccinations with an average of 825,000 shots a day. Throughout the pandemic, the Biden administration has worked around the clock to get more people vaccinated, decrease hospitalizations and deaths, and keep our schools and economy open," Ms. Plaskett said.

She added, "... President Biden outlined a robust plan to build on our progress, stop the spread of the Delta variant, and increase vaccinations. The wartime spirit and science-based plan reflects the Biden administration's whole-of-government approach and unwavering commitment to defeat the deadly virus at home and abroad."

