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## Dept. of Health Encourages Masking as Covid-19 Cases Surge to 962 Following Carnival; Bryan Seeks State of Emergency Extension

Coronavirus / **Published On May 09, 2022 05:37 PM /**

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Revelers participate in Jouvert Morning in St. Thomas on Thurs. April 28, 2022. The V.I. Dept. of Health has said that the latest rise in cases is tied to Carnival festivities in St. Thomas. By. REEMY-REEMZ PHOTOGRAPHY/VICONSORTIUM

The V.I. Dept. of Health on Monday encouraged Virgin Islanders to wear masks in public two months after Governor Albert Bryan [lifted the indoor mask mandate](#), a decision based on rising Covid-19 cases that the health department says is tied to V.I. Carnival festivities that took place late April in St. Thomas.

According to Deputy Health Commissioner Reuben Molloy, speaking during the Bryan administration's weekly press briefing from Gov't House on St. Croix, there were 962 active Covid-19 infections as of Monday, with a territory-wide positivity rate of 5.18 percent. D.O.H. said 11 were patients hospitalized with the virus, and of the total cases, 775 were reported on St. Thomas, 171 on St. Croix, and 16 on St. John.

D.O.H. has administered a total of 69,564 first-dose Covid-19 vaccination shots, and 56,873 second-doses.

"The Dept. of Health expected the numbers to rise as a result of the close knit carnival festivities. So while we're not happy with the rise in the number of infections we're seeing, we're not surprised," Mr. Molloy said. "For this reason I'm asking everyone who has symptoms to isolate immediately and get tested as soon as possible."

The deputy health commissioner reminded the public that regardless of one's vaccination status, or whether Covid symptoms are being experienced, "if you are infected with Covid-19 you can spread the virus to others. Please think of all the vulnerable people in our community: the elderly, the immunocompromised, the immunosuppressed and those too young to get vaccinated. That's why I'm asking everyone to double down and take all the precautions as we navigate this period," he said.

Mr. Molloy added, "If we all do our part we can bring the numbers down. Wear your mask in public."

Government House Communications Director Richard Motta said while the administration "hopes to avoid these surges here locally, we certainly plan for them, and at the foundation of those plans is the state of emergency that affords us continued access to the most effective tools in helping us to protect Virgin Islanders."

To that end, Mr. Motta announced that Governor Bryan has requested another extension to the existing state of emergency to June 30.