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## 58-Year-Old Man Dies From Complications Tied to Covid-19, Carrying Total USVI Deaths to 124

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A 58-year-old man became the 124th person in the U.S. Virgin Islands to die from complications tied to Covid-19, the V.I. Dept. of Health announced today.

"After further investigating cause of death and ensuring notification of next of kin, the Virgin Islands Department of Health is saddened to confirm the territory's one hundred and twenty-fourth (124th) death related to COVID-19," the department said in a release. "The deceased is a 58-year-old male on St. Thomas. The VIDOH extends condolences to the family and friends of our latest COVID-19 related fatality."

D.O.H. said it continues to work to slow the spread of the disease and encourages the public to become fully vaccinated and boosted. "Residents are also urged to remember to follow all

precautionary measures by practicing social distancing around persons with whom you do not reside, wearing a mask in crowded public areas, washing your hands often with soap and warm water, and cleaning frequently used areas thoroughly," the department said.

On Monday, V.I. Dept. of Health Territorial Epidemiologist, Dr. Esther Ellis said a slight increase in Covid-19 cases in the territory can be expected during the winter months.

Already, she said infection rates have increased this week with 42 active cases territory-wide and four hospitalizations. Most of the reported cases, 36, have been identified on St. Croix with one hospitalization at the Juan F. Luis Hospital; three have been identified on St. Thomas all of whom are hospitalized at the Schneider Regional Medical Center, as well as two cases on St John.

"As we indicated previously, Covid-19 has become endemic. This means that it'll always be circulating in our community and other communities elsewhere. However, when case numbers increase, people should be more deliberate in how we do things," she cautioned.

Dr. Ellis continues to encourage residents and visitors to follow measures that reduce the spread of the virus like getting vaccinated or boosted or social distancing, washing of hands and wearing face masks. This she said is particularly important as the tourism season enters its peak.

"We all know the steps to take. The new Omicron variants XBB, BA.4.6, BQ1, BQ 1.1 and BF7 are predicted to be more contagious so every little precaution each of us individually takes in the coming months can have a tremendous benefit for our Virgin Islands as a community," she said.

Dr. Ellis is also encouraging residents to get their annual flu shots especially people who are immune compromised.