

The Virgin Islands Consortium

DEA, VIPD and Dept. of Health to Hold Press Conference on Opioid Problem in USVI

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The Federal Drug Enforcement Agency, the Virgin Islands Police Department and the V.I. Department of Health will host a press conference Tuesday afternoon to discuss the opioid crisis and how it's affecting the U.S. Virgin Islands.

According to a release issued by the V.I.P.D. Monday, the aforementioned agency and departments will discuss the issue at 1:00 p.m. The Consortium will carry the event live.

Between Dec. 2019 and January 2020, the DEA arrested two individuals on St. Croix in relation to the use and trafficking of fentanyl. At the time, the DEA said it was working with the V.I.P.D. and the USVI U.S. Attorney's Office to identify the sources trafficking

(knowingly or unknowingly) fentanyl-laced pills. These individuals could possibly be charged with the wrongful death of those who overdosed on these drugs.

A lethal dose of fentanyl is estimated to be about two milligrams, but can vary based on an individual's body size, tolerance, amount of previous usage and other factors.

In January, the V.I. Dept. of Health and the V.I.P.D. said they were committed to fighting opioid abuse in the territory. D.O.H. said it was working to identify outbreaks, collect data, respond to overdoses, and provide care to those in the community who need it.

The V.I.P.D. said at the time that it was tracking the source of opioids entering the islands and will arrest those responsible for the use and trafficking of illicit drugs.

“As we know, drug related incidents and overdoses related to fentanyl are occurring at an alarming rate throughout the United States and has now made its way to the U.S. Virgin Islands. This represents a potentially significant threat to public safety, as fentanyl is currently one of the most dangerous opioids that is illicitly being distributed on the market,” stated Department of Health Deputy Commissioner of Public Health Renan Steele in January.

This powerful synthetic opioid is commonly being mixed with other illicit drugs and has been found to be up to 100 times more potent than morphine, and 30 to 50 times more potent than heroin. It's estimated that the effects of fentanyl are 50 times stronger than heroin and 100 times stronger than morphine. This means just a tiny amount of fentanyl can cause complications from over intoxication or overdose.

D.O.H. said it will continue educating the public about substance abuse and specifically fentanyl by providing the community with important information about avoiding drug use.

V.I.P.D. said it is fully committed to identifying and arresting persons providing the drug to users and those buying and using it. “I am concerned about the devastating and addictive nature of these drugs. Fentanyl is a drug that has proven to be deadly. VIPD will use its resources in collaboration with federal and local agencies to investigate and educate on matters involving fentanyl,” said V.I.P.D. Commissioner Trevor Velinor.