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Acting Governor Roach Provides Details On Investigation into Noxious Odor on St. Croix

U.S. VIRGIN ISLANDS — Lt. Governor Tregenza A. Roach, Esq., in his capacity as Acting Governor while Governor Albert Bryan Jr. is out of the Territory, held Monday's Government House weekly press briefing and provided an update on the status of the Government of the Virgin Islands' (GVI) investigation into the noxious odor that is plaguing St. Croix.

Department of Planning and Natural Resources (DPNR) Commissioner Jean-Pierre Oriol and Health Commissioner Justa Encarnacion also provided information during the briefing about the odor investigation.

"The island of St. Croix has been confronted in recent weeks with gaseous emissions in the atmosphere that are at best a nuisance that is degrading our enjoyment and quality of life; but at worst presents a clear and present risk to the health of our residents," Lt. Governor Roach said. "Several agencies have spent the weekend tirelessly pursuing the source of those emissions. I must say that I am impressed with the technical capacity possessed by our Virgin Islands Civil Support Team, the Virgin Islands Fire Service Hazmat, and the DPNR Environmental Protection Division."

The Lt. Governor said he is confident that the Territory, which is working in collaboration with the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency, has the ability and resources to track down the source of the smell.

Lt. Governor Roach also reminded residents that now is the time to begin putting together hurricane survival kits for the upcoming hurricane season.

“We live in a time when changes to the climate make the behaviors of these storms more difficult to predict. That is why it is all the more important to make a plan and discuss it with your family, not just during hurricane season. Before a hurricane strikes it is important to a have conversation with your family about where you will go and what you will do for shelter if needed,” he said.

The Lt. Governor advised residents to service their generators and visit vitema.gov for up-to-date information about hurricane season.

Lt. Governor Roach opened Monday’s briefing by sending his condolences to the family of 16-year-old Kimani Perdomo, who was murdered Sunday morning in the John F. Kennedy housing community on St. Croix.

“That is certainly a tragic occurrence, particularly on Mother’s Day. I pray that the family finds comfort in this time of grief, and we ask that if any of you have knowledge that can lead to the apprehension of the individuals that perpetrated this crime, please come forward and share what you know with the Virgin Islands Police Department,” the Lt. Governor said.

Anyone with information can call the anonymous national tip line at Crime Stoppers, 1-800-222-8477.

Graduations
Lt. Governor Roach also discussed the Department of Education’s plans for the upcoming graduations and said the primacy of public health must take precedence. He also praised the department’s “hybrid” approach that will allow students to walk the stage in front of their families and pose for graduation pictures with their diplomas.

“The principals and graduation planning committees at each of our public high schools have put significant thought into the conduct of these events. They have planned spectacular events that will honor the achievement of our graduating seniors, and we thank them for their creativity and ingenuity in these trying times,” Lt. Governor Roach said. “We must be mindful that times are not normal. We have been effective in our management of this virus because we have made prudent decisions when necessary. We cannot afford to abandon that same level of prudence at this time when we are making such great progress towards restoring normalcy.”

Stimulus payments
Noting that the Bureau of Internal Revenue (BIR) and Department of Finance had issued a batch of 10,000 stimulus checks last week, the Lt. Governor said the agencies will be releasing a second batch of the $1,400 checks this week.

Those checks averaged approximately $2,500 per household, and the Bryan-Roach Administration is on track to issue all checks from this latest round of stimulus payments within the month of May, he said.

The Bureau of Internal Revenue has established a hotline – 340-714-9325 – to assist in responding to the high volume of calls be residents with questions about the stimulus checks.

Lt. Governor Roach also thanked Clarina Modeste-Elliott for filling in as the acting Commissioner of Finance since last October.

Commissioner of Finance Designee and St. John resident Bosede Bruce began her duties on Monday, May 10.

Vaccinations administered

- 38,165 first doses
- 29,033 persons fully vaccinated
- 11,835 first doses away from July 1 goal of 50,000.

Anyone who thinks they may have contracted COVID-19 can call the Epidemiology hotline at 340-712-6299 or 340-776-1519. For more information, visit covid19usvi.com.

For information about the COVID-19 vaccines, call the VITEMA hotline Mondays-Fridays from 8:30 a.m. to 3 p.m. at 340-777-VACS (8227).

Pop-Up testing sites

This week, pop-up testing sites will be at the following locations:

- **Home Depot** on St. Thomas on Tuesday, May 11, from 1 to 3 p.m.
- **Canegata Rec Center** on St. Croix on Tuesday, May 11, from 10 a.m. to 1 p.m.
- **The V.I. Port Authority Gravel Yard** on St. John on Wednesday, May 12, from 1:30 to 4:30 p.m.
- **Buddhoe Park** on St. Croix on Thursday, May 13, time TBD.
- **Fort Christian parking lot** on St. Thomas on Thursday, May 13, from 1 to 3 p.m.

Residents can pre-register for testing online at www.covid19usvi.com/testing.

COVID-19 cases as of May 8

- Currently tracking 94 active cases (16 STX; 77 STT; 1 STJ).
- 106,018 individuals tested to date.
- 102,795 of those tests were negative.
- 3,223 tests came back positive (1,379 STX; 1,622 STT; 222 STJ).
- 3,102 people have recovered.
- 27 fatalities.
- No COVID-19 patients are hospitalized at Juan F. Luis Medical Center on St. Croix.
- Three COVID-19 patients, none on ventilators, currently are hospitalized at Schneider Regional Medical Center on St. Thomas.

Health Commissioner Encarnacion said the weekly positivity rate in the Territory is 3.33 percent, which is a dramatic increase from last week's rate of 1.86 percent.

“We have seen a major increase in cases in St. Thomas. You must do your part,” Commissioner Encarnacion said. “The most recent surge seen on St. Thomas is among unvaccinated individuals. I will repeat that – unvaccinated individuals and was determined to be a cluster-related incident.”

The commissioner said the surge on St. Thomas is likely due to private functions and parties during what was to be Carnival weekend – organized against Governor Bryan’s orders.

The Bryan-Roach Administration is committed to transparency, stabilizing the economy, restoring trust in the government and ensuring the disaster recovery is completed as quickly as possible.

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