GOVERNMENT HOUSE
UNITED STATES VIRGIN ISLANDS

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Department of Health Updates Residents On Legionella Bacteria Found in Both Districts

Governor Bryan will sign the historic legislation allowing the Administration to refinance Rum Cover-Over debt to stabilize the Government Employees' Retirement System

U.S. VIRGIN ISLANDS — During the Government House weekly briefing on Monday, the Virgin Islands Department of Health gave an update on cases of Legionella bacteria and advised residents how they can avoid illness caused by the bacteria, which can cause severe pneumonia.

Deputy Commissioner of Health Reuben Molloy said there was one instance of Legionella bacteria on St. Croix and one on St. Thomas. Legionella can cause flu-like symptoms that can develop into severe pneumonia, called Legionnaire's Disease, if a Legionella illness is not diagnosed and treated quickly, but cases typically are isolated, he said.

Symptoms can include cough, muscle aches, shortness of breath, headache and fever.

Legionella is typically found in warm water environments, such as cisterns, hot tubs or commercial air conditioning systems that are cooled by water, and it is contracted by inhaling water vapor with Legionella bacteria in it and is not contracted by ingesting water.

It is not an airborne illness and can not be passed between individuals. Deputy Director Molloy said residents and businesses can avoid the bacteria by having their cisterns, hot tubs and air conditioning systems routinely cleaned.

Bill-signing ceremony
Governor Albert Bryan Jr. is scheduled to sign the historic legislation that allows the Government of the Virgin Islands (GVI) to refinance its Rum Cover-Over Matching Fund Bonds and use the savings from the more favorable terms to stabilize the Government Employees' Retirement System (GERS) and immediately return it to solvency for at least 30 years.

The Governor will sign the bill at 9:30 a.m. at the newly refurbished Government House on St. Thomas, and it can watched live online at the Government House page at facebook.com/GovernmentHouseUSVI or on Channel 27 for Viya subscribers.

The legislation was a collaborative effort between the Governor's Executive Team, the 34th Legislature, the GERS board and the GERS actuary, Segal and Company, and the Senate passed it unanimously 14-0. The Governor's Executive Team already has begun the work that will allow the Bryan-Roach Administration to secure the bonds and make them available to investors on the bond market.

$250 Vaccine Incentive for Children
The VI Youth $250 Gift Card Giveaway begins on February 14 and runs through Friday, March 18. Any child residing in the US Virgin Islands between the ages of 5 and 17 who receives the second dose of either the Pfizer or Moderna vaccines between by March 18, will receive a $250 gift card at the time you receive your second dose.

Children who receive only the first dose by that deadline are not eligible.

"We also want to thank those parents who trusted the science and did not hesitate to get their children vaccinated as soon as the COVID-19 vaccines became available for their young ones," Government House Communications Director Richard Motta Jr. said. "Those children who have already been fully vaccinated before today will also receive a $250 Visa gift card."

Travel restrictions
Director Motta reminded residents that the USVI has reverted back to its pre-Omicron protocols for travelers arriving into the Territory, and they must present a negative test result received with 5 days of arrival or have proof of being fully vaccinated in the USVI.

For more information on the territory's travel protocols, visit USVITravelPortal.com.

First Family temporarily relocates
Governor Bryan and the First Family have temporarily vacated the official residence at Government House on St. Croix, as the residence is undergoing critical maintenance.

The repairs, according to the contractor, are expected to take a month to complete. In the interim the first family will reside at the rental residence in St. Thomas and at a private residence in St. Croix.

New Hours for Testing
Beginning Wednesday, February 2, the Department of Health shifted its hours for testing to 9 a.m. to noon **by appointment** at covid19usvi.com/testing.

Hours will not change on St. John, and testing will be available from noon to 3 p.m. three days a week – Tuesdays, Wednesdays and Fridays – at the V.I. Port Authority gravel lot until further notice.

Pop-Up Vaccinations
St. Croix – Tuesdays, Wednesdays and Thursdays from 10 a.m. to 1 p.m. at the Market (formerly Plaza Extra West) and 7 to 11 a.m. Saturdays at Agriculture Fairgrounds.
St. Thomas – Tuesdays and Thursdays from noon to 3 p.m. at Cost-U-Less.
St. John – Wednesdays from 1 to 4 p.m. at the V.I. Port Authority gravel parking lot.

Vaccinations for Children 5-11
Appointments can be scheduled by calling 340-777-8227 or online at covid19usvi.com/vaccines.
St. Thomas – 8 a.m. to 4 p.m. Tuesdays and Fridays at the Maternal Child Health Center.
St. Croix – 8 a.m. to 5 p.m. Mondays through Fridays at the Community Vaccination Center.

Please make sure to have a parent or guardian accompany any minor wishing to get vaccinated and bring an ID for both the minor and the parent or guardian.

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

Vaccination appointments also can be scheduled online at covid19usvi.com/vaccines. The Department of Health will bring the COVID-19 vaccine to children and adults who are homebound.

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.

COVID-19 cases as of February 7
- 4.53% seven-day positivity rate
- Currently tracking 324 active cases (211 STX; 89 STT; 24 STJ).
- 316,197 tests administered.
- 15,024 individuals tested positive.
- 14,598 individuals have recovered.
- 103 fatalities.
- There are 11 COVID-19 patients, with one on a ventilator, hospitalized at Luis Hospital on St. Croix.
- There are 6 COVID-19 patients, with two on a ventilator, hospitalized at Schneider Regional Medical Center on St. Thomas.

The Bryan-Roach Administration is investing in the Territory's people, infrastructure and future through transparency, stabilizing the economy, restoring trust in the government and ensuring that recovery projects are completed as quickly as possible. Visit transparency.vi.gov

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