



The Office of the Magistrate's Court

TO: To All Court Users

FROM: Court Manager

DATE: 23 March, 2020

RE: **Corona Virus Pandemic – Emergency Measures in place for the Magistracy**

As you are aware, the Deputy Governor of the Virgin Islands on 19 March, 2020 issued Circular Number 4 regarding the continuity of operations and arrangements for the Supreme Court, Magistracy and the Royal Virgin Islands Police Force in light of the Corona Virus Pandemic.

In light of said Circular, the Registrar of the High Court has taken measures to safeguard the public and her staff and to minimize the risks posed by the Corona Virus Pandemic. Said measures were appended to Circular Number 4.

The Magistracy is also in receipt and have reviewed a memorandum dated 19 March, 2020 and received on 20 March, 2020 from the Chief Justice of the Eastern Caribbean Supreme Court urging that as far as is possible, video-link, or other virtual communication technologies be utilized for court proceedings in so far as is practicable to safeguard staff and customers alike.

The Government of the Virgin Islands is also urging us to enhance cleaning practices, practise social distancing, and to limit meetings to five (5) persons present in person. Currently, in the manner in which our court proceedings take place, it is difficult to limit matters to 5 persons, as the staff component necessary to run hearings is larger than same.

Further, in Circular Number 4, the Deputy Governor communicated that civil servants are eligible for pandemic leave where they suffer from chronic illnesses, or would need time off to care for their children in light of school closures. Having reviewed our unique situation, it appears that many staff members are eligible for pandemic leave at any given time.

As such, having evaluated the safety needs of our staff and the public, we have determined that commencing Tuesday, 24 March, 2020 and continuing until the Court resumes after its Easter Vacation on 20 April, 2020, the court will not be embarking on any in person trials.

During the first two weeks of this period (that is 24 March, 2020 to 3 April, 2020) all matters that are urgent matters (eg involving persons on remand), arrest matters, decisions, and sentences will be handed down as and when scheduled. These matters will be facilitated from 9 am to 1 pm in each court whether in person, or via video technology, if applicable. There will be no sittings after 1 pm in any of our courts.

All matters that are scheduled during this time that do not fall into these categories will be administratively adjourned. Please do not attend our offices, or at courthouses in mass as you will not be allowed into the premises in mass. Controlled entry and social distancing will be practised. You may also be asked questions about your health and travel history. If you appear visibly ill, you will not be allowed in.

Entry into our courtrooms will be limited. Particular numbers and rules will apply to each location and will be posted accordingly.

If you are unwell and have a matter before the court, whether as a litigant, or a defendant, please do not appear during this period.

If you have travelled to a COVID-19 affected country in the last 30 days, or have been in close contact with someone who has so travelled, please do not appear at our offices, or courtrooms.


If you are required to be in isolation, or quarantined, please do not appear at our offices, or courtroom.

In all the above circumstances, we may be contacted at telephone number 468-4360, or alternatively, via e-mail address MagistratesCourtJH@gov.vg for information concerning your matter.

However, during the closure of the court for its Easter Vacation, as is customary, only arrest matters for persons in Police custody will be facilitated.

As it concerns cashiering and filing at the court office, the opening hours remain the same, which is from 9 a.m. to 3:30 p.m. However, as indicated above, controlled entry and social distancing will be practised, therefore the number of persons allowed into the front office at any given time will be limited.

We appreciate that this decision may have a negative impact on some of you as many persons are anxious to have their day in court and to have their matter completed. However, we must safeguard each other, and the best way right now is to put measures in place to prevent the virus, hence the reason we have decided to adopt this approach. We trust and pray that you will join us in our efforts to keep the BVI COVID-19 free.


Court Manager

cc: Magistrates

