



**NATIONAL EMERGENCY MANAGEMENT ORGANISATION (NEMO)
MINISTRY OF NATIONAL SECURITY
ST. VINCENT AND THE GRENADINES
WEST INDIES**

Tel: 784-456-2975, Fax: 784-457-1691, Email: nemosvgeoc@gmail.com or nemosvg@gov.vc

PRESS RELEASE

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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Contact: Chief Medical Officer, Chair
Health Services Subcommittee
National Emergency Committee

Kingstown, St. Vincent and the Grenadines

**STRENGTHENING OF THE ENFORCEMENT OF PUBLIC
HEALTH MEASURES**

St. Vincent and the Grenadines on February 4, 2021 reported one hundred and three (103) new COVID-19 cases from samples collected between January 21st and February 3rd. These new cases were detected through the testing of contacts of known positives, routine screening and testing of persons with flu symptoms. Many of the cases are clustered in families and small social groups including patrons of gambling sheds and rum shops. There are now one thousand and twenty-one (1021) local cases of COVID-19. Four hundred and ninety-four (494) of these cases are contacts of known positives, while one hundred and seventy-seven (177) are persons who presented with flu-like symptoms and tested positive for COVID-19. Forty-seven (47) persons have been found to be positive for COVID-19 during exit screening. The laboratory forms of three hundred and three (303) persons who tested positive had no record of the reason for testing and may have been part of random screening. While there are many new clusters of cases, this pattern of transmission is consistent with community spread.

A review of the COVID-19 cases since December 16, 2020 revealed that the positivity rate for COVID-19 testing dramatically increased from 6.6% on January 11th to 15.7% on January 21st, 16.6% on January 28th and 15.3% on January 30th. Testing on samples taken on February 1st and 2nd so far gives incidence rates of 2.7% and 3.2%. Given the incubation period of 14 days, increases in these rates due to spread which occurred around January 28 are anticipated in the coming days.

A significant proportion of the cases recorded from testing done between January 20th and 28th came from the Georgetown health district, specifically Sandy Bay, and the Chateaubelair health district.

In view of the increased risk of spread of COVID-19 in indoor locations where masks use and physical distancing are reduced, the following additional measures under the Public Health Act of 2020 have been recommended and statutory rules and orders are currently being drafted for a ticketing system in support of their enforcement:

1. The mandatory use of masks in all public transportation vehicles.
2. All public vehicles may only transport a maximum of half their permitted number of passengers. (A 20-seater van will be allowed to transport 10 persons inclusive of the driver and conductor.)
3. No indoor dining in eating establishments. Only take away service will be allowed for indoor restaurants. Outdoor dining with adequate spacing is permitted.
4. Enforcement of all components of the mass gathering protocol with particular emphasis on indoor gatherings at places of entertainment such as bars, gambling sheds and rum shops.
5. Mandatory masks in all public establishments and private establishments to which the public has access.

These measures will commence with the publication of the Statutory Rules and Orders specific to the ticketing system to be implemented. This publication is anticipated to occur between today Friday, February 5 and Monday, February 8, 2021. These measures will be in place for four weeks in the first instance.

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