
Stakeholder Engagement Strengthens Port Health Preparedness in the VI

Release Date: 2 July, 2026



The Ministry of Health and Social Development, through the Environmental Health Division, has taken another significant step toward strengthening the Territory's capacity to prevent, detect and respond to public health threats by hosting a Port Health Stakeholder Engagement Meeting.

The meeting brought together key stakeholders responsible for safeguarding the Territory's points of entry, including representatives from H.M. Customs, the Department of Immigration, BVI Airports Authority, BVI Ports Authority and the Department of Disaster Management.

It also provided a forum for agencies to strengthen collaboration, clarify roles and responsibilities and enhance coordinated preparedness for public health events at the Territory's points of entry.

Minister for Health and Social Development, Honourable Vincent O. Wheatley, welcomed participants and highlighted the importance of an effective Port Health system in protecting public health, ensuring safe travel and trade and strengthening the Territory's emergency preparedness.

"As a Territory that depends heavily on tourism and trade, our ports of entry serve as critical points of connection with the rest of the world. They are also important points of protection," the Minister said. "Effective Port Health systems enable us to identify risks early, respond appropriately and reduce the potential spread of communicable diseases and other public health threats."

The Minister also emphasized that strengthening Port Health extends beyond regulatory compliance and is an essential component of national preparedness.

"Public health risks do not respect borders, he said. Our ability to respond effectively depends on strong partnerships, clear communication, coordinated action, and a shared understanding of each agency's role in protecting the health of our Territory."

During the meeting, participants reviewed the Territory's existing Port Health programme and discussed strategies to strengthen disease surveillance, public health risk assessments, emergency communication, traveler health management,

and inter-agency coordination.

Discussions identified several priority areas for continued improvement, including contingency planning, isolation facilities, emergency communication protocols, staff training and joint simulation exercises to test and strengthen emergency response capabilities.

The Environmental Health Division will continue working with partner agencies to strengthen the Territory's Port Health Contingency Plan, enhance emergency preparedness and broaden stakeholder engagement to include additional agencies that support border health protection.

Honourable Wheatley reaffirmed Government's commitment to ensuring that the Virgin Islands remains prepared to respond to emerging public health threats. "Strengthening our Port Health capacity strengthens our national resilience," the Minister said. "Through continued collaboration, planning and investment in our people and systems, we are building a stronger, safer and more prepared Virgin Islands."

The Ministry of Health and Social Development is committed to improving the health of the people of the Virgin Islands.

For Additional Information Contact:

Natasha Lettsome-Humphrey
Public Health Communications Specialist
Ministry of Health and Social Development
Telephone: 468-2286

Email: nlettsome@gov.vg

Gallery

