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USVI's Sunscreen Ban Officially Takes Effect

by [Matt Turner](#) Mar 31, 2020 2:43pm



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On March 30, the **U.S. Virgin Islands'** historic **"Toxic 3 Os" Sunscreen Ban** officially went into effect, making the territory the first in the **United States** to implement a ban of sunscreen

chemicals that are known to destroy coral and cause health risks for people. (Similar laws in **Hawaii** and **Key West, Florida** are set to commence in January 2021.)

The USVI ban bars octinoxate in addition to the chemicals included in Hawaii and Key West legislation (oxybenzone and octocrylene; the “toxic 3 Os”), which ensures safer mineral sunscreens that contain zinc oxide and titanium dioxide are the default choice.

According to **National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration** (NOAA), there is scientific evidence indicating these chemicals are deadly to coral and threaten overall reef health. They wash off people’s bodies when they swim and contaminate through wastewater runoff and cause coral bleaching, “zombie” coral, which looks healthy but is unable to reproduce, and other issues. The good news is that once these chemicals are out of the water, the coral can rejuvenate.

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"It is imperative that our coral and marine life are protected," said **Lisa Hamilton**, president of the **U.S. Virgin Islands Hotel & Tourism Association**. "We are working with our membership to ensure visitors to our islands have access to safe sunscreens and are informed of the dangers posed by oxybenzone, octocrylene and octinoxate." Coral reefs take up less than one percent of the ocean floor but are home to more than 25 percent of marine life. They are vital to

protecting coastlines and supporting life in oceans and have the highest biodiversity of any of the planet's eco-systems.

Once visitors are again welcomed to the territory, an education system will notify them of the sunscreen ban via their hotels, villas and airlines. Signage in ports and at the airport will also be in place, with information about switching out toxic sunscreens for products that meet the new mandate.

There are a plethora of safe sunscreen options available, such as those offered by [Stream2Sea](#) and [Badger](#).

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