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Press Contact

Richard Motta

340-474-2399

www.vi.gov

richard.motta@go.vi.gov

**Governor Bryan Introduces Legislation
Creating V.I.'s First Emergency Medical Services System**

*Bill Also Would Merge V.I. Fire Services and Health Department's Emergency
Medical Services to Expand Resources*

ST. THOMAS, U.S. VIRGIN ISLANDS— Governor Albert Bryan Jr., on Friday, submitted two major pieces of proposed legislation to dramatically overhaul emergency medical services in the Territory by merging two critical response apparatuses to increase available resources and manpower, and by creating a system that is more efficient and responsive to the emergency needs of residents and visitors to the Virgin Islands.

The first proposed legislation, the Virgin Islands Emergency Medical Services System Act, creates the first-ever Emergency Medical Services System and gives the Virgin Islands Department of Health regulatory authority over all out-of-hospital emergency medical services providers in the Territory to ensure those services are available and accessible to everyone.

“The VIEMSS Act establishes an Emergency Medical Services System in the Virgin Islands Code and allows for the Department of Health to regulate out-of-hospital emergency medical services, to advance the quality of care and increase the amount of available care providers,” Governor Bryan wrote in his submittal letter to Senate President Novelle Francis Jr. “This Bill, for the first time, gives the DOH the legal foundation to regulate EMS in the territory whether it is provided by fire service, rescue squad, a private entity or a non-profit organization.”

Emergency medical services providers in the Virgin Islands currently operate without oversight. The proposed legislation calls for DOH to establish a board which will be responsible for regulating ambulatory services and emergency medical care, for setting educational requirements and permitted practices, for licensing persons and organizations providing this service, and for developing a system that encourages providers to deliver the highest degree of care.

The second proposed legislation, the Virgin Islands Fire and Emergency Medical Services Act (VIFEMS), merges the Virgin Islands Fire Services and the Department of Health's Emergency Medical Services to expand available resources.

The VIFEMS Act "integrated Fire and EMS as an efficient use of emergency resources and recognizes the need for firefighters throughout the territory to provide prompt fire prevention services as well as emergency medical services VIFEMS, as a combined service provider, decreases the response times to emergencies and enhances the capability and capacity of providing emergency and basic and advanced life support services to all individuals in the U.S. Virgin Islands," Governor Bryan wrote.

In preparation for the merger of Fire Service and EMS, between September and October of this year, more than 50 VI firefighters took an Emergency Responder Course.

Governor Bryan added that the merger is not a unique arrangement. Similar structures exist across the United States as communities address the increasing need for out-of-hospital emergency medical services. According to the US National Highway Safety Administration, fire services is the largest provider of EMS in the United States.

The Bryan/Roach Administration has been working for several months to ensure a seamless transformation of the DOH and VI Fires Services into an integrated and regulated emergency medical services system.

Earlier this year, Governor Bryan named policy advisor for justice and public safety, Atty. Marise James, to lead the task force on this effort. The task force included representatives from DOH, Fire Services, Office of the Governor, Division of Personnel and the Office of Collective Bargaining.

Governor Bryan has said that the initiative is necessary to promote the health, safety, and welfare of the residents of the territory and that reducing response time to medical emergencies is a critical objective of this integration.

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