



VITEMA VIRGIN ISLANDS TERRITORIAL EMERGENCY MANAGEMENT AGENCY

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JOINT PRESS RELEASE – VITEMA, DHS, DOH, VIPD, VIFS

May 29, 2020

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The Territory's Emergency Support Agencies Collaborate for the Start of the 2020 Atlantic Hurricane Season

U.S. Virgin Islands – The territory's lead emergency agencies activate cooperative plans to prepare for a multi-threat response starting June 1st, the official commencement of the 2020 Atlantic Hurricane Season.

The 2020 Atlantic Hurricane season is off to an early start with May already seeing two named Tropical Storms, Arthur and Bertha, however, due to on-going and frequent planning efforts, the territory's agencies' preparations and mitigation plans remain organized for this hurricane season which is also layered with a COVID-19 pandemic.

The Virgin Islands Territorial Emergency Management Agency (VITEMA) hosted a half day tabletop exercise last week which identified key gaps of sheltering limitations, communication systems, and the order of operations. Through identified gaps it was determined that shelter capacity will be limited this year due to the American Red Cross social distancing sheltering requirements and the challenge to recruit the ideal and typical number of volunteers persists.

"It is imperative that our faith communities, our local businesses and our not-for-profit community all come together to identify new, safe, innovative ways to prepare and shelter safely this year," said Department of Human Services Commissioner, Kimberley Causey-Gomez. "More than ever, we need our community to do what Virgin Islanders do best and reach out to support your family, friends and neighbors so that as many people as possible can safely shelter in place."

Virgin Islands Fire Services (VIFS) and the Virgin Islands Police Department (VIPD) will be ready to serve in the event of a storm, and the agency is prepared to deploy personnel to conduct search and rescue operations, assist with clearing routes and brush cutting, and provide general support for disaster response and recovery efforts.

For most storms threatening the territory, Governor Albert Bryan, Jr. will declare a State of Emergency and implement hours of curfew, which means shelter in place to protect the lives of individuals before, during, and after the storm. Additionally, the Virgin Islands Police Department establishes traffic control points to minimize the risk of unsafe driving conditions and checking for curfew violators.

“A curfew is for your protection as there are unsafe conditions on the roads,” said VIPD Commissioner, Trevor Velinor. “Our control points serve a purpose to minimize the threat to drivers and protect the workers who are assessing any damages. Everyone must do their part and not put others at risk based on poor judgement.”

Starting June 1, VITEMA will be processing the 2020-2021 Curfew Passes to businesses with demonstrated justification to be on the roads during times of a curfew. The curfew pass process is located on the VITEMA website www.vitema.vi.gov in the key documents section. Business owners should plan for three weeks to allow for VITEMA to process requests and will be notified by email when their passes are ready for pick-up at the VITEMA Emergency Operation Center.

Due to the complexity of the multi-layered threats, residents are asked to take advantage of the resources that the Emergency Support Agencies provide which include: Alert VI and the Senior and Disability Disaster Registry.

For more information on maximizing these free resources, residents can contact the VITEMA Emergency Operations Centers at (340) 774-2244 on St. Thomas, (340) 773-2244 on St. Croix, and (340) 776-2244 on St. John or log on to the VITEMA website, www.vitema.vi.gov.

“With proper planning, adhering to mass alert notices, and keeping safety as the number one priority,” says Director Jaschen, “the territory’s leadership can effectively manage the threats of the season with confidence.”

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