THE UNITED STATES VIRGIN ISLANDS
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VITEMA Announces 'Blue Skies' Distribution of Sandbags and Sand Territory-wide

U.S. VIRGIN ISLANDS — The Virgin Islands Territorial Emergency Management Agency (VITEMA) is announcing that sandbags and sand will be distributed territory-wide on Thursday, August 13, 2020, and Tuesday, August 18, 2020, to residents whose property is susceptible to flooding.

"Normally, we issue sandbags and sand only when there is an imminent threat of flooding during the hurricane season," said VITEMA Director Daryl Jaschen. "However, in consideration of the COVID-19 pandemic and the need to take precautions to protect personnel working at our distribution sites and the general public, we have adjusted our procedures to distribute sandbags and sand safely under blue skies – when there is no immediate threat of flooding."

VITEMA, in collaboration with the departments of Public Works, Health, V.I. Police and the V.I. Fire Service, has updated the territory's Sandbag Distribution Plan to include new protocols specific to the dynamic nature of the COVID-19 pandemic. The new guidelines direct that mitigation strategies – such as social distancing, increased hygiene and the use of Personal Protective Equipment (PPE) – be followed during the distribution of sandbags and sand. All personnel providing support at distribution sites are required to don PPEs and practice social distancing in accordance with the V.I. Department of Health's guidance.

Sandbags and sand will be distributed between 10 a.m. and 3 p.m. on Thursday, August 13, 2020, and Tuesday, August 18, 2020, to residents only, and a total of six (6) bags will be allotted per household.

At VI Fire Stations, residents should be prepared to fill the six (6) sandbags with shovels and sand made available at each station. Firefighters will provide special assistance to the elderly and the physically challenged population. Individuals will be required to wear masks and utilize the portable on-site hand washing stations before and after filling their bags to reduce COVID-19 risk. Individuals will be required to complete a Sandbag Distribution Form before filling their sandbags. VI Police will be on-location to provide access control and ensure proper social distancing is maintained.

At Public Works locations, six (6) pre-filled sandbags will be loaded by employees to residents' vehicles. There will be no need to exit the vehicle, but each vehicle occupant will be required to wear a mask to reduce COVID-19 risk and complete the Sandbag Distribution Form before leaving. VI Police will be on-location to provide traffic flow to and from the loading area.

Sandbags and sand will be distributed at the following sites:

St. Croix
Department of Public Works, Estate Anna's Hope
Department of Public Works, Estate Concordia West
Renceliar Gibbs Fire Station, Cotton Valley
Charles A. Seales Fire Station, Grove Place

St. Thomas
Department of Public Works, Sub Base
Fortuna Fire Station
Curriculum Center (Tutu)
Omar Brown Fire Station, Estate Taarneberg

St. John
Coral Bay Fire Station
Department of Public Works, Susannaberg

According to Director Jaschen, this month's distribution does not include government agencies and departments, which will be scheduled at a later date. The director is also reminding the public that is illegal to remove sand from beaches.

For more information, call VITEMA at 340-773-2244 on St. Croix, 340-774-2244 on St. Thomas or 340-776-2244 on St. John.

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