



GOVERNMENT HOUSE  
UNITED STATES VIRGIN ISLANDS

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Press Contact

Richard Motta Jr.

340-474-2399

[www.vi.gov](http://www.vi.gov)

[richard.mottajr@go.vi.gov](mailto:richard.mottajr@go.vi.gov)



*From left, FEMA Region 2 Mitigation Division Director Michael Moriarty, Office of Disaster Recovery Director Adrienne L. Williams-Octalien, Governor Albert Bryan Jr, FEMA Region 2 Acting Regional Administrator David Maurstad, Region 2 Acting Deputy Regional Administrator Dale McShine, FEMA Acting Recovery Director John Covell and VITEMA Director Daryl Jaschen*

## **Governor Bryan Meets with Acting FEMA Regional Administrator To discuss STEP Program and Hurricane Recovery Progress**

U.S. VIRGIN ISLANDS — During the Government House weekly press briefing on Thursday, January 21, 2021, Communications Director Richard Motta Jr. said that Governor Albert Bryan Jr. met with Acting FEMA Regional Administrator David Maurstad and the men discussed the Territory's hurricane recovery progress, the STEP (Sheltering and Temporary Essential Power) program and other issues.

The Acting Administrator reaffirmed FEMA's commitment to resolving the outstanding issues surrounding the STEP program and assured Governor Bryan that the transition of the White House administrations will not affect the progress of the recovery, Director Motta said.

The Governor and Acting Administrator Maurstad also discussed the situation with FEMA's eligibility determinations for some of the Territory's requests for repairs to storm-damaged roads.

"After initially determining some of those roads ineligible, FEMA has recently agreed to revisit six sites at the Territory's request and has reversed its decision," Director Motta said.

Also under discussion was the Conditional Letter of Map Revision application (CLOMAR) for the Paul E. Joseph Stadium on St. Croix.

"While Acting Administrator Maurstad could not commit to a date for approval of the application, he assured the Governor that he is familiar with the issue and is expediting the review," Director Motta said. "While on-island, he took the opportunity to tour the project site. Construction on the project currently is stalled pending FEMA's review of the application."

### **Buck Island**

Governor Bryan and Delegate to Congress Stacey Plaskett are working with the National Park Service to make available additional resources to ensure the safety of visitors to Buck Island Reef National Monument following an incident earlier this month when a large gathering that was not adhering to social distancing and masking guidelines got out of hand and resulted in a person being injured by a gunshot.

"Our primary goal is to ensure the park is safe for our local community as well as visitors to the Territory," Governor Bryan said. "We also have to be good stewards of the precious natural resources at the Buck Island National Monument, that is why we are going the extra mile to keep Buck Island accessible to everyone."

Until a more permanent solution is found, the National Park Service is providing additional officers from Florida and Puerto Rico to assist in enforcement.

In the January 10 incident, a suspect has been arrested in connection with the shooting.

### **State of the Territory**

Governor Bryan is scheduled to give his third State of the Territory address at 7 p.m. Monday, January 25, 2021, and the speech will be livestreamed at the [Government House Facebook page](#), as well as broadcast on a number of radio stations and TV outlets.

The Governor will speak from the Legislature on St. Thomas, but because of COVID-19 restrictions, only he, a few members of his Cabinet and senior staff and members of the 34<sup>th</sup> Legislature will be allowed to attend in person.

The speech can be viewed live at:

- [Facebook.com/GovernmentHouseUSVI](https://www.facebook.com/GovernmentHouseUSVI)
- [Facebook.com/LegislatureUSVI](https://www.facebook.com/LegislatureUSVI)
- Government Access Channel (channel 27)
- Legit TV (channel 26)
- WTJX (channel 12)

In addition, these radio stations will carry the speech live:

- Papi Love Radio (WVSE 91.9 FM)

- Da Vybe (WLDV 107.9 FM)
- Lucky 13 (WSTA 1340 AM)
- WSTX (970 AM)
- WTJX (93.1 FM)

### **Vaccine Rollout**

Health Commissioner Justa Encarnacion said that providers across the Territory have administered 4,355 first doses of the vaccines and 294 second doses.

“Support of the vaccine rollout has been tremendous and participation from individuals in phases 1A and 1B is very encouraging,” Commissioner Encarnacion said. “The department continues to work diligently on COVID-19 mitigation and although our current efforts have somewhat shifted to vaccine distribution and administration, we are still focused on surveillance, testing and outreach.”

The Commissioner also explained why two doses of the vaccine are needed.

“The first dose helps the immune system to respond to the virus, and the second dose, taken weeks after, further boosts the immune system for long-term protection from the virus,” Commissioner Encarnacion said. “It is important that you take the second dose as directed. If you take the Pfizer vaccine for your first dose, you must take the Pfizer vaccine for your second dose.”

Commissioner Encarnacion also spoke about the Department of Health’s monitoring a specific batch of the Moderna vaccine in California that has been the subject of reports of possible adverse effects.

“Fortunately, we have not had any reports of unexpected or severe adverse effects within the Territory or among the individuals vaccinated from this specific supply,” the Commissioner said. “If you have received the Pfizer or Moderna COVID-19 vaccine, the department encourages you to use the VSafe app to report any side effects.”

VSafe is a smartphone-based tool that uses text messaging and web surveys to provide personalized health check-ins after receiving a vaccination and it can be downloaded at [vsafe.cdc.gov](https://vsafe.cdc.gov).

### **Series on Racial Equality**

Lisa Harris-Moorhead of the Women’s Coalition of St. Croix gave notice of an upcoming forum on racism the organization is presenting. The fourth forum in the free virtual series is scheduled for February 11, and residents can register to participate at [wcstx.org](https://wcstx.org).

### **VI at Inauguration**

Director Motta also remarked about the historic inauguration on January 20 in Washington, D.C., including the Kamala Harris officially assuming the vice presidency as the first women of color to be elected to a national office, and said it represented a bright light shone on that dark underbelly of America that Governor Bryan spoke of last week.

“A light on the darkness and the political divisions that today seemingly provide a cloak for those purveyors of racism, hate and intolerance,” Director Motta said. “But yesterday was also a proud day for Virgin Islanders as we watched our young people in their beautiful displays of some of our favorite pastimes during the inaugural parade across America.”

The Director also Thanked the department of Tourism and the Office of Congresswoman Plaskett for making that happen, and he also recognized those members of the Virgin Islands National Guard and Air National Guard who were part of the security forces at and around the U.S. Capitol during the inauguration.

### **Unemployment**

- As of January 14, the Virgin Islands Department of Labor (VIDOL) has issued 51,540 unemployment insurance checks to residents impacted by COVID-19 job losses totaling more than \$41,802,376.
- The department also has issued an additional 29,016 Federal Pandemic Unemployment Compensation checks totaling \$47,974,980.
- VIDOL has issued 7,057 Pandemic Unemployment Assistance checks to self-employed Virgin Islanders totaling \$11,492,090 and \$5,578,025 in Pandemic Emergency Unemployment Compensation.
- Under the newly administered Lost Wages Assistance Program, VIDOL has issued 3,548 checks totaling \$2,994,148.
- Since April, the Bryan-Roach Administration has issued 95,150 checks totaling \$109,965,530 in unemployment benefits.

### **COVID-19 cases**

- Currently tracking 115 active cases.
- 39,676 individuals tested to date (almost 40% of the population).
- 37,465 of those tests were negative.
- 2,305 tests came back positive.
- 2,166 people tested since March have recovered.
- 24 fatalities to date.
- One COVID-19 patient is hospitalized at Juan F. Luis Hospital on St. Croix.
- One COVID-19 patient is hospitalized at Schneider Regional Medical Center on St. Thomas.

The Bryan/Roach Administration continues to be committed to transparency, stabilizing the economy, restoring trust in government and ensuring that the disaster recovery is completed as quickly as possible.

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