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## Over 460 Residents Participated in VITEMA's Earthquake Town Hall Meetings

Community Center / **Published On February 13, 2020 07:49 AM /**

Staff Consortium **February 13, 2020**

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**The Immaculate Concepcion Catholic church lies in ruins after an overnight earthquake in Guayanilla, Puerto Rico, Tuesday, Jan. 7, 2020. By. AP PHOTO/CARLOS GIUSTI**

The Virgin Islands Territorial Emergency Management Agency (VITEMA) on Thursday commended the community for taking a pro-active role in tsunami and earthquake preparedness, and for participation in the territory-wide Earthquake Town Hall Meetings which began on Jan. 23 and ended on Feb. 12.

“It is important for residents to have access to interactive discussions about earthquake and tsunami preparedness, to pose important questions, and to get the assistance they need to strengthen their emergency plans,” said VITEMA Director, Daryl D. Jaschen.

The agency said over 460 residents participated in the town hall meetings across the territory, and the high resident turnout was appreciated by the entire VITEMA staff.

“Knowing that residents are willing to take time out of their schedules to understand how threats will affect their households puts government agencies in a better position to respond and recover from a seismic threat,” Mr. Jaschen said. “These past few weeks made us proud of our territory’s commitment to remain informed, prepared and resilient.”

VITEMA said the territory has survived previous tsunami events in centuries prior, and with modern technology and a willingness of the community to remain engaged in preparedness, VITEMA stands ready to respond to seismic activity with confidence.

“Although the Caribbean in general has been seismically active in the past few months, we count our blessings but remain focused on the local capability of residents and government agencies,” said Mr. Jaschen.

Residents who were not able to attend the meetings should take a few immediate actions today:

- Register for Alert VI emergency notifications at [www.vitema.vi.gov](http://www.vitema.vi.gov)
- Find the best route to get inland (1 mile) or to higher ground (82 ft) in all the areas that you work and spend leisure time
- Prepare an emergency “go-bag” for your home and vehicle
- Practice “Drop, Cover, and Hold On” earthquake techniques with the elderly, disabled, and children
- Designate meeting points and reuniting plans should family members be in different areas at the time of an event
- Be sure that you have a battery-operated radio available if communication systems become impaired. Follow instructions provided by VITEMA and other official sources

The agency thanked the Office of the Governor, St. Paul’s Anglican Church, V.I Department of Education, Department of Sports Parks & Recreation, University of the Virgin Islands, the Federal Emergency Management Agency Disability Integration Team and Office of Equal Rights, and the Office of Senator Steven D. Payne Sr. for their timely support and collaboration in the coordination of the town hall meetings.