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Hurricane to Pass Well North of USVI; VITEMA Halts Sandbag Distribution; Life-Threatening Swells Forecast

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With Hurricane Lee veering away from the U.S. Virgin Islands, local authorities have announced that they will not be distributing sandbags on Thursday, Sept. 7, or Friday, Sept. 8, at the Department of Public Works or the Virgin Islands fire stations on St. Thomas, St. John, or St. Croix.

Although the storm is moving away, the National Hurricane Center (NHC) has advised that the Virgin Islands and Puerto Rico still need to prepare for potentially life-threatening swells through the weekend. The storm is fast strengthening and is expected to reach major hurricane status by Friday.

As of 11:00 a.m. AST, the eye of Hurricane Lee was located at latitude 16.4 North, longitude 50.0 West. Currently moving in a west-northwest direction at approximately 15 mph (24 km/h), the storm is expected to maintain this course through Friday. A slower west-northwest movement is predicted over the weekend. According to the latest forecasts, the core of Hurricane Lee will pass north of the northern Leeward Islands in the coming days.

Rapid Intensification and Wind Speeds

Lee has shown rapid intensification, with maximum sustained winds now reaching near 105 mph (165 km/h) and even higher gusts expected. Meteorologists are warning that Lee is likely to escalate into a major hurricane by later today. The storm is anticipated to remain a very strong major hurricane throughout the weekend.

Extent of Winds

The hurricane-force winds of Lee extend up to 25 miles (35 km) from the storm's center. Additionally, tropical-storm-force winds extend outward up to 90 miles (150 km). These powerful winds pose a significant risk to shipping routes, air travel, and potentially land areas if the hurricane changes its current path.