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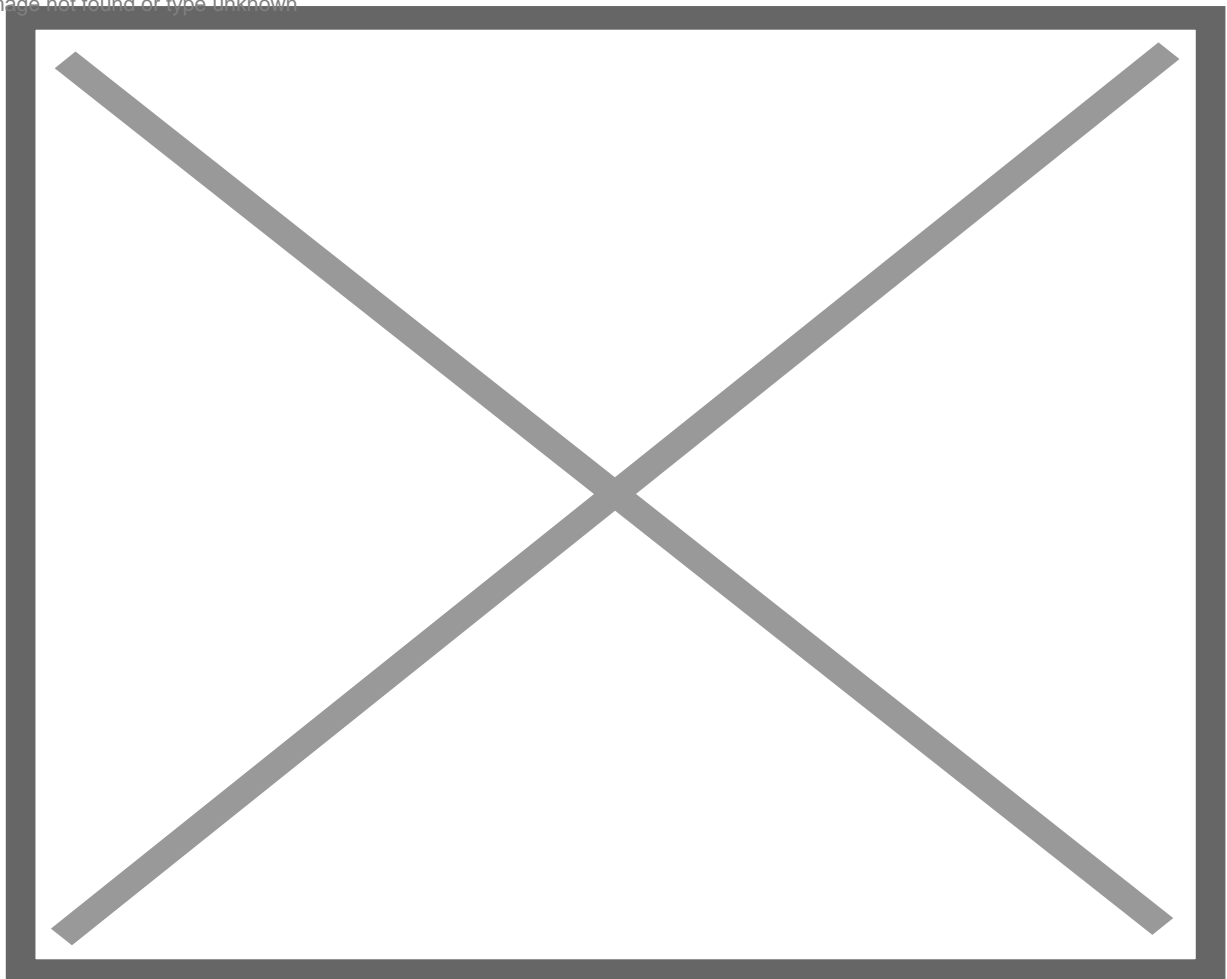
Governor Bryan Requests Emergency Declaration from President Biden Amid Water Contamination Crisis

In urgent request to White House, Governor Bryan Jr. seeks President Biden's support in Virgin Islands' water crisis.

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Governor Albert Bryan has made an urgent plea to President Joe Biden, seeking an emergency declaration in the wake of a severe water contamination crisis in St. Croix. The request, a crucial step in addressing the escalating public health emergency, follows Mr. Bryan's own declaration of a local state of emergency on October 30, 2023.

The governor's call for federal assistance is grounded in the alarming findings of hazardous lead and copper levels in St. Croix's water supply, as reported by the Environmental Protection Agency on October 14. These toxic contaminants were initially detected in water samples collected on September 28 and 29. In response, Mr. Bryan has taken measures in a bid to protect the residents

of St. Croix and mitigate the crisis.

Key actions undertaken by the governor include:

- Imposing a cap on bottled water and water hauler prices to prevent price gouging.
- Activating the Virgin Islands National Guard for additional support.
- Mobilizing the Virgin Islands Territorial Emergency Management Agency (VITEMA) in St. Croix for effective emergency management.

The emergency declaration, if approved by President Biden, will extend from November 15, 2023, to February 13, 2024, providing up to \$5 million in additional resources to the territory, according to Gov't House.

Since the EPA's alarming revelation, the territory has initiated a Joint Information Command (activated on October 16, 2023), conducted extensive water sampling, and launched a campaign to test school-aged children for lead exposure, the release further states. Additionally, plans are in motion to distribute [water vouchers](#) to affected residents and provide water purifying equipment.

Mr. Bryan's request for federal support is critical for managing this crisis and ensuring long-term access to clean and safe water for the residents of St. Croix. This support is essential for the territory's efforts to overcome this environmental challenge and restore normalcy, Gov't House said.

Residents with health concerns related to lead exposure can seek assistance by contacting the Department of Health hotlines at 340-712-6299 or 340-776-1519, available Monday through Friday, from 8 a.m. to 5 p.m.

According to the release, the governor's office and local agencies are committed to maintaining transparent communication and taking prompt action as they work towards resolving this emergency. Further updates will be provided as more information becomes available and the situation evolves.

For additional information, the public is encouraged to visit the official website: <https://www.vi.gov/jic/>.