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## New Fire Station Breaks Ground on St. Croix as Territory's Disaster Recovery Push Continues

**New Charles “Tappy” Seales Fire Station set to enhance emergency response capabilities with advanced features and facilities**

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**Groundbreaking of the new Charles “Tappy” Seales Fire Station and Multipurpose Center in Grove Place, St. Croix on April 12, 2024. By. GOVERNMENT HOUSE**

An important step toward enhancing public safety and emergency responsiveness on the island of St. Croix was taken with the groundbreaking of the new Charles “Tappy” Seales Fire Station and Multipurpose Center on April 12. The ceremony was attended by Governor Albert Bryan Jr., Senate President Novelle Francis, and other dignitaries, marking the beginning of construction on the first of five fire stations set to be rebuilt through FEMA’s disaster recovery grant programs.

The facility, which will be constructed at the previous location in Estate Grove Place, is designed to be larger and includes additional features such as a space for a VIPD officer and a multi-purpose saferoom to provide shelter for fire and EMS personnel during storms. This project, part of a broader initiative funded by a multi-million-dollar grant from FEMA's Hazard Mitigation Grant Program, aims to fortify the infrastructure against future disasters.

During the event, Governor Bryan highlighted the project's significance, saying, "Providing the VIFEMS with this new and improved fire station will not only allow our community to benefit from purposeful planning but will also save lives in the process. That's a win-win situation in my book."

Adrienne L. Williams-Octalien, director of the Office of Disaster Recovery, emphasized the scale of the federal support, noting that FEMA has allocated over \$53 million for the territory-wide replacement of fire stations, including \$6.8 million for this particular facility alone.

The ceremony also served as an occasion to honor the memory of the late VIFEMS Director Daryl A. George Sr., whose vision and commitment to the project were recalled fondly by speakers. Senate President Novelle Francis mentioned that this will be the first fire station built to accommodate the merger of fire and emergency medical services since the passing of Act 8545, which established VIFEMS in April 2022.

VIFEMS Director Designee Antonio Stevens took the opportunity to thank the various stakeholders involved, including the Office of Disaster Recovery, the V.I. Territorial Emergency Management Agency, the V.I. Police Department, the Department of Public Works, the Department of Property and Procurement, and contractors like Jaredian Design Group, LLC, Marco St. Croix, and Persons Services Corp.

Construction of the Charles "Tappy" Seales Fire Station and Multipurpose Center is projected to be completed in the Fall of 2025, providing the community with a state-of-the-art facility aimed at improving safety and emergency preparedness.