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Moderate to Severe Saharan Dust Event to Impact USVI and Puerto Rico

NWS has issued a weather briefing for a moderate to severe Saharan Dust event expected to impact PR and the USVI from Friday afternoon through at least Sunday morning, bringing hazy skies, reduced visibility, and health risks to residents

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Starting Friday, a significant plume of Saharan Dust is expected to impact the U.S. Virgin Islands and Puerto Rico, as reported by the National Weather Service in San Juan. This event, classified as Moderate to Severe, is anticipated to last through at least Sunday morning, bringing with it several environmental and health challenges.

The Saharan Dust event will begin Friday afternoon, leading to hazy skies, reduced visibilities, and potential health impacts across the region, NWS PR said. The dust, carried across the Atlantic Ocean from the Sahara and Sahel deserts, contains minerals, organic matter, marine salts, viruses, and bacteria. While it serves as a natural fertilizer for marine and terrestrial ecosystems, it can also pose health risks to the population.

Dust particles from the Saharan Dust event can exacerbate existing health conditions, particularly in immunocompromised, vulnerable, and sensitive groups. The Department of Health has observed an increase in respiratory conditions during such events. Common symptoms associated with exposure to Saharan Dust include:

- Nose irritation
- Sinusitis
- Allergies
- Asthma exacerbation
- Throat irritation
- Eye and skin irritation
- Acute bronchitis
- Risk of respiratory infection

To mitigate these health impacts, residents are advised to have medications available, stay hydrated, wear light clothing, avoid outdoor activities, and use face masks and eyeglasses.

The V.I. Dept. of Health [has provided guidance](#) and resources to help residents manage the effects of the Saharan Dust. DOH emphasizes the importance of taking preventive measures and seeking medical advice if experiencing severe symptoms.

The NWS said it continues to monitor the situation and will provide updates as necessary.