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Plaskett and DHS Announce SNAP Benefits for Residents Impacted by Rolling Blackouts and Other Misfortunes

Eligible households can apply for replacement benefits to cover food losses due to power outages and other qualifying disasters, ensuring continued access to essential nutrition

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Delegate to Congress Stacey Plaskett and the V.I. Department of Human Services have announced initiatives to support Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP) recipients who have experienced food loss due to recent rolling blackouts and other misfortunes.

Ms. Plaskett on Friday revealed that the U.S. Department of Human Services will enable SNAP recipients in the Virgin Islands to receive replacement benefits if they lose food due to power

outages lasting four or more hours. Plaskett emphasized the importance of timely response to these needs, particularly for the most vulnerable populations affected by recurring power outages.

“It is critically important for our leaders to respond timely to ensure that those desperately in need of these replacement benefits receive them as quickly as possible, particularly since the recurring power outages affect our most vulnerable populations on a different level,” Plaskett stated. She credited her team for initiating the program with VIDHS and commended Commissioner Averil George for taking steps to address the food loss experienced by SNAP recipients in the territory.

SNAP recipients who experience food loss must report it within ten days. Applications for replacement benefits can be picked up at any SNAP office or downloaded online. For assistance, SNAP recipients can contact the VIDHS Division of Family Assistance on St. Croix at 340-772-7100 (ext. 7159/7166) or 340-772-7120, and on St. Thomas/St. John at 340-774-0930 (ext. 4303) or 340-774-2399.

According to DHS, other misfortunes include fire, flood, and malfunctioning refrigeration units.

“We recognize the challenges our community faces during times of disaster,” said Ms. George. “The replacement of SNAP benefits ensures that no family will go without necessary nutrition due to circumstances beyond their control.”

Program Details:

1. Eligibility and Reporting:

- SNAP households that lost food due to a qualifying disaster or misfortune are eligible for replacement benefits. The maximum replacement amount is equivalent to one month of benefits.
- Losses must be reported within ten days. Reporting can be done in writing, with forms available at any SNAP office or online at www.dhs.gov.vi.

2. Submission Process:

- Complete the request form and submit it to your district office within ten days of the loss. Forms can be mailed, emailed, or faxed.

3. Verification and Approval:

- VIDHS will attempt to verify the reported incident through third-party contacts. If verification is not possible, additional documentation may be required.
- Replacement SNAP benefits will be issued within 2 to 10 business days if eligibility criteria are met.

For further information or assistance, SNAP recipients can contact the Certification Unit Offices on St. Croix at 340-772-7100 (ext. 7159/7166) or 340-772-7120, on St. Thomas at 340-774-0930 (ext. 4303) or 340-774-2399, and on St. John at 340-774-0930 (ext. 4303), 340-774-2399, or 340-776-6334.

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