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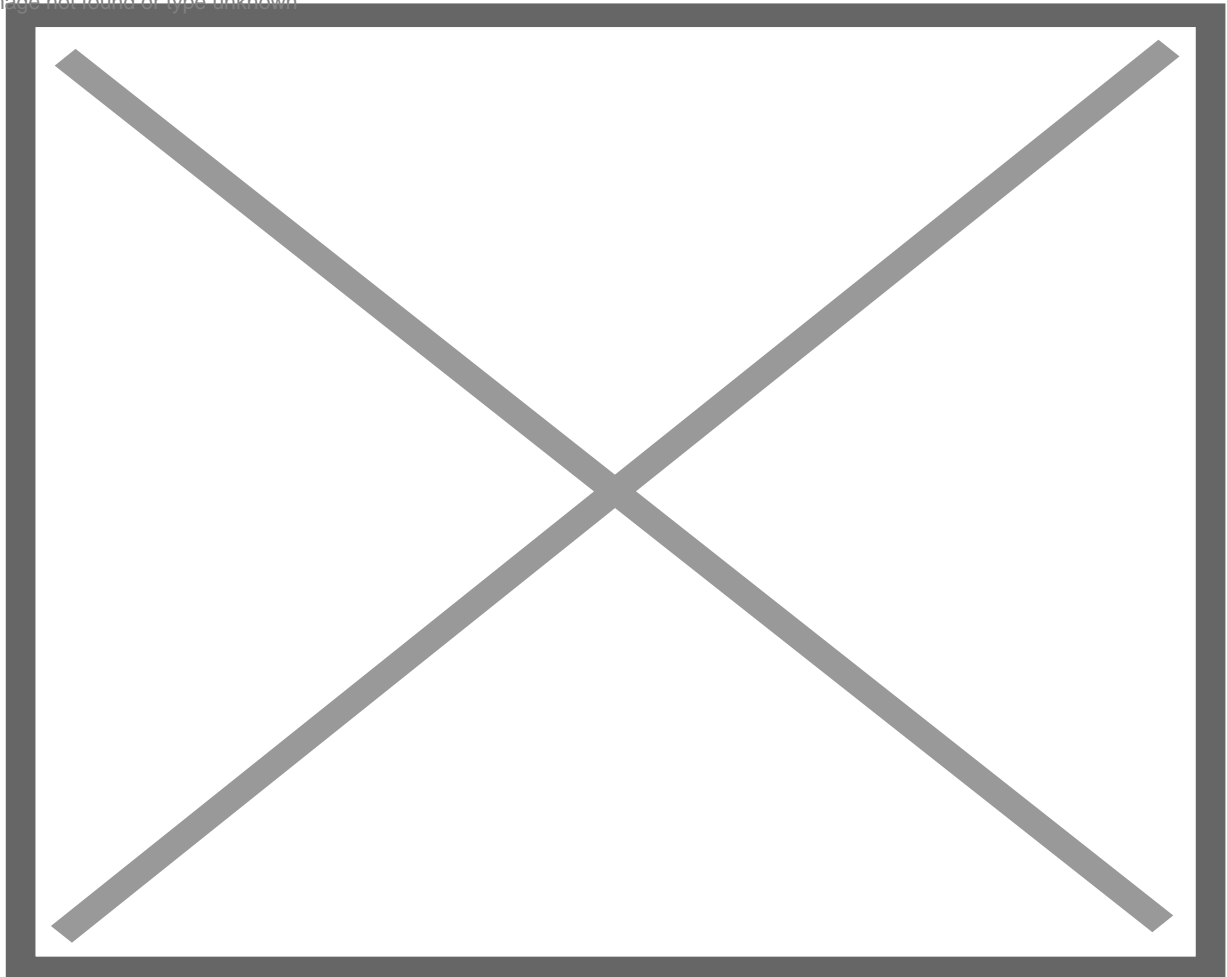
Airports To Open At Noon; Schools Closed on Thursday; Six Boats Broke Moorings During Passage of Ernesto

Bryan and Jaschen update public on Ernesto's impact, flash flood warning for St. Croix and St. Thomas, airports reopening at noon, and schools closed Thursday for cleanup and assessment

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V.I. Public Works employees perform cleanup work in Barren Spot on Wednesday morning following the passage of TS Ernesto. By. ERNICE GILBERT, V.I. CONSORTIUM

A quick press briefing on Wednesday morning provided updates to the public on the status of the territory following Tuesday night's passage of tropical storm Ernesto, which is now a hurricane.?

V.I. Territorial Management Agency Director Daryl Jaschen noted that both St. Croix and St. Thomas districts were under a flash flood warning until noon Wednesday, and informed that airports on both islands would be opening at 12 p.m. as well.?

As for damage, debris and downed trees have impacted the feeder line for the Juan F. Louis hospital on St. Croix, Mr. Jaschen reported. “We’re working very diligently with...hospital as well as public works as well as police,” he said, noting that the road to the hospital may remain closed “because we’re trying to repair that feeder line.”?

Six boats reportedly broke free of their moorings on St. Thomas. “To my understanding, we rescued a couple boaters last night,” Mr. Jaschen said, offering reassurance that everyone was found safe.

Several cell towers owned by Liberty VI were knocked offline by Ernesto’s strong winds, Mr. Jaschen reported. “There is some degradation of some other lines,” he noted, but said that officials were still trying to get information from T-Mobile.

As of 10 a.m. there was no power on St. John or St. Croix. Electricity was on in certain areas of St. Thomas, Mr. Jaschen said. “We do appreciate those units being up.”

?He informed that landfills were closed, with the Waste Management Authority due to make an announcement soon regarding temporary disposal sites for vegetative debris. The VITEMA director urged residents to exercise caution as they venture outdoors to clear out their spaces.

Governor Albert Bryan Jr. went further, recommending that people stay indoors for now. “There's a lot of branches in the road. There's a lot of water coming off the hills on all three islands, and there is sporadic flooding in areas when you're trying to traverse the streets. So especially if you have a low lying car...stay in the house,” he exhorted.

Schools will remain closed on Thursday, Governor Bryan said. “We'll let the teachers and other personnel know if and when they need to report.” The focus now, he says, is cleanup and assessment, “so we can get the students back out there on Friday.”