

USVI Faces Extended Heatwave Threat as Forecasters Predict Intense Heat Stress Through October

As the Caribbean enters a peak heat season, the USVI is forecast to experience intense heatwaves that could strain power supplies, impact agriculture, and affect productivity in schools and workplaces

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As the territory puts Ernesto in the rear view mirror, the beginning of the week brought a different weather concern: a heat advisory was issued for the USVI on Monday, and there will likely be more to come, with the Caribbean Climate Outlook Forum predicting intense heat for the next three to six months.

“Near-record heat causing significant heat stress can be expected until October,” CariCOF says in its latest Heat Outlook (Aug ‘24 to Jan ‘25). The peak of the regional heat season, from now until October, is forecast to be “considerably hotter than usual,” with “intense...night-time and daytime

heat,” increasing in humidity as September draws closer.

The intense heat environment could result in “frequent, very likely intense (and persistent) episodes of heat stress in the vulnerable population & small livestock” according to CariCOF. The organization is predicting at least 30 heatwave days between now and October for the USVI and surrounding islands.

During the Government House press briefing earlier this week, V.I. Territorial Emergency Management Agency Director Daryl Jaschen advised residents on how to deal with the elevated temperatures. “The hot temperatures and high humidity may cause heat illness. Please drink plenty of fluids. Stay in air conditioning if you can, stay out of the sun, and of course, check up on your relatives and your neighbors and also your pets. Anyone overcome by heat should move to a cooled area in a shade location,” he instructed. “Heat stroke is an emergency, please call 911,” Mr. Jaschen advised.

Elevated heat levels have implications for life across the territory. Agriculture may be impacted due to the exacerbation of any existing drought conditions. Productivity may be impacted due to the increased difficulty in working outside during the day. Increased water temperatures will likely result in further coral bleaching, leading to reef ill-health and a degradation of marine ecosystems.

?Across the rest of society, increased power demands from commercial entities, the tourism sector and residential consumers should be anticipated, as people rely more on a/c, refrigeration, and other cooling solutions. Perversely, elevated temperatures could lead to the reduced efficiency of power generation, resulting in a situation where supply falters as demand ramps up.

The educational environment is also expected to be impacted. CariCOF says that children are at risk of reduced productivity and learning ability during the start of the new school year, due to the elevated heat.

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Health officials across the region have been urged to implement proactive measures to mitigate the deleterious effects of extreme heat