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USVI to Simulate Magnitude 8.6 Earthquake in CARIBE WAVE 2025 Tsunami Exercise

VITEMA will participate in CARIBE WAVE 2025 on March 20, simulating an 8.6 earthquake off Portugal's coast. The drill will test tsunami response systems, communication protocols, and evacuation plans. Residents are encouraged to take part in activities.

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The V.I. Territorial Emergency Management Agency has announced the territory's participation in CARIBE WAVE 2025, an international tsunami preparedness exercise scheduled for Thursday, March 20, 2025.

This annual drill, coordinated by the UNESCO/IOC Intergovernmental Coordination Group for the Tsunami and Other Coastal Hazards Warning System for the Caribbean and Adjacent Regions

(ICG/CARIBE-EWS), aims to evaluate the effectiveness of tsunami warning systems across the Caribbean.

This year's exercise will simulate a magnitude 8.6 earthquake off the coast of Portugal, testing the communication and coordination protocols that would be activated in the event of an actual tsunami threat to the region.

VITEMA Director Daryl Jaschen noted the importance of this exercise in ensuring the readiness of local emergency response teams and raising public awareness about tsunami risks. "Tsunami preparedness is critical for our island communities," said Jaschen. "The USVI's participation in CARIBE WAVE provides an essential opportunity to test our emergency response systems and enhance public awareness about tsunami hazards."

VITEMA is encouraging residents, businesses, schools, and organizations to actively engage in the preparedness exercise. Those interested can follow these steps:

1. Register by March 17 at TsunamiZone.org/usvi
2. On March 20, 2025, participants can:
 - Review or practice their tsunami evacuation plan with family, co-workers, or classmates
 - Conduct a tsunami preparedness discussion at home or work
 - Visit VITEMA's website to review and download Tsunami Evacuation Maps at vitema.vi.gov/plan-prepare/tsunamis
 - Identify and familiarize themselves with evacuation routes leading to higher ground

As part of CARIBE WAVE 2025, VITEMA will conduct a territory-wide Emergency Alert System (EAS) test. Residents should expect to receive a test alert on their mobile phones on March 20.

This test is separate from the Alert VI system and does not require residents to opt-in. VITEMA reassures the public that the alert is only a test and no action is required beyond practicing tsunami preparedness measures.

"We want to emphasize that this is only a test," added Director Jaschen. "When residents receive emergency alerts on their phones on March 20, they should recognize this is part of our participation in the international CARIBE WAVE exercise. It's an excellent opportunity for everyone to think about what they would do in an actual tsunami emergency."

According to VITEMA, since its inception in 2011, CARIBE WAVE has seen increasing participation each year. In 2024, the exercise included 45 out of 48 Caribbean member states and territories, with over 475,000 participants engaging in preparedness activities.

Residents looking for additional information about CARIBE WAVE 2025 and tsunami preparedness resources can visit vitema.vi.gov or caribewave.org.

For tsunami preparedness updates and emergency alerts, VITEMA offices can be contacted at (340) 773-2244 on St. Croix, (340) 776-2244 on St. John, and (340) 774-2244 on St. Thomas.

Residents are urged to be prepared, stay informed, and remain vigilant.