

The Virgin Islands Consortium

VITEMA Cancels Upcoming Drills Over Mass Gathering Concerns

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The Virgin Islands Territorial Emergency Management Agency (VITEMA) has cancelled the upcoming Caribe Wave Tsunami Drill as well as the Operation Extra Credit: Active Shooter Exercise for high schools which were both scheduled for March 19, the agency has announced.

Due to the recent federal and territorial emergency declarations and in support of social distance practices to address the coronavirus pandemic, both drills have been cancelled.

"We understand the importance of these drills," said VITEMA Director Daryl D. Jaschen. "But the need to safeguard our community has taken priority at this time."

Caribe Wave, which is a regional tsunami exercise, planned to execute an Integrated Public & Warning System (IPAWS) test along with a territory-wide exercise of residents' emergency evacuation plans. This exercise was expected to include schools and other public and private stakeholders which would have resulted in a mass gathering exceeding the limit of 100 people for social distancing.

Operation Extra Credit: Active Shooter Exercise, was also scheduled for March 19 but cannot be assembled at this time due to the closures of public schools.

"While we remain vigilant as we continue to proactively navigate the impacts of the COVID-19 pandemic in the territory, we will keep the community informed of future emergency preparedness exercises," said Mr. Jaschen.

Residents are encouraged to continue performing good hand hygiene, and to keep up with updates from the Virgin Islands Department of Health as the territory continues to respond to COVID-19.