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Viya to Keep Internet on For All Customers for Next 60 Days Even If They're Unable to Pay Bill

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Viya field worker conducting repair work on a pole at the Sunny Isle Intersection in December 2017 following the passage of Hurricane Maria. By. Ernice GILBERT/VI CONSORTIUM

Viya said Saturday that it would keep the internet on for customers who are unable to pay their bill for the next 60 days, as the company seeks to help residents who are struggling financially because of disruptions caused by the coronavirus.

Viya said it's building on connectivity initiatives put forth last week, and has announced its commitment to the Federal Communications Commission's "Keep Americans Connected Pledge" by supporting customers with the following incentives for the next 60 days:

- Not terminate the service of any residential or small business customer because of their inability to pay their bill due to disruptions caused by the COVID-19 pandemic.
- Waive any late payment fees that any residential or small business customer incur because of economic hardship related to the COVID-19 pandemic.
- Keep public Wi-Fi hotspots open for the community. A complete list of Viya's hotspots throughout the Territory is available online at <https://viya.vi/free-hotspots/>.

Viya said although it will not terminate service due to nonpayment during this critical period, the company encouraged customers who can pay their bills to do so by using one of the many convenient options. Customers can set up auto-pay accounts, pay online or make payments at all local banks, the St. Thomas Federal Credit Union and the Frederiksted Federal Credit Union. A complete list of payment options are available at <http://viya.vi/support/pay/>.

In addition to the FCC's mandate, Viya on March 13 committed to further lowering the barriers to new customers who wish to obtain service and stay connected. Viya is offering the following:

Residential customers:

- Free installation for all new high-speed internet customers through the end of April.
- 50 percent discount on 25Mbps service for the first three months for new customers.
- Deep discount on its mobile internet service (Mi-Fi) for new customers at a low cost of \$40 per month for the first three months.

Small Business customers:

- 50 percent discount on 25Mbps service for the first three months for new small business customers.
- Deep discount on its mobile internet service (Mi-Fi) for new small business customers at a low cost of \$45 per month for the first three months.

Effective Monday, March, 23, Viya will institute abbreviated hours at the Customer Experience Centers: 8:00 a.m. to 4:00 p.m. Monday to Saturday. Changes to the company's operating hours could change quickly, therefore, Viya reminds customers to log on to www.viya.vi to keep abreast of any changes that may occur due to this unpredictable situation. For issues of customer care and billing, Viya encourages customers to use alternative avenues.

For the customers, the company is taking measures to ensure the community's safety by advising customers who must visit that it is critical that they follow the social distancing and hygiene protocol that has been established in the office.

Viya said it recognizes that many of its customers are seniors, the most vulnerable population affected by COVID-19. "While we prefer that our seniors limit visits to the CEC, the team will ensure that they are given priority during their visit," the company said.

Viya said its technical team is focused on installations and repairs during this period to ensure that customers have the products and services to stay connected. The company said it is very important that customers who are scheduled for an installation or repair at their residence or business be available on site for the appointment. Viya's installers will continue to do new installs to the extent that they can do so safely or provide alternative solutions to keep customers connected and the company's technicians will continue to work around the clock to monitor the network and

promptly deal with service-affecting issues.

“We are committed to keeping our team healthy while ensuring that everyone, from students to small business owners, stay connected for education, business and entertainment purposes," said Viya Chief Executive Officer Geraldine Pitt stated. "Help us to keep the Virgin Islands safe by keeping informed of the changes and following the instructions given by the relevant authorities as well as changes that may take place at our stores.

Beginning Friday, March 20 News2 (on Channel 4) will begin airing 30-minute special segments about COVID-19 developments three times a week at 7:00 p.m. and will repeat at 11:00 p.m.: Monday, Wednesday and Friday. Friday's inaugural episode will re-air on Saturday and Sunday. Monday's latest episode will re-air early on Tuesday, and Wednesday's latest episode will re-air early on Thursday. These segments will encapsulate pertinent local and national updates on the pandemic, Viya said.

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