

Health Department Urges Precautions as Extreme Heat Grips the Virgin Islands

As the USVI faces its hottest months, the Department of Health is urging residents to stay safe in extreme heat, stressing hydration, limiting outdoor activity during peak hours, and never leaving children, pets, or vulnerable adults in parked cars.

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With the territory entering the hottest months of the year, the V.I. Department of Health is urging residents to take extra steps to protect themselves from extreme heat, particularly those at higher risk.

Health Commissioner Justa Encarnacion said rising temperatures can strain the body and become especially dangerous for vulnerable populations. “High temperatures can place serious stress on

the body, and those with weakened immune systems are at greater risk for heat-related illnesses,” she noted. “Prevention is the best protection. Hydration is critically important.”

The department advises residents to drink 8–10 glasses of water each day, equal to about two liters, regardless of thirst. People working outdoors or engaging in physical activity may need more. Health officials also caution against sugary drinks, alcohol, and excessive caffeine, which can worsen dehydration.

The department said heat levels are most intense between 10 a.m. and 4 p.m. During these hours, residents are encouraged to:

- Limit strenuous outdoor activities.
- Seek shade or remain in air-conditioned environments.
- Wear lightweight, light-colored, loose-fitting clothing.
- Use fans and take cool showers to help lower body temperature.

Officials stressed the danger of leaving people or pets in parked cars. Even with windows cracked, temperatures can rise to deadly levels within minutes. Heatstroke can occur quickly and may be fatal.

“Never leave a child, pet, or vulnerable adult unattended in a vehicle — not even for a minute,” Encarnacion said. “Always check the back seat before locking your car. If you see a child left alone in a vehicle, call 911 immediately.