

The Virgin Islands Consortium

Only Three Paramedics Cover St. Croix as VIFEMS Says Six More Needed Territory-wide

VIFEMS leaders told lawmakers there are only seven paramedics in St. Thomas/St. John and three on St. Croix, with three trainees in progress, as officials push salary increases and renewed implementation of Act 8506 in high schools.

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Despite ongoing recruitment efforts, there remains a critical need for paramedics across the territory, says the leadership of the V.I. Fire and Emergency Medical Services.

On Friday, VIFEMS Director Antonio Stevens told the Committee on Homeland Security, Justice, and Public Safety that six more paramedics are required for a full complement of

these essential workers. Currently, there are seven paramedics in the St. Thomas/St. John district, and three on St. Croix. Two of these individuals are new hires.

“There’s still a significant need...and we continue to pursue whatever ways we can get them to come into the territory,” Stevens told Senator Ray Fonseca. Notwithstanding, VIFEMS does not intend to depend solely on skilled personnel from outside the USVI. “I do believe that we should hire those who have a vested interest in being here in the territory,” he said.

“There’s gonna be people that [say] oh let me take a chance, but we need people that this is what they want to do,” added EMS Chief Robert Bryan later on.

Internally, VIFEMS is working on upskilling EMS personnel to become paramedics. Three people are currently going through that process. The training comes at no cost to those interested.

Senator Kurt Violet pleaded with residents, including those already qualified as EMTs to take up the mantle. “A lot of you have the capacity to become paramedics. Go for the training,” he urged.

“How can you cover this whole island with three paramedics, twenty-four hour service,” Sen. Violet questioned, referring to personnel numbers for St. Croix. Overtime, he anticipated, must be understandably high.

Paramedics, he learned, make “a lot more.” According to Mr. Stevens, VIFEMS is interested in securing yet another salary increase.

Senator Kenneth Gittens, meanwhile, encouraged VIFEMS to push its partner agencies to implement ACT 8506, passed into law in 2021. That legislation establishes the Emergency Medical Services curriculum within high schools.

“We’re in 2026 now. We should be to the graduation year, ready to hire people out of high school to become EMTs,” he stated. “After that, you could be working on them to become paramedics.

Mr. Stevens admitted that at the cabinet level, there was no push from VIFEMS to make the existing legal framework an on-the-ground reality in schools. He was urged by Sen. Gittens to remedy that.

“I know that there are challenges to get an individual to be paramedics. However, we can’t give up,” Sen. Violet said, remaining resolute. “I don’t care if it’s a year, two years, five years, six years. We need to motivate local Virgin Islanders to become paramedics. We need to remove all of the obstacles,” he urged.

With increased traffic accidents, shootings, and other incidents that require emergency response, the need for a full slate of trained personnel in the territory is rapidly increasing.