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## Backup Battery Program Begins for Medically Vulnerable Residents Ahead of Peak Hurricane Season

The Virgin Islands Resiliency Gateway Program will distribute about 900 portable battery systems to qualifying residents who rely on powered medical devices, refrigerated medication and other essential support during outages.

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The V.I. Resiliency Gateway Program is now underway, with officials preparing to distribute portable backup battery systems to medically vulnerable residents who rely on powered medical devices and essential equipment during outages.

Lieutenant Governor Tregenza Roach announced Monday that the program, known as VIRG, is officially active. [Launched in April](#), the initiative is intended to distribute approximately 900

portable battery systems across the Virgin Islands.

The systems are designed to help qualifying residents power medical devices and essential appliances during intermittent power outages.

“An outage is an inconvenience for someone who depends on an oxygen concentrator, a CPAP machine, refrigerated medication, or another powered medical device,” Lt. Gov. Roach stated during the administration's weekly press briefing, warning that under these circumstances, a lack of electricity “can quickly become dangerous.”

VIRG is intended to address that risk by providing direct support to residents’ homes as hurricane season advances.

The battery backup units are described as compact and user-friendly. They can be charged through a standard household outlet or with an included solar panel.

Officials cautioned that the systems are not designed to power an entire household. Instead, they are intended to support essential medical equipment, keep critical medication refrigerated and maintain basic communication during a power emergency.

Priority is being given to residents facing the most serious medical risks during a blackout.

Rather than using an open application period, recipients were selected directly, according to Michael Jaffers, deputy director of the Virgin Islands Energy Office.

The V.I. Department of Human Services provided a list of Medicaid participants who automatically pre-qualified based on documented medical vulnerabilities. Those residents include individuals who rely on oxygen therapy, BiPAP machines, home ventilation, tracheostomy support, feeding tubes, LVAD heart machines and 24-hour wound vacuums, among other critical medical devices.

“I cannot state how impactful this is for recipients,” said Mr. Jaffers.

Energy Office personnel have already begun coordinating home delivery of the backup systems to qualifying residents after confirming physical addresses and specific device needs.

Officials are urging Virgin Islanders with friends, family members or loved ones who receive Medicaid and depend on qualifying medical devices to help them monitor phone calls and voicemails from Energy Office staff, so deliveries can move forward quickly and efficiently.