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Emergency Battery Program Closes Applications After 527 Residents Apply on Opening Day

The Virgin Islands Energy Office received 527 applications on Aug. 3 for emergency battery systems serving medically vulnerable residents, filling the program's current capacity in one day. Applications are now closed while eligibility reviews begin.

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The Virgin Islands Energy Office has stopped accepting applications for the current phase of its emergency backup battery program after receiving 527 submissions on opening day, filling the available enrollment capacity before the close of business.

Registration for the Virgin Islands Resiliency Gateway, or VIRG, Program opened Aug. 3 to full-time Virgin Islands residents who are at least 60 years old and depend on critical electrically

powered medical equipment.

All available systems for the current enrollment phase were spoken for that day. Residents who collected an application but did not submit it on Aug. 3 are being asked not to return the completed form because no additional applications can be accepted at this time.

Created by the Bryan-Roach administration and administered by the Energy Office, the program provides medically vulnerable residents with emergency backup power during outages caused by hurricanes and other emergencies.

The administration said the first-day response reflects the demand for dependable backup electricity among residents who rely on medical equipment. It also pointed to the enrollment figures as support for launching the program before the peak of the Atlantic hurricane season.

Gov. Albert Bryan Jr. said the initiative was developed to help vulnerable households prepare before severe weather threatens the territory.

“A hurricane does not wait until we are ready, and neither should we. That is why our Administration created the VIRG Program and made it a priority before the height of hurricane season. For many medically vulnerable Virgin Islanders, losing electricity is not simply an inconvenience. It can become a life-threatening emergency. Through the Virgin Islands Energy Office, we developed this program to give families greater peace of mind and to help ensure they can continue powering essential medical equipment when they need it most. The response we saw on the very first day tells us we identified a real need and delivered a solution that will help protect lives.”

Energy Office Director Kyle D. Fleming said the number of submissions exceeded the agency’s expectations.

“We expected strong interest in the VIRG Program, but receiving 527 applications on the first day exceeded our expectations. The response confirms that this Bryan-Roach Administration initiative, implemented through the Virgin Islands Energy Office, is meeting an important need for medically vulnerable residents and their families. It also reinforces the importance of continuing to invest in programs that improve energy resilience throughout the Virgin Islands.”

Applications Now Under Review

The Energy Office will review the applications, verify whether applicants meet the medical eligibility requirements and coordinate distribution to those who are approved.

Applicants will be contacted directly if the agency needs additional information.

Each system includes a portable backup battery and a 400-watt solar panel. The equipment is intended to power essential medical devices and help keep medications refrigerated during an electrical outage.

The Energy Office said the program forms part of a broader effort to improve hurricane preparedness and energy resilience across the territory.

Before the current enrollment period, the administration distributed 234 portable backup battery systems to medically vulnerable households.

Another 80 systems were provided to Continuum Care Hospice & Home Health to support patients across the territory. Additional battery units were also supplied to the Virgin Islands Territorial Emergency Management Agency to support emergency-response operations during hurricanes and other disasters.

The administration said the equipment is intended to improve preparedness among vulnerable residents, healthcare providers and emergency responders before, during and after severe weather.

The Energy Office thanked residents for their interest and patience as staff review the applications and prepare for distribution.

Updates on the review and distribution process will be published on the Energy Office's website and official social media pages.