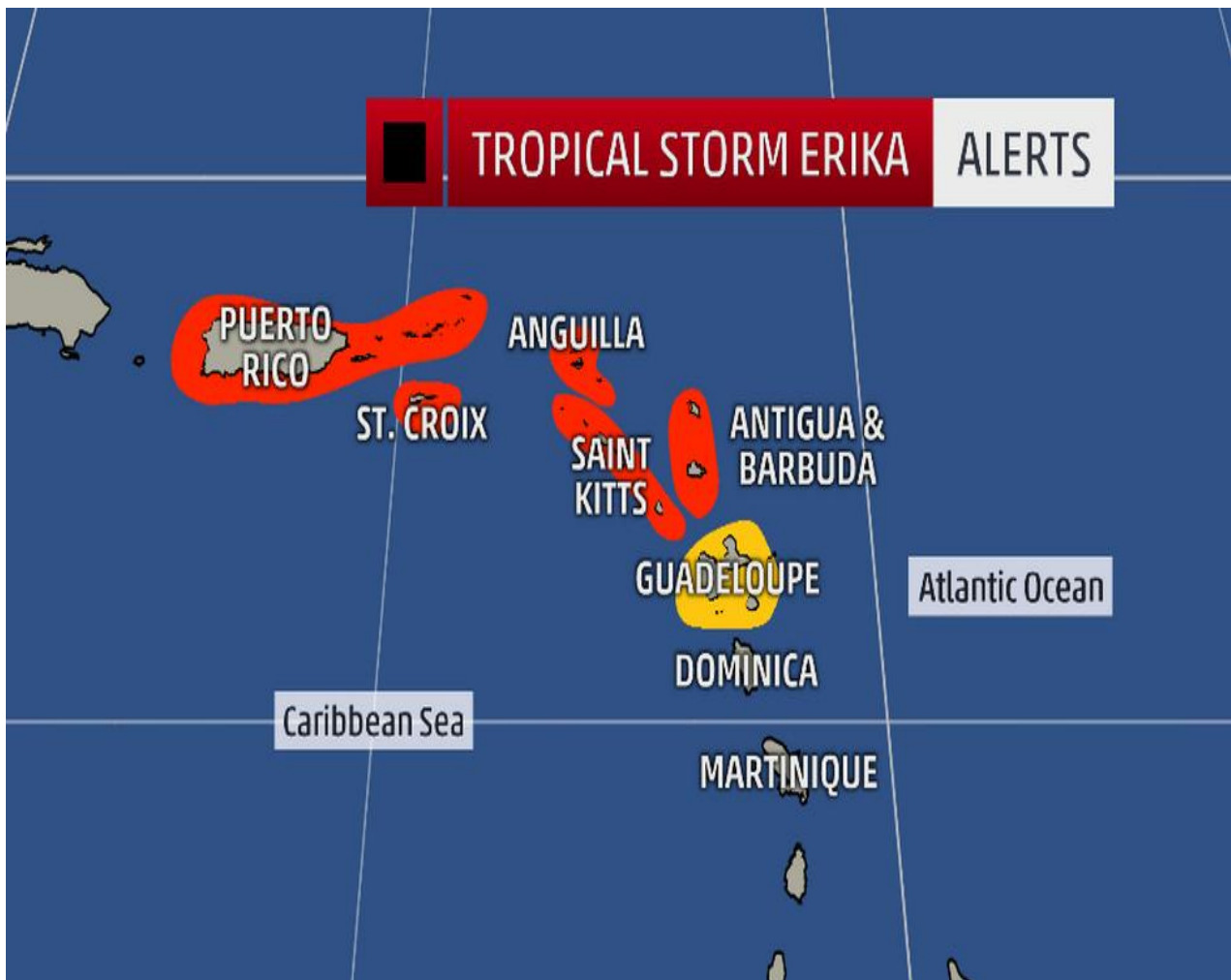


The Virgin Islands Consortium

Mapp Announces Government And Airport Closures On Thursday As Erika Sets Aim On Territory

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Staff **August 26, 2015**



Governor Kenneth E. Mapp held a press conference earlier today to announce Tropical Storm Erika preparedness activities territorywide and to encourage the community to take the storm's passage seriously.

"We are urging each and every Virgin Islander and visitor to take this event seriously," Governor Mapp said. "All of the departments are ready. The VI National Guard is prepared. Our FEMA, US Coast Guard, and National Weather Service partners are ready to respond. But your personal protection is our highest priority. Make your final preparations."

The governor also urged residents who live in low-lying or flood-prone areas to seek refuge at a shelter for the duration of the storm. First responders will not attempt rescue operations in the midst of a tropical storm force winds, he stated.

“Given our history in the Virgin Islands with Hugo and Marilyn, we should get through this with flying colors,” he said. “Stay safe and as dry as possible.”

Government Operations

Mapp announced today that government operations will close on Thursday and all non-essential employees are asked not to report to work. He asked that government employees monitor local radio stations on Friday morning for an announcement on whether the Government of the Virgin Islands will reopen for business on Friday.

“I’m also asking the private sector employers to advise non-essential that they do need to report to work,” he said. “This is a fast-moving storm and so we expect conditions to deteriorate rapidly.”

Curfew

A curfew will not be implemented for Tropical Storm Erika, however, the territory's leader asks that the public remain off the roads during the early morning hours on Friday to allow the Department of Public Works to complete clearing roadways of debris and for the VI Water and Power Authority to begin power restoration operations.

General Population Shelters & Pet Sheltering

The Department of Human Services and the American Red Cross will open shelters territorywide at 6 p.m. today, at the following locations:

- Herbert Grigg Home on St. Croix
- Knud Hansen Complex on St. Thomas
- Julius Sprauve School and Guy Benjamin Elementary School on St. John.

The American Red Cross asked that individuals and families seeking shelter bring the following items:

- Special foods for dietary needs for 24 to 72 hours
- One complete change of clothing
- Sleeping bag and pillow
- Rain gear
- Toiletries
- Medications and first aid supplies
- ID and other valuable documents
- Games, cards and toys (for youngsters)
- Battery-powered radio
- Flashlight and radio
- Games toys and reading material for children
- Baby formula for infants

Individuals needing the service of a seeing eye-dog may have their service animals with them.

Pet Sheltering

Pets are allowed at the shelters as long as they are caged and have a leash. Bring food, water, medication and litter for your pet.

Boaters

Boaters are encouraged to seek safe haven for their vessel.

St. Croix: Salt River

St. Thomas – St. John:

Mandahl Bay and Flamingo Bay are almost full but can accept small boats.

Benner Bay is full no longer accepting boats.

Hurricane Hole on St. John is under the Jurisdiction of the National Park Service. Boaters must coordinate with the NPS for assigned mooring locations by contacting the Chief Ranger of Protection.

The Department of Planning and Natural Resources is advising residents and visitors to stay away from beaches until the community receives an all-clear from DPNR.

For assistance, boaters can contact a DPNR representative at:

- 340-773-5774 or 340-244-9066 on St. Croix
- 340-714-9510 or 340-643-6001 on St. Thomas-St. John

Boaters are urged to not to attempt to ride the storm out on their vessel. Seek shelter on land.

Sandbag Distribution:

Sandbag distribution points will open until midafternoon today. To date the Department of Public Works has distributed approximately 10,000 sandbags across the Territory. The Department of Public Works now moves to a posture of readiness for recovery efforts for road debris removal and to address areas impact by heavy rains.

Sea Ports/Ferry

The US Coast Guard will close all sea ports to inbound commercial traffic at 6 p.m. today and close all sea ports to inbound and outbound traffic at 6 a.m. on Thursday.

Ferry Operations – St. Thomas-St. John

Ferries will operate until midnight tonight, however, individual traveling to and from St. Thomas and St. John by ferry are encouraged make plans to do so as soon as possible.

The seaports will be closed to all vessels on Thursday, August 27 at 6 a.m. No ferry or barge services will be allowed. The US Coast Guard will determine when the seaports can be re-opened once the storm has passed.

Solid Waste & Sewer System:

Waste Management Authority Director May Adams Cornwall is advising that the Territory's sewer collection system will likely experience a large inflow of storm water and debris, which may exceed the system capacity and block the sewer lines causing overflows in certain areas. The inflow and infiltration of storm water into the sewer system may also displace manhole covers and exceed the pumping capacity at wastewater pump stations.

Pedestrians and motorists are advised to proceed with caution when traversing flooded roadways, where manhole covers may have been displaced by system overflows. During this rain event until the rain and the storm water run-off subside, the sewer collection system may continue to be impacted.

Residents are asked to report any overflows and displaced manhole covers to the VIWMA at (340) 715-9100 on St. Thomas; (340) 712-4962 on St. Croix and (340) 774-2141 on St. John. The Report-A-Problem link on the Authority's website, www.viwm.org, can also be used.

Bin and debris collection sites remain open for regular operation today but will close on Thursday.

Airports

All airports will close at 9 a.m. on Thursday to all inbound flights with the exception of the NOAA Hurricane Hunters conducting routine missions. The airports are scheduled to reopen at 6 a.m. on Friday.

Tourism Commissioner Beverly Nicholson-Doty reported that approximately 6,000 visitors are currently in the US Virgin Islands. The Tourism Department has activated its USVIUpdate.com website to keep visitors informed about Tropical Storm Erika and government response efforts.

The department is also working with hoteliers to ensure that visitors who are unable to fly out of the Territory or who are unable to travel on to their final destination on Thursday, have accommodations.

WICO

To date the Adventures of the Seas and the Carnival Liberty, which are scheduled to call on St. Thomas on Friday and Saturday respectively, have not cancelled, according to WICO officials.

After the Storms Hits: Stay tuned local radio or monitor the VI Alert mass notification system for instructions from Governor Mapp on the resumption of government operations and whether roads have cleared and are for vehicular traffic.

[Listen to the original recording](#)

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