

The Virgin Islands Consortium

After Almost Ten Years, 15 New Firefighters Graduate In St. Croix

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Ernice Gilbert **March 30, 2016**



ST. CROIX -- Fifteen Virgin Islanders were sworn in as members of the Virgin Islands Fire Service Tuesday morning at Government House here, the first such event in ten years, according to Fire officials and Government House. Above, Fire Director Clifford Joseph, left, pins a badge on new Fire recruit Ehrin Lynch.

The event was attended by family and friends of the recruits, as well as community leaders, including Delegate to Congress Stacey Plaskett and Senator Kurt Violet, who keynoted the event.

Governor Kenneth Mapp thanked the recruits for their dedication and said that he remained committed to fully staffing the agencies responsible for the territory's safety and security. As many as 80 more firefighters are expected to be trained this year.

"Each one of the recruits here has pledged to put their lives on the line for the people of the Virgin Islands. We must ensure they have the appropriate training and equipment," the governor said, adding that yesterday's swearing-in ceremony was the first of two on this island in 2016.

Mr. Mapp also thanked Mr. Violet for speaking at the graduation and said it was critical that the Legislature work with his administration to properly fund the agency, as many firefighters are now living and working under poor conditions.

"We must put our first responders in top notch facilities and ensure they have modern equipment and first class training," the governor said. "We can't ask people to risk their lives without the proper tools."

Lieutenant Governor Osbert Potter said not having a graduating class in nearly ten years is one of the things that "does not make sense." And Deputy Chief of Training Antonio Stevens told The Consortium that Tuesday's graduation will help fill a gap as the department has lost between 30 to 40 firefighters during the ten-year period.

The 15 firefighters sworn in Tuesday are George Greene, Zoraida Martin, Lishati-Shumba Bailey, Mr. Lynch, Mahlik Griffin, Renaldo Philbert, Nichole Christian, David Martinez, Jahmil Felix, Angel LeGrand, Khai Petersen, Hakim Christian, Kenrick Mottley, Shakuille Williams and Ronald Motta.

Four firefighters were also promoted during the ceremony – Johnny Frontal, Felix Denis, Klebert Titus and Julio Soto. A similar ceremony will be held today in St. Thomas, where 13 new firefighters will be sworn in.