

The Virgin Islands Consortium

VITEMA Presents Water Island Search And Rescue With Medical Supplies and Emergency Equipment

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The Virgin Islands Territorial Emergency Management Agency on Tuesday delivered a cache of much-needed medical and emergency supplies to the Water Island Search and Rescue organization V.I.T.E.M.A. has announced.

According to the released, Water Island Search and Rescue, a volunteer non-profit community organization, has been working for more than a decade to provide emergency services to residents and tourists who visit the island's popular Honeymoon Beach.

The 38-member team is the island's first response to emergencies for close to 200 residents and for 600-plus tourists on any given day. Water Island Search and Rescue,

provides the initial emergency medical response for any event on this island.

On Tuesday, Todd Patton, VITEMA Deputy Director for Planning and Preparedness – on behalf of VITEMA Director Mona Barnes – presented the organization with two Yamaha portable generators, three emergency oxygen kits, three oxygen tanks, three deluxe Emergency Medical Technician (EMT) oxygen tank bags and three large EMT trauma bags.

“Director Barnes is committed to supporting our first responders and helping provide them the resources they need,” Mr. Patton said. “It has been a pleasure working with Water Island Search and Rescue and supporting the preparedness of the island.”

VITEMA was able to provide the supplies and equipment through a \$5,500 homeland security grant from US Department of Homeland Security, according to the release.

Rachael Ackley, Water Island Search and Rescue President, and Tom McCoy, Training Officer, were among the members to receive the new medical supplies and equipment.

“For many years, it was neighbor helping neighbor but as more and more people came to live here and our beach became more popular,” the need for an organized Search and Rescue team grew,” Ms. Ackley said.

Currently, 75 percent of Water Island Search and Rescue response efforts are for incidents involving tourists visiting the island. Water Island Rescue also responds to fires and medical emergencies and works with the VI Police Department to ensure they arrive on the island for other types of incidents. The Rescue team's coverage goes as far out as the half-a-mile of water surrounding Water Island.

“We cover so many different areas that it’s important that we have to right equipment when the time comes,” Mr. McCoy said. “It can make the difference between someone living or dying. It can take a matter of seconds. Having the right equipment assures that we are better prepared to serve the public.”

Water Island Search and Rescue also transports individuals with medical emergencies to St. Thomas dock areas.

“We really appreciate VITEMA for providing us this equipment,” Ackley said. “We are better equipped to help our community and those who visit our island.”