

The Virgin Islands Consortium

USVI Tsunami Preparedness Week Is March 19 – 25

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Tsunamis remain a serious threat to the territory and the Virgin Islands Territorial Emergency Management Agency (VITEMA) is encouraging the community to learn more about this deadly force of nature during Tsunami Preparedness Week, March 19 - 25.

VITEMA is also urging the community to practice walking the evacuation route if they reside, work or often play in the tsunami inundation zone. VITEMA's USVI Tsunami Evacuation Maps can be found at www.vitema.gov/plan-prepare. The Tsunami Evacuation Maps delineate the tsunami inundations and delineate coastline inundation as well as safe areas, evacuation route and assembly points.

“Tsunamis are not like tropical storms or hurricanes where the territory is warned more than 24 hours ahead of the impact,” said VITEMA Director Mona Barnes. “It is highly possible that you may have 10 minutes or less to get out of harm’s way if you are on the coastline. It is so important that our community understands what a tsunami is, what the natural warning signs are and how to respond.”

“No one should live in constant fear of a tsunami,” she said, “but everyone should be aware that it can happen and that there are ways to protect yourself and your family. For a tsunami, you have to get to higher ground as quickly as possible. Wherever you are, you should have an idea of where higher ground is.”

VITEMA is also asking the community to register their Tsunami Preparedness Week activities and participation at www.tsunamizone.org.

Caribe Wave 2017 Tsunami Exercise

VITEMA will mark the Tsunami Preparedness Week by participating in the annual *Caribe Wave 17* Caribbean region tsunami response exercise which is scheduled for March 21. The exercise is designed to help communities identify operational strengths and weaknesses.

At 10:15 a.m., on Tuesday, March 21, VITEMA will activate the territory’s 24 sirens to broadcast the system’s “Test Message” and its “All-Clear Message.” Siren locations are:

- **St. Thomas:** Cyril E. King Airport, Crown Bay, Addelita Cancryn School, Griffith Park, Enid Baa Library, Yacht Haven Sugar Mill, Long Bay, Magen’s Bay, Coki Point, Sea Side Inn - Frydenhoj, Red Hook Marina, Fort Christian.
- **St. Croix:** Cramer’s Park; Divi Carina Bay; DC Canegata Ball Park; Government Parking Lot— Christiansted; Estate Sion Farm; William’s Delight; La Vallee; Government Parking Lot— Frederiksted; Fisher Street—Frederiksted; Sprat Hall—Frederiksted.
- **St. John:** Winston Wells Park, Cruz Bay; Guy Benjamin School at Coral Bay.

As part of *Caribe Wave 17* tsunami exercise, VITEMA will also hold a tabletop exercise to evaluate its response operations for this type of event. *Caribe Wave 17* simulates a major earthquake in the Northeastern Antilles that generates a tsunami. The tsunami is expected to reach the USVI coastline within three hours, according to the scenario.

Caribe Wave is sponsored by the UNESCO/IOC Intergovernmental Coordination Group for Tsunami and Other Coastal Hazards Warning System for the Caribbean and Adjacent Regions (ICG/CARIBE-EWS), the Caribbean Emergency Management Agency (CDEMA), the Centro de Coordinación para la Prevención de los Desastres Naturales en América Central (CEPRENAC), and the U.S. National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration (NOAA).

For more information on the U.S. tsunami warning system, see www.tsunami.gov.