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Governor Bryan Declares State of Exigency at JFL Hospital

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Juan F. Luis Hospital, Governor Albert Bryan has declared a state of exigency at the medical facility, meaning the critical needs of the hospital demand urgent action in order to remain functional. By. Ernice Gilbert for VI Consortium

ST. CROIX -- Two years after the Irma and Maria storms broke the Juan F. Luis Hospital (JFL) apart, Government House has declared St. Croix's sole hospital to be in a state of exigency -- meaning the critical needs of the hospital demand urgent action in order to remain functional.

Gov. Albert Bryan issued the executive order declaring the state of exigency Thursday, as the hospital is still struggling to recover from the 2017 hurricanes.

The declaration may open doors to new federal assistance in recovering from heavy flood and wind destruction to the hospital's infrastructure, medical equipment, furnishings and fixtures, much of which was excluded from federal funding.

According to the Government House statement: "This damage resulted in a significant reduction in the capacity of the organization to include: (a) complete closure of the third floor, which housed JFL's medical and surgical units; (b) a reduction in Operating Room (OR) services, from 3 ORs to 1 OR; and (c) a reduction in bed capacity, from 80 in- patient beds to 46. In addition, there was also a loss of outpatient dialysis and interventional cardiology services."

"Subsequently, a modular hospital was procured by the prior hospital administration. In December 2017, the furniture, fixtures and equipment (FF&E) were removed from FEMA's initial project worksheets prior to the appointment of the current executive team, which caused a critical delay in the procurement of FF&E required for the operation of the planned temporary modular hospital," the statement read.

According to Government House, JFL's Acting CEO Dyma B. Williams has worked closely with the Office of Disaster Recovery to outfit the modular hospital with the necessary furnishings and medical equipment to ensure the temporary modular hospital can begin operations by the scheduled May 2020 opening.

The public exigency declaration was issued to help JFL expedite the procurement process and complete emergency repairs in the Intensive Care Unit.

"The territory's hospitals are a top priority for our administration in this recovery," said the governor. "We are continuing our work with the current leadership of both our hospitals to ensure that we have facilities that are able to appropriately provide for the health needs of the residents while we work on a longterm solution to improve healthcare in the territory."