

The Virgin Islands Consortium

Relief Effort Update: Help On The Way For St. John; Power To Be Restored To Cruz Bay; Mass Tourist Evacuation Starts Today

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Ernice Gilbert **September 11, 2017**



Governor Kenneth Mapp on Sunday evening gave an update on his administration's work so far relative to post Hurricane Irma relief efforts.

Mr. Mapp pledged more support for St. John, including evacuation of critically ill patients, additional shipments of diesel fuel for generators, and Coast Guard clearance of ferry boats to resume service.

Confirming that power is in underwater utility cable, Mr. Mapp promised to expedite restoration of electricity in Cruz Bay, initially. He also spoke of the resilience of the residents in St. John, and commended restaurants that have been providing cooked meals free of charge, as well as medical professionals providing patient care without electricity.

Medical Assistance Progress

- Department of Health nurses continue arriving from St. Croix to assist and relieve counterparts on St. Thomas and St. John.
- Disaster Medical Assistance Team (DMAT) will establish a mobile medical facility outside hospital in St. Thomas. A facility intended for longer use will be established at the rear of the hospital.
- Health Commissioner Michelle Davis announced that mental health services are being provided to inmates transferred to St. Croix. Dialysis patients evacuated from St. Thomas are now in St. Croix awaiting transfer.
- Thirty inmates were transferred from the St. Thomas correctional facility to Golden Grove on St. Croix. Thirty more are awaiting transfer.

Evacuation of Tourists

- Two cruise ships are to arrive today to evacuate 2,000 tourists to the U.S. mainland. Vacated hotel rooms, which are undamaged, may house military and other relief personnel.

Curfew Schedule

- Mr. Mapp stressed that the current curfew -- 6:00 p.m. to 12 noon daily -- would remain in place for the time being, although he wants to add an additional 3 hours to the 6 hours currently allowed.

Public Safety

- Mr. Mapp appealed to the public to report only "real crimes," noting that several hoax calls have prompted unnecessary response. Police strength is at 80 percent, according to V.I.P.D. Commissioner Delroy Richards. The commissioner commended his officers for the work they've performed so far, noting that 70 percent of officers' homes were destroyed, yet they have been reporting to work and performing their duties.

Federal Assistance

- Mr. Mapp confirmed the Supplemental Nutritional Assistance Program (SNAP) policy, which replenishes benefits for participants enduring power outage of more than four hours. The governor noted, however, that only in the St. Thomas and St. John will modified eligibility requirements extend SNAP benefits to previously ineligible residents.

Status of Schools

- Mr. Mapp encouraged families on St. Thomas and St. John to consider enrolling students in St. Croix public schools, where family or other support systems exist. Teachers and support staff in St. Thomas and St. John will be given opportunity to work in St. Croix district.

Minimum Work Hours to be Required

- The governor requested that public employees on administrative leave since Hurricane Irma, report to work for at least three hours daily.

Essential Employees Call to Duty

- Schneider Regional Medical Center (SRMC) directed all clinical staff to report for work at 7:00 a.m. tomorrow. Non-clinical to report at 8:00 a.m. While not admitting patients, SRMC and Myrah Keating Smith Community Health Clinic, St. John, continue providing emergency services.
- Department of Education employees (St. Thomas – St. John District) who staff the main office and maintenance workers directed to report for work tomorrow at 1:00 p.m.

Correction: Sept. 28, 2017

A previous version of this article stated that DMAT teams were under the authority of FEMA. However, DMATs fall under the U.S. Department of Health & Human Services (HHS), National Disaster Medical System (NDMS). The story has been updated to reflect the correct information.