

The Virgin Islands Consortium

EPA Working With U.S. Virgin Islands To Remove 130,000 Pounds Of Stockpiled Medical Wastes At Hospitals

Disaster Recovery / **Published On October 13, 2017 02:13 PM /**

Staff **October 13, 2017**



The Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) on Thursday said that it's engaged with local officials within the U.S. Virgin Islands government to effectively remove and dispose of approximately 130,000 pounds of stockpiled medical wastes at hospitals in St. Thomas and St. Croix.

According to the release, EPA discussed medical waste disposal issues and needs with the St. Croix hospital administrator this afternoon. "I am delighted with the expeditious response to our needs," said Richard Evangelista, acting chief executive officer and

general counsel for the Juan F. Luis Hospital and Medical Center. “I’m pleased with the plan put forward to take care of our red-bag waste and properly dispose of these wastes.”

The EPA says it continues to coordinate closely with federal, commonwealth, territory, and local partners as it responds to the impact of Hurricane Maria. The agency is focused on environmental impacts and potential threats to human health as well as the safety of those in the affected areas. EPA is continuing to coordinate with local governments in Puerto Rico and the USVI to assess the conditions of drinking water, which includes sampling, analysis and lab support, and getting wastewater treatment systems up and running. EPA’s missions also include oil and chemical spill response, oil and chemical facility assessments and debris management.

Personnel EPA continues to deploy personnel to Puerto Rico and the U.S. Virgin Islands as conditions allow. As of October 12, 2017:

- About 243 personnel are currently involved in hurricane response efforts.
- About 57 personnel are on the ground in USVI to assist with response efforts.
- About 89 personnel are on the ground in Puerto Rico to assist with response efforts.

Debris Management EPA continues to work with FEMA, the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers and the Puerto Rico and USVI governments on debris management. EPA will assist with the handling and disposal of orphan containers, household hazardous waste, medical waste and e-waste. EPA plans to conduct air monitoring at collection areas and during all hazardous materials operations.

Marine Operations EPA is working with the US Coast Guard on marine operations to assess sunken vessels on the eastern coast of Puerto Rico and USVI. Teams will locate and evaluate the condition of sunken vessels and assist with the disposal of recovered oil and hazardous materials.

Assessment of Superfund Sites, Oil Sites and Regulated Facilities EPA continues to re-assess Superfund sites, oil sites, and chemical facilities in both Puerto Rico and the USVI to determine if the sites were affected by Hurricane Maria and if there is a potential for contamination to cause off-site impacts.

Drinking Water and Wastewater Management In USVI, EPA continues to coordinate drinking water sampling with the U.S. Virgin Islands Department of Natural Resources. In Puerto Rico, the EPA continues to focus on assessing both drinking water and wastewater systems and continues to work closely with the government of Puerto Rico.

Water Safety Raw sewage continues to be released into waterways and is expected to continue until repairs can be made and power is restored. Water contaminated with livestock waste, human sewage, chemicals, and other contaminants can lead to illness when used for drinking, bathing, and other hygiene activities. According to the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC), people should not use the water from rivers, streams and coastal water to drink, bathe, wash, or to cook with unless first boiling this water for a minimum of one minute. If boiling the water is not possible, water may be disinfected with bleach. To learn more about making water safe in an emergency, go to CDC’s [Making Water Safe in an Emergency](#) web page.

Feature Image: Red bag waste at the Juan F. Luis Hospital. (Ernice Gilbert, VIC)

© Viconsortium 2026