

The Virgin Islands Consortium

Curfew Territory-Wide Now 8 p.m. To 5 a.m.; 7 St. Croix Schools Condemned; Split School Sessions Announced For Oct. 23

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ST. CROIX -- The territory's curfews have been unified into one, Governor Kenneth Mapp announced at his Wednesday evening press briefing, a move the governor said was made to coincide with the partial reopening of schools on St. Croix. The curfew territory-wide is now 8:00 p.m. to 5:00 a.m., meaning residents have between the hours of 5:00 a.m. and 8:00 p.m. to conduct business.

Relative to schools, Mr. Mapp said while it was good that schools would partially reopen on Oct. 23, he announced that multiple schools, after being assessed, had been

condemned, which altered the school schedule on St. Croix and left many students without classes.

According to Department of Education Commissioner Sharon McCollum, the following schools have been condemned:

- Pearl B. Larsen Elementary School
- Lew Muckle Elementary School
- Alfredo Andrews Elementary School
- Eulalie Rivera Elementary School
- Alexander Henderson Elementary School
- John H. Woodson Junior High School
- Elena L. Christian Junior High School

Some students who attended schools that have been condemned will have split sessions (double sessions) at operable schools on Oct. 23. The Ricardo Richards Elementary School is currently being assessed, according to D.O.E. Claude O. Markoe Elementary School was not mentioned.

Split Session Schedule

On Oct. 23 Central High School students will have morning sessions beginning from 7:30 a.m. and will be dismissed at 11:30 a.m. In the afternoon, John H. Woodson Junior High and Elena Christian Junior High schools will have classes at Central High School beginning from 12:30 p.m. until 4:30 p.m.

The St. Croix Education Complex will also open on Oct. 23 for split sessions. Educational Complex students will have the morning classes from 7:30 a.m. to 11:30 a.m., while Arthur A. Richards students will have the afternoon classes from 12:30 p.m. to 4:30 p.m.

The third school that will open on Oct. 23 for split sessions is the Juanita Gardine Elementary School. Juanita Gardine students will have the morning sessions from 7:30 a.m. to 11:30 a.m., while students from Pearl B. Larsen will occupy the school for the afternoon classes from 12:30 p.m. to 4:30 p.m., according to the Department of Education.

Alternative Education, CTEC, and the Youth Rehabilitation Center will open as well.

D.O.E. said because St. Croix did not lose any of its School Lunch Program items, breakfast as well as hot meals for lunch will be served to students. Lunch will start at 11:30 a.m and end at noon for all schools on Oct. 23.

Transportation

Only six school buses are operable, according to Ms. McCollum. Therefore, she said, parents will have to help D.O.E. with transporting students to school by carpooling. VITRAN buses will be utilized as well, and D.O.E. promised to release a schedule before Monday. The Consortium will publish the schedule once it becomes available.

Relative to attire, D.O.E. is encouraging students to wear uniform. However, those without will be allowed to wear other appropriate clothing for a certain time period, Ms.

McCollum said.

Mr. Mapp said he was taken aback when told about the extensive damage at many of the schools on St. Croix. He said asbestos, which can cause cancer if inhaled or ingested, was discovered at some of the damaged schools.

Here are the other important updates from the press briefing:

1. Bureau of Motor Vehicle offices territory-wide are open for business, albeit on a limited basis. BMV, according to Director Lawrence Olive, is currently offering registration, shipping of vehicles and transfer services. There will be no issuance of driver's licenses or IDs for multiple weeks, Mr. Olive said. He said the Bureau of Information Technology, along with BMV's internal IT personnel, have been working to get the system for license and ID processing back up.
2. The Office of the Lieutenant Governor will resume full services beginning on Friday, according to Lieutenant Governor Osbert Potter. Mr. Potter said the office's full array of services will be available as well.
3. The U.S. Passport Information Center has indicated to the U.S. Virgin Islands and Puerto Rico that they should curtail the processing of passport applications until further notice. If you are in need of a passport for emergency use, call 1-877-487-2778 for assistance.
4. Mr. Potter, whose office includes the Division of Banking and Insurance, said many households in the USVI are under-insured. Furthermore, there are many households with no insurance at all, and some persons only have what is called the "first place insurance" plan, which sees a bank covering only what is due to it but leaves homeowners with no policy to make claims. "It is heartbreaking because a lot of these individuals believe that they had coverage," Mr. Potter said. And he said some insurers are offering policies without wind damage coverage, which he deemed unfair. The lieutenant governor said he would pursue legislation that would require mandatory coverage for specified damages caused by natural disasters -- among them wind damage.
5. Mr. Potter said a lot of claims have been filed, with multiple adjusters currently in the territory working with residents. The lieutenant governor said individuals were beginning to receive their checks as well.
6. All hurricane-related donations coming into the territory will be managed by the Office of the Lieutenant Governor moving forward, Mr. Potter said. In partnership with the Federal Emergency Management Agency, the Office of the Lieutenant Governor will collect the donated goods and turn them over to FEMA, which has created a module to distribute the items. Persons looking to donate should address the goods to "the Office of the Lieutenant Governor", which will immediately clear the items from being taxed locally, Mr. Potter said.
7. Residents worried about missing property tax payments should not be, according to Mr. Potter. He said the Tax Assessor's Office will work with property owners to assure that payments become a "second thought to you during this time."
8. The Department of Labor (D.O.L.) on St. Croix has moved back to its location in Peter's Rest. The department's commissioner, Catherine Hendry, said offices in both districts are providing full services, including the processing of unemployment checks.

9. As the rebuilding of the territory takes hold, more jobs are becoming available, Mr. Mapp said. Currently, there are 2117 jobs available through D.O.L.
10. National Guard soldiers are finally starting to receive their payments, after staying a month without being compensated for their work. Separately, overtime payment for other government first responders are being issued, Mr. Mapp said, with more to come.
11. V.I.P.D. Commissioner Delroy Richards vowed to continue arresting curfew violators. Separately, the V.I.P.D.'s records division is now operational. And those looking to make payments for firearm licenses may do so as well. The V.I.P.D. is asking that receipt of payment be kept until the firearm license is fully processed.
12. Approximately 128 blue roofs were installed today, bringing the territory-wide total to 823. Also, 25,400 residents have signed up for disaster assistance, with \$3.2 million being distributed so far.
13. Sprint wrote a letter to Mr. Mapp after the company was contacted by Attorney General Claude Walker, according to the governor. The carrier disclosed to the governor steps it intends to take to get its service up and running at optimum levels. Sprint also requested some assistance from the government, which Mr. Mapp did not disclose, but said his administration would help where possible.
14. The Department of Health has begun reaching out to medical evacuees to provide pertinent information about their status, and will continue to do so on a weekly basis, according to Commissioner Michelle Davis. D.O.H. will also send a team to Puerto Rico to check on medical evacuees there.

Feature Image: Hurricane Maria damage on St. Croix. (Credit: Irene Ali Photography)