

The Virgin Islands Consortium

7 People Hospitalized In St. Thomas For Suspected Carbon Monoxide Poisoning Emanating From Generator

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ST. THOMAS -- With thousands of generators now buzzing daily across the U.S. Virgin Islands, which is still mostly without electricity, the danger of carbon monoxide poisoning has grown urgent, with V.I.P.D. Commissioner Delroy Richards revealing on Monday that 7 persons were hospitalized after inhaling the colorless gas.

The commissioner said the individuals who were hospitalized were subject to constant use of a generator in a nearby apartment. Mr. Richards did not reveal the community where the incident occurred, but urged residents throughout the territory to be

considerate of their neighbors.

"I'm asking people to be very cautious when you have generators," Mr. Richards said on Monday night during Governor Kenneth Mapp's hurricane recovery press briefing at Government House on St. Croix.

Carbon monoxide poisoning typically occurs from breathing in too much of the gas. Symptoms are often described as flu-like and commonly include headache, dizziness, weakness, vomiting, chest pain, and confusion. Large exposures can result in loss of consciousness, arrhythmias, seizures, or death. Mr. Richards did not say whether the individuals who were hospitalized had life-threatening symptoms.

According to guidelines put in place by the government, which are to be enforced by Department of Planning and Natural Resources officers along with help from the V.I.P.D., residents should use their generators between the hours of 6:00 a.m. to 10:00 p.m. In some communities, where homes are not in close proximity, residents who operate their generators beyond the recommended time period are not necessarily bothered by their neighbors' use of the electricity-producing equipment. But for those living in close proximity, as was the case with the St. Thomas incident, the constant use of generators beyond the recommended hours have not only caused illness, but also the loss of sleep and restlessness.