

The Virgin Islands Consortium

Congresspeople Critical In Funding USVI Recovery Visit St. Thomas; V.I.P.D. To Take Stronger Stance Against Generator Curfew Violators

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ST. THOMAS -- Governor Kenneth Mapp said during his Monday hurricane recovery press briefing, held on St. Thomas, that Congresspeople critical in funding the territory's recovery needs visited St. Thomas on Sunday, and were given a tour of many areas affected by the storms.

Among the nine senators and representatives who visited was Senator Lisa Murkowski (R-Alaska), the chair of the U.S. Senate Committee on Energy and Natural Resources, before which Mr. Mapp will be testifying on November 14. Her visit to the territory, along

with the other Senate and House members, served as an important step in the leaders' decision in deciding how much -- if not all -- of the \$7.5 billion requested by the Mapp administration that should be provided to the USVI following Hurricanes Irma and Maria.

"It is so critical that Congress sees firsthand the challenges we face in rebuilding our infrastructure," the governor said. "I am truly grateful to the United States senators for making this visit and believe they left with a more complete understanding of our needs."

Other U.S. lawmakers who joined Mr. Mapp on the tour were Senator Bill Cassidy (R-Louisiana), Senator Tom Carper (D-Delaware), Senator Al Franken (D-Minnesota), Senator Kamala Harris (D-California), Rep. Bill Shuster (R-Pennsylvania), Rep. Garret Graves (R-Louisiana), Rep. Peter DeFazio (D-Oregon), Resident Commissioner of Puerto Rico Jenniffer González-Colón, and Isaac Edwards, Senior Counsel, Senate Energy and Natural Resources Committee.

In other news, Mr. Mapp said the government would make payroll throughout the month of November.

During the briefing, V.I.P.D. Commissioner Delroy Richards urged motorists to use caution when driving, as most of the territory's intersections are without traffic lights, and at nights most of the thoroughfares are dark. He said there's been an increase in accidents as a result of motorists driving recklessly at a time when heightened carefulness and vigilance should be employed.

Two individuals have died as a result of vehicular accidents in the past two days, Mr. Richards made known. The first incident occurred on Sunday in St. Thomas on the Weymoth Rhymer Highway. According to police, the vehicle was headed eastward when it went off of the road and into the area of New Hernhut, colliding with a tree. The other incident occurred on Monday on the St. Thomas waterfront (Veterans Drive), and included a vehicle that veered off the road and into the ocean. The individual driving the vehicle died, according to Mr. Richards.

As more residents buy generators to power their homes, more complaints about the equipment's excessive use are being reported by residents, including some who say the carbon monoxide emanating from the machines are causing them health problems. Mr. Richards said the V.I.P.D. has made the issue a priority and will start generating reports, issuing warnings and, for repeat offenders, making the reports available to the Department of Planning and Natural Resources (D.P.N.R.), which will then sanction offenders.

D.P.N.R.'s guideline for generator use is between the hours of 6:00 a.m. and 10:00 p.m. daily. If you have a medical condition that demands 24-hour electricity, you won't be cited, Mr. Richards has said.

There will be 60 cruise ship calls in St. Thomas in December and 8 in St. Croix. For November, 5 are scheduled to visit St. Croix and 25 will dock in St. Thomas, Department of Tourism Commissioner Beverly Nicholson-Doty revealed at the briefing. There will be a cleanup effort Thursday at Magens Bay in St. Thomas and the Frederiksted waterfront on Friday, as the islands prepare for cruise ship tourist arrivals. Full details are [here](#).

D.P.N.R. in collaboration with the Virgin Islands Water and Power Authority (W.A.P.A.), has devised a plan that will see people with blue roofs receiving power when their neighborhoods are energized. Homes with blue roofs and damaged weatherheads will need to be examined by a certified electrician. If the electrician determines that the structure is safe to be energized and the weatherhead can be repaired with minimal work, this electrician will certify directly with WAPA, according to D.P.N.R. Commissioner Dawn Henry.

If extensive electrical work is required to repair the damaged weatherhead, the electrician must apply for a permit from D.P.N.R. before moving forward, Ms. Henry said.

The territory's roads have been badly damaged by the hurricanes, with heavy erosion occurring in some areas. Mr. Mapp said the USVI was declared a state of emergency by the Federal Highway Administration, which makes available "a bevy of resources," to the islands, the governor said. He added that the intention was to fully reconstruct the territory's roads.

But the asphalt plants in the USVI -- one on St. Thomas and two on St. Croix -- were down as of Monday, the governor made known, making it difficult to use local companies to do the work. "It's a matter of supply," the governor said, adding that he would speak with the Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA) about the asphalt issue, suggesting that the commodity may need to be shipped into the USVI so that the roads can be fixed.