

The Virgin Islands Consortium

BMV Resumes Written Tests 'By Appointment Only;' Road Tests Still Unavailable Nearly Five Months After Storms

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ST. CROIX -- Going on five months following Hurricanes Irma and Maria, the Bureau of Motor Vehicles, which, among other roles, is responsible for driver's licenses and the road and written tests needed before one can be issued, said on Tuesday that it would resume written tests on this past Thursday, albeit "by appointment only," but had yet to recommence road tests. Both tests are needed before a license can be issued for first-time drivers.

"The director of the Bureau of Motor Vehicles would like to inform the motoring public that after a continuous effort to find a suitable secure location to administer the written tests, we are pleased to announce that on Thursday, February 1st, 2018, the B.M.V. will resume written tests on the island of St. Thomas and St. Croix," reads a release issued by B.M.V. The announcement follows a Consortium [article on the matter](#), which quoted the owner of EZ Driving School speaking of her frustration with B.M.V. and the length of time it was taking to restart the programs.

"Our business is suffering, our students and the community are suffering," Carmen Clarke, owner of EZ Driving School, told The Consortium last week at her office in Castle Coakley, while dozens of individuals — among them school students and at least two adults — took driving classes. "Right now with double session in schools, our public transportation system is not reliable, so getting a driver's license is even more important."

Still, even with B.M.V.'s announcement that written tests had resumed in both districts, the unavailability of road tests still served as a hindrance. B.M.V. had told Ms. Clarke that the area it normally uses for parallel parking at its offices on St. Croix sustained damage, and the stretch of road used near Estate Paradise for further road tests lost its traffic lights. On Tuesday, B.M.V. said, "We will be assessing the roads, and work diligently with the Department of Public Works as to when the traffic lights and signage will be replaced." Why B.M.V. has not chosen a temporary location to perform the road tests remains unclear.

Ms. Clarke's decision to go to the media comes after months of attempting to quietly get B.M.V. to move quicker on restarting the written and road tests, which are essential to her business's survival. "A driver's license for a student may be considered a privilege by some, but it's a privilege given by the parent, not by B.M.V.," she said.

She added, "I had an adult student who lost a job opportunity because they needed as driver's license. They had given the adult student 30 days, then the storm came, they gave them an extension of another 30 days, and after that they chose another person."

The slow progress is not only impeding Ms. Clarke's operations, but that of her competitor on St. Croix, and the driving schools in St. Thomas as well.

"We can't move forward. I have students who have had appointments since September, and they haven't been able to reschedule an appointment," she said last week.

The resumption of written tests will help with the backlog of appointments, but with no date on when the road tests will restart, Virgin Islands residents seeking their driver's license are still in limbo.