

The Virgin Islands Consortium

JFL Receives Mobile Operating Rooms; Hospital Working To Obtain Dialysis Units

Health / **Published On April 07, 2018 10:47 AM /**

Staff **April 07, 2018**



ST. CROIX -- On Friday, the first of three portable operating room (OR) trailers arrived at the Juan F. Luis Hospital and Medical Center (J.F.L.), the medical facility has announced.

The mobile medical unit trailer was provided by the North Carolina Office of Emergency Medical Services' State Medical Response Team, J.F.L. said, and will serve as the operating rooms for J.F.L.'s surgical procedures since the hospital's OR sustained heavy damages during Hurricane Maria.

The trailer houses two surgical suites, and a setup team from North Carolina's EMS office arrived on Tuesday to begin preparing the site to receive the trailer. "I am very

excited that we finally have our OR trailers on island, and I can't wait to start serving our community," said J.F.L. CEO Wanda Ruben.

On Friday, the NC team worked on stabilizing and leveling up the OR trailer. Two other portable operating room trailers from New Jersey will be attached to the North Carolina unit and are already in the territory, J.F.L. said. Those additional units will be setup at J.F.L. once the New Jersey team arrives next week.

J.F.L.'s management team is also working to procure two hemodialysis mobile units which will provide a total of twelve chairs. Once those trailers arrive in the territory, the hospital said it would work in conjunction with the Department of Health to start bringing hemodialysis patients back home to the Virgin Islands.

J.F.L. did not give a timeline as to when the hemodialysis units would arrive, but they can't come soon enough. The number of evacuees -- many of them dialysis patients -- who have died while receiving care outside the territory has climbed to about 50, and the number continues to grow. In a release issued Friday, Senator Dwayne M. DeGraff called on the Departments of Human Services, Health and other agencies to collaborate with the Legislature on a plan for caring for USVI residents who were evacuated and their return home. He did not elaborate on what the collaboration would entail, nor did the senator offer suggestions.

Mr. DeGraff said the needs of 201 residents were being provided by the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services at a cost of roughly \$1.6 million per month. The Federal Emergency Management Agency was also waiting on a request for proposal (RFP) from the local government in regards to disaster care management for these residents upon their return home, he said.

"This trip was a fact-finding mission for me," Mr. DeGraff said. "I wanted to know firsthand the real situation of our residents. Unfortunately, I learned we do not have a formulated plan for addressing these residents abroad or bringing them home."

In discussions with D.H.S. Commissioner Felicia Blyden, the senator said he learned that the agency was not fully aware of the locations of all the residents who have been released. She also indicated that the RFP was at the Department of Property and Procurement, according to Mr. DeGraff.

"We need to come together to work on a holistic plan to address the needs of our residents as they return home," he said. "Some of them may have homes that were destroyed and may need assistance with that, as well as other needs."

The J.F.L. portable ORs as of Friday were not yet operational for patients.