

The Virgin Islands Consortium

Human Services Announces Territory-Wide Shelter Plans For 2019 Hurricane Season

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As the 2019 hurricane season draws closer, the Department of Human Services has announced that two shelters will be open to the public on the island of St. Croix, two on St. Thomas, one on St. John, and one shelter on Water Island. The department did not name the shelters, however, as the process of identification may still be underway.

Additionally, the Virgin Islands Department of Health will open special needs shelters on the islands of St. Croix, St. Thomas, and St. John. A special needs shelter is for residents who, during periods of evacuation or emergency, requires sheltering assistance due to physical impairment, mental impairment, cognitive impairment or sensory disabilities.

Depending on the threat to the territory, shelters are anticipated to open approximately 48-hours prior to landfall, D.H.S. said. Landfall is the time where sustained hurricane force winds (greater than 45 miles per hour) arrives to the territory. Once hurricane-force winds arrives, D.H.S. said residents should not attempt to leave their homes and travel to a shelter. It is unsafe to travel then, and may place lives and that of any first responders at risk, the department said.

Notification of shelter openings will be announced on radio stations, newspapers, governmental websites, social media, and Alert VI. To sign-up for Alert VI, go to www.vitema.vi.gov and choose which method of notification you desire – text, phone, email, or all three. Additionally, nonprofit organizations will receive direct notification of shelter openings in order to assist in transportation of individuals.

Support for shelter management will be accomplished through inter-agency coordination with Department of Education, Department of Human Services, Department of Health, The American Red Cross, and Virgin Islands Police Department, according to the release. However, it is equally important that those who need shelter cooperate with these coordinating entities to ensure a smooth and comfortable operation.

To assist with your individual and family disaster preparedness, visit the Disaster Preparedness EXPO 2019, sponsored by the Department of Health. On St. Croix, the EXPO is scheduled for June 22 from 11 am – 4 pm at the DC Canegata Recreation Center. On St. Thomas, the EXPO is scheduled for June 29 from 12 pm – 5 pm at the Tutu Park Mall Center Court.