

The Virgin Islands Consortium

Bryan Administration Announces Hurricane Shelters

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Today starts the 2019 Atlantic Hurricane Season, which is predicted to be near-normal by the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration (NOAA) with a likely range of 9 to 15 named storms (winds of 39 mph or higher), of which 4 to 8 could become hurricanes (winds of 74 mph or higher), including 2 to 4 major hurricanes (category 3, 4 or 5; with winds of 111 mph or higher).

In its ongoing preparation efforts for the season, the Department of Human Services late Friday announced shelters territory-wide in case of a storm. They include the following:

- **St. Thomas** – Department of Human Services Head Start Center, Sugar Estate and Lockhart Elementary School, 41 Estate Thomas

- **St. Croix** – Department of Human Services Head Start Center, Mars Hill, Frederiksted and St. Croix Educational Complex, 5A&C VICorp (across from the University of the Virgin Islands)
- **St. John** – Calabash Boom Community Center
- **Water Island** – Water Island Fire Station.

D.H.S. said it is the lead agency under the Emergency Services Function (ESF) No. 6 involving Mass Care. The goal is to provide safe, temporary accommodation for a significant number of residents and visitors who are threatened by an impending storm, or are displaced or homeless after a disastrous event.

“Sheltering is a key component of Mass Care, and we have been very deliberate in our selections of qualified facilities,” said D.H.S. Commissioner Nominee Kimberly Causey-Gomez said. “To that end, the assurances paramount to the selection of these primary shelters are that they meet all the necessary standards for shelters during a disaster.”

D.H.S. said residents are advised to use shelters in closest proximity to their homes. The department said it will provide sheltering-related updates and provide notice to the public approximately 48 hours in advance regarding shelter openings territory-wide.

NOAA said its 2019 outlook reflects competing climate factors. The ongoing El Nino is expected to persist and suppress the intensity of the hurricane season. Countering El Nino is the expected combination of warmer-than-average sea-surface temperatures in the tropical Atlantic Ocean and Caribbean Sea, and an enhanced west African monsoon, both of which favor increased hurricane activity.

“New satellite data and other upgrades to products and services from NOAA enable a more Weather-Ready Nation by providing the public and decision makers with the information needed to take action before, during, and after a hurricane,” said Neil Jacobs, Ph.D., acting NOAA administrator.

The 2019 hurricane season marks the first time NOAA’s fleet of Earth-observing satellites includes three operational next-generation satellites. Unique and valuable data from these satellites feed the hurricane forecast models used by forecasters to help users make critical decisions days in advance