The Virgin Islands Consortium

Headstart In Mars Hill To Serve As Evacuation Center On St. Croix From 9:00 p.m. Tonight As T.S. Dorian Approaches

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ST. CROIX -- During a joint phone conference with VITEMA and Governor Albert Bryan at 7:45 Tuesday night, VITEMA Director Daryl Jaschen announced that an evacuation shelter at the Head Start facility in Mars Hill, Frederiksted (located behind Claude O. Markoe School), would be open from 9:00 p.m. Tuesday. Above, Mr. Bryan, St. Croix Administrator Sammuel Sanes, Chief of Staff Karl Knight, and Mr. Jaschen hold the phone conference, which was also hosted on VITEMA's Facebook page as a "watch party".

The announcement comes as the National Hurricane Center has issued a tropical storm warning for the U.S. Virgin Islands, with T.S. Dorian expected to impact the territory Wednesday.

A tropical storm warning means that tropical storm conditions are expected somewhere within the warning area within 36 hours.

The Mars Hill evacuation shelter site will provide a safe place to stay amid Dorian's winds and rains, but it is not designated for a long-term stay, VITEMA said in a release. It is always recommended that residents stay with neighbors, family or friends in a safe place, but this shelter provides a place for people with no other options, VITEMA said.

The Department of Human Services advised residents to bring items to the evacuation shelter that could keep them comfortable for a short-term stay. Below are a few things residents should pack in their go-bags for the evacuation shelter:

- Chairs
- Snacks, nonperishable canned or packaged food.
- Medications, eyeglasses, contact lenses, hearing aids, dentures, any medical equipment
- Two extra changes of clothes and footwear
- Pillows/cots/blankets/sleeping bags
- Toiletries – sanitizer, toothbrush, toothpaste, sanitary items.
- Important papers – ID, proof of residency and insurance papers.
- Cash in case your debit or credit card is not working.
- Entertaining items – books, magazines, puzzles, games, toys for children
- Baby food and diapers if you have young children
- Miscellaneous items such as a battery-powered radio, earbuds, flashlight, and cellphone charger.

The Mars Hill shelter is not designed for a long-term stay and St. Croix residents are urged to bring the above items to the site for their comfort, VITEMA said.

A Tropical Storm Warning is in effect for:

- Puerto Rico
- Vieques
- Culebra
- U.S. Virgin Islands
- Dominican Republic from Isla Saona to Samana

According to Mr. Jaschen, two additional shelters may be available, however no announcement was made tonight on location and time. VITEMA's management team will meet at 5:00 a.m. at Government House on St. Croix Wednesday.

No curfew has been imposed yet. "At this point we are expecting excessive rainfall," Mr. Bryan said.

Government offices territory-wide are still scheduled to be open tomorrow, Mr. Bryan said, although that may change during a 5:00 a.m. update Wednesday, according to the governor.

Mr. Jaschen said Emergency Operations Centers were under partial activation as of Tuesday night.

Mr. Bryan said he spoke with the White House and the FEMA director to provide details on preparations.

USVI Tropical Storm Warning

The U.S. Virgin Islands has been placed on a tropical storm warning as Tropical Storm Dorian approaches the southern Leeward Islands. According to the National Hurricane Center's 5:00 p.m. advisory, the USVI and Puerto Rico are expected to experience tropical storm conditions on Wednesday, with hurricane conditions possible in Puerto Rico and portions of the Dominican Republic Thursday.

Discussion and Outlook

According to N.H.C. data from the Guadeloupe radar indicate that the center of Tropical Storm Dorian was located near latitude 15.3 North, longitude 62.5 West. Dorian is moving toward the west-northwest near 13 mph (20 km/h), and this motion is expected to continue through tonight, followed by a turn toward the northwest on Wednesday. On the forecast track, the center of Dorian will move across the northeastern Caribbean Sea tonight, pass over or near western and central Puerto Rico on Wednesday, and move near or just east of eastern Hispaniola Wednesday night. On Thursday night and Friday, the center of Dorian is forecast to move near or to the east of the Turks and Caicos and the southeastern Bahamas.

Maximum sustained winds remain near 50 mph (85 km/h) with higher gusts. Slow strengthening is forecast during the next 24 hours, and Dorian is forecast to be near hurricane strength when it approaches Puerto Rico on Wednesday. Some weakening is expected after Dorian moves across the higher terrain of Puerto Rico Wednesday night. Dorian is expected to gradually re-strengthen on Thursday and Friday while passing near or to the east of the Turks and Caicos and southeastern Bahamas.

Tropical-storm-force winds extend outward up to 45 miles (75 km) from the center. The estimated minimum central pressure is 1005 mb (29.68 inches).

Lieutenant Governor Tregenza Roach urging residents to be prepared

"As we approach September, the most active month of the hurricane season for the Virgin Islands, I encourage residents to stay vigilant and not delay preparations," Mr. Roach said in his capacity of commissioner of insurance.

He also encouraged residents who have insurance to review their policy.

"Whether you have a mortgage or own your home, homeowners should have insurance and understand what is covered by the policy. An annual review of the policy is important. Be sure to contact your insurance agent directly to discuss any need for additional coverage," he said.

In order to be prepared before a hurricane, the following actions should be taken by property owners, according to Mr. Roach:

- Avoid being underinsured by purchasing at least 80% of the replacement cost value of your residential property. Get your residential property appraised and make sure the appraisal includes Replacement Cost Value. Then, purchase your homeowner's insurance at Replacement Cost Value, which is the cost of replacing your property without a reduction for depreciation.
- Remember that homeowner's insurance cannot generally be purchased once a storm is named.
- Avoid being force-placed because forced-placement covers only the mortgage balance. Have the insurance premium escrowed along with your mortgage and property tax payment or use premium financing.
- If renting, buy renter's insurance to cover your contents in the building.
- Protect your property by putting up shutters, cutting back tree limbs and clearing debris.
- Remember, you must buy a separate homeowners/windstorm policy and a separate flood insurance policy. A homeowner's policy does not provide coverage for flooding that comes with a hurricane. Do know that a flood insurance policy does not take effect until 30 days after it is purchased.

- Understand that you do not have a separate policy if you own a condominium. The policy belongs to the condominium association as a whole and is subject to a decision by its Board of Directors. You can purchase a separate contents insurance policy as a condominium owner.
- Keep your insurance policy and other important documents (e.g., insurance policies, birth certificates, passport, will and testaments, licenses, etc.) in safe, dry and secure waterproof and fireproof containers.

- Visit ltg.gov.vi and download the "Home Inventory Checklist". Complete the checklist and take photos of your home's contents before a storm occurs. Know what is insured and what is not insured. Read other hurricane preparedness materials on the website.
- Have an adequate amount of cash stored in a safe area in your home, in the event communication and transportation systems are damaged by a storm.
- Have disaster supplies on hand (e.g., water, dry food items, prescription drugs, bandages, flashlights, batteries).

- Know what to do after a disaster strikes. Secure your property; take photos; make a list of your damages; file a claim as soon as possible; get an estimate of your damages; be ready to have your claim adjusted; receive a claim settlement.
- Public adjusters are also licensed by the Commissioner of Insurance. A public adjuster may not charge a fee that exceeds 5% of the insurance proceeds recovered on behalf of the homeowner or residential insured.

Ernice Gilbert and Robert Moore contributed to this story.