

The Virgin Islands Consortium

VITEMA Encourages Community Participation in Thursday's Earthquake Drill

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In the wake of the increased earthquake activities affecting the region, which includes the magnitude 6.0 quake experienced in Puerto Rico on September 23, the Virgin Islands Territorial Emergency Management Agency (VITEMA) on Wednesday encouraged all residents, schools, businesses and communities to actively participate in the Great ShakeOut earthquake drills set for Thursday in the territory.

The Great ShakeOut earthquake drill is a self-lead opportunity for U.S. Virgin Islands residents to join the nation in practicing how to be safer during earthquakes, VITEMA said. Major earthquakes may happen anywhere residents live, work, or travel. The ShakeOut earthquake drill provides an opportunity to practice immediate protection

techniques to safeguard oneself, and to become better prepared in any scenario.

“Small earthquakes occur in and around the territory often, although we may not feel them. With our neighbors in Puerto Rico experiencing frequent earthquakes at magnitudes as high as 6.0, it is in the best interest of the territory to ensure that all residents have exercised a plan in the event that the U.S. Virgin Islands becomes impacted by a major earthquake as well,” said VITEMA Director Daryl D. Jaschen. “Young children, elderly, the disabled, and vulnerable populations all need to have the confidence that if or when an earthquake affects the territory, there are ways we can effectively protect ourselves.”

At 9:00 a.m. tomorrow VITEMA will launch the Great ShakeOut in the territory by conducting a live test of the Integrated Public Alert & Warning System (IPAWS) and the Wireless Emergency Alert (WEA).

During the self-led drill, participants will practice how to “Drop where you are, Cover your head and neck by getting under a sturdy cover (i.e. table or desk), and Hold On until shaking stops.” Participants will also practice evacuation to a “safe zone,” and review earthquake response procedures to include additional preparedness open discussions.

Practicing with the rest of the country helps solidify that all states and territories are in support of one another and to ensure that no community is left behind.

“When we are faced with a dangerous scenario such as earthquakes, fear and confusion can inhibit rational thought processes,” said Jaschen. “These exercises help make our initial responses to an earthquake hazard instinctive, so no one becomes frozen from fear.”

All schools and organizations are strongly encouraged to participate and help spread the word throughout their networks, ensuring that the entire Virgin Islands community is aware of this important public exercise.

To register your participation in the drills, visit shakeout.org/register/today.