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Modular JFL Hospital Will Most Likely Come Online in 2022, Five Years After Hurricanes Irma and Maria

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JFL North, the 50,000 square foot temporary hospital will most likely open in 2022. By. ERNICE GILBERT FOR THE VIRGIN ISLANDS CONSORTIUM

JFL North, the modular facility that was supposed to be up and running and serving the public's medical needs, has experienced yet another delay and will most likely come online early 2022, some five years following Hurricanes Irma's and Maria's impact to the USVI.

An employee with intimate knowledge of the hospital's operations spoke to the Consortium at length about matters affecting the hospital. This employee was prompted to speak following the collapse of a nurse on Friday at the Virgin Islands Cardiac Center (V.I.C.C.) building after working in near 100 degrees heat.

[Stories: [Woman Was Employed at JFL for Two Years as Certified Medical Assistant With Fraudulent Certification Documents](#) | [Nurse Working in Hot Room at JFL Collapses, 'We're in Dire Straights,' Says Employee as CEO Defends Efforts](#) | [Senator Novelle Francis Calls for Emergency Hearing Following Hospital Revelations](#)]

This employee said it was revealed during a recent meeting that JFL North, which hospital officials had hoped to open early in the year, had experienced another lengthy delay because a structure that houses oxygen for the facility, which it cannot operate without, was not considered and therefore needed to be built. Asked about this matter, JFL Interim CEO Dyma Williams said the oxygen facility was always part of their plan, but it was part of plan B, not plan A.

Plan A, she said, was to connect JFL North to the current hospital's oxygen system, a decision she said was made to hasten the process of opening. But the plan backfired.

"We had a first phase approach where the medical gases were supposed to be piped in from our current system," Ms. Williams said. However, the hospital brought a company to evaluate the feasibility of using the current system, and "they determined that it would not in fact be safe to hook up JFL North, the new hospital, to the existing medical gas system," Ms. Williams said.

She added, "We had always anticipated phase B, which would have been the buildout of the oxygen generator, the construction, the connections the utilities, the trenching." Ms. Williams described the buildout as a "very technically complex build, so it takes time."

She said plan B was always in the works because "we knew that JFL was going to go away. But when the certifying agency did not certify plan A as safe and sound, we then had to quickly transition to plan B, which is taking no less than six to nine months of construction because of the technicality of the build."

She said the design request for proposal for what is called a cement mechanical unit (CMU) that houses all the technical support for the infrastructure of JFL North was sent out between two or three weeks ago. Once a vendor is selected, it would take six to nine months for construction of the facility, Ms. Williams stated — easily pushing back the opening of JFL North into 2022.

Asked why wasn't plan B the first option, Ms. Williams said, "Because we were trying to shorten the schedule to the greatest extent possible, and plan A would allow us to do that." She added, "People often want us to hurry up, and when we do those things and it fails then we get punished for it failing."

During a February hearing, JFL officials, including Ms. Williams, told senators that [the hospital needed an immediate infusion of cash](#) if it were to continue making payroll. A big reason for the drop in revenue was JFL North's delayed opening which was causing an exodus of patients to the mainland and other destinations for healthcare, hospital officials said.