

Fiona Update: Human Services to Dismiss Head Start at 1pm Friday; Education Says Schools to Proceed on Normal Schedule

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The V.I. Dept. of Education and the V.I. Dept. of Human Services have issued guidance on the operation of their respective learning facilities in response to Tropical Storm Fiona, which is expected to impact the territory late Saturday into Sunday.

Education said it remains in close communication with VITEMA regarding weather conditions throughout the territory. "Based on the most current information provided, all V.I. public schools are expected to open and operate on normal schedule, Friday, September 16. St. Croix Central High School will remain virtual," the department said.

D.O.E said if weather conditions deteriorate overnight, it will provide an update early on Friday morning. Updates will be sent via email, the department's Facebook page, and through local media outlets.

D.H.S. said its Head Start Program will dismiss students early territory-wide on Friday at 1:00 p.m. in anticipation of Fiona. The department is asking parents to be at the campuses on time to pick up students for early dismissal.

In addition, all DHS Senior Recreational Centers will be closed on Friday September. The Richmond Senior Center on St. Croix, the Strive Senior Center on St. Thomas and the Adrian Senior Center on St. John will be closed ahead of the storm's landfall, the department said. Meals on Wheels, however, will continue to serve the public as scheduled.

TS Fiona Update

According to the National Hurricane Center's 5:00 a.m. Friday forecast, the center of Tropical Storm Fiona was located near latitude 15.7 North, longitude 58.1 West. Fiona is moving toward the west near 15 mph (24 km/h). A westward motion with a gradual decrease in forward speed is expected through Saturday night or early Sunday, followed by a turn toward the west-northwest later on Sunday. On the forecast track, the center of Fiona is expected to move across the Leeward Islands tonight and early Saturday, and move near or just south of the Virgin Islands and Puerto Rico late Saturday into Sunday.

Data from an Air Force Hurricane Hunter aircraft indicate that maximum sustained winds are near 50 mph (85 km/h) with higher gusts. Some slight strengthening is forecast during the next few days.

Tropical-storm-force winds extend outward up to 125 miles (205 km) from the center.

Wind: Tropical storm conditions are expected across portions of the northern Leeward Islands within the warning area beginning this evening. Tropical storm conditions are possible within the watch area across the Virgin Islands on Saturday and in Puerto Rico late Saturday or Saturday night.

Rainfall: Fiona is forecast to produce the following rainfall totals:

Leeward Islands: 3 to 6 inches.

British and U.S. Virgin Islands and Puerto Rico: 4 to 6 inches with local maximum totals of 10 inches, particularly across eastern and southern Puerto Rico.

Eastern Dominican Republic and Turks and Caicos: 4 to 8 inches with local maximum totals of 15 inches, particularly in terrain.

These rains may produce flash and urban flooding, along with mudslides in areas of higher terrain, particularly southern Puerto Rico and eastern Dominican Republic.

Storm Surge: Localized coastal flooding will be possible along the coasts of the U.S. Virgin Islands and Puerto Rico in areas of onshore winds Saturday into Sunday.

Surf: Swells generated by Fiona are affecting the Leeward Islands, and are expected to spread westward to the Virgin Islands and Puerto Rico today and Saturday. These conditions could cause life-threatening surf and rip current conditions. Please consult products from your local weather

office.

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