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Temporary Hospital Called JFL North to Open No Later Than March, Bryan Says

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JFL North, the 50,000-square-foot temporary hospital on St. Croix. By. V.I. CONSORTIUM

JFL North, the temporary hospital that was supposed to be in operation years ago, will open in the first quarter of 2023, Governor Albert Bryan has said.

The facility, equipped with state-of-the-art medical equipment, will serve as a fully serviced hospital until the new Juan F. Luis Hospital is built — the latter being a project that is not expected in multiple years.

"First quarter," Mr. Bryan said late December, referring to when JFL North will come online. "We're done with construction now, we got to make sure that everything works and is tested."

He added, "Although we're done with the construction, there are some other things that need to be done. They need a better entrance; people are right now entering through the emergency room. So in for a penny, in for a pound, let's get it right, now."

The last hospital postponement, which was announced late September during a Senate hearing, was a result of manufacturing delays with the world's steel shortage, a major component which is needed to erect a 260,000-gallon water storage tank to provide water to the building, said Darryl Smalls during the September Senate hearing. Mr. Smalls is the executive director of Facilities & Capital Development for the Territorial Hospital Redevelopment Team.

Mr. Smalls had given a tentative November 2022 date for the opening, however JFL CEO Douglas Koch called the timeline "irresponsible," arguing that authorities were not going to expedite construction at the risk of creating an unsafe workspace for patients and staff.

"We will not do it until we can assure that," Mr. Koch remarked, as he sought to rally the support of the Legislature and the hospital board.

Once the mechanical building has been completed it will be used to house the critical systems required for the temporary hospital to operate such equipment as components of the life safety system, the domestic water supply system, the medical air and vacuum delivery systems, the oxygen supply system, the emergency backup generators, the fire suppression system, and the liquid propane distribution system.

JFL North is anticipated to be a state-of-the-art structure with brand new surgical suites and technology, along with dedicated labor and delivery rooms that allow for a mother to recover and stay in the same room throughout her stay. The building will also have a fully outfitted trauma and emergency services department, a new 128 slice CT scanner with a full cardiac imaging package and many other services. FEMA obligated $111.4 million for a 101-bed temporary structure.

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