

The Virgin Islands Consortium

After Hosting Grand Opening, JFL North Delayed For Umpteenth Time as Hospital Pushes Back Patient Transfer

Health / **Published On March 18, 2023 05:59 AM /**

Ernice Gilbert **March 18, 2023**



JFL CEO Douglas Koch, center, provides tour of JFL North following a grand opening event on March 7, 2023. To his left is Darryl Smalls, executive director of the Territorial Hospital Redevelopment Team, and on his right, Lt. Gov. Tregenza Roach. By. V.I. CONSORTIUM

JFL North, the temporary hospital that has taken four years to build and [last week celebrated its grand opening](#), has been delayed yet again, with the Juan F. Luis Hospital on Friday announcing that the transfer of patients to the facility has been pushed back by a month.

According to JFL, four issues were uncovered during a systems check conducted as part of final inspections, among them “a malfunctioning transformer that powers the electrical branch for the facility alarm systems (PBX), a faulty damper in the fire alert system, a programming error in the nurse call system, and a software concern with the CT scanner,” hospital officials indicated.

“Without these systems operating as designed, JFL is unable to conduct many life safety drills that affect operations,” the statement read in part.

The faults discovered have caused the healthcare facility to push the patient transfer date to April 22, which the hospital said in a press release on March 8 was originally set for March 25. Hospital CEO Douglas Koch told Governor Albert Bryan and Lt. Gov. Tregenza Roach during a March 7 walkthrough following the grand opening event, that patient transfer would start September 25 (see the [11:53 mark of this video](#)).

"There are a couple caveats with that [regarding] some of the safety issues that we have to take care of before we can move our patients. But if you're not pushing for a date that's when things start to linger, so we continue to push our teams forward," Mr. Koch said during the March 7 walkthrough.

However, in the hospital's press release the following day, it said patients would be transferred beginning March 25 before pushing the date back to April 22 in its Friday announcement.

In Friday's press release, Mr. Koch emphasized the hospital's commitment to patient safety as its number one priority. “These issues prevent us from allowing patients into this environment,” he explained, calling the decision to delay patient transfer “difficult”.

None of the issues currently being faced, however, are overly complicated, according to Mr. Koch. “The good news is we have identified solutions for all issues. Parts have been ordered, technicians are being scheduled, and we will quickly be able to clear this final hurdle.”

During the grand opening event on March 7, Governor Bryan joked, "Some people graduate magna cum laude, summa cum laude. This project? Thank you laude."

The joke was fitting. JFL North received the notice to proceed in July 2018 and was supposed to be completed by the end of 2019. Four years later, after what felt like unending delays and setbacks, the facility is finally ready to begin operations. "I actually ignored this on my calendar. I saw it a couple of weeks ago, I was like, really? It's been a long, tough road," the governor added, reminding the public that the development of JFL North had five CEOs, two governors, two elections and cost \$130 million, which Mr. Bryan said is "the largest project ever completed in the Virgin Islands."

Some of the delays could have been prevented — from [attempting to attach medical gas pipes from the new facility with JFL's current system](#), a decision that failed, and failing to order important hospital furnishings that caused another protracted holdup. Governor Bryan on Tuesday said sometimes leaders must admit when they lack knowledge of certain matters and ask for help — words Mr. Bryan spoke [during a January interview](#) with the Consortium. “I want us to remember the lessons we have learned. You don’t know what you don't know. And as leaders, we all have to be humble enough to say we

don't know. We haven't built a hospital before...We need to be brave enough to admit to ourselves when it's too much. Like, we need help," he said.

© Viconsortium 2026