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VITEMA Says 18,000 Residents Registered to Participate in Tsunami Exercise as Agency Deems Event a Success

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The V.I. Territorial Emergency Management Agency on Thursday, March 16 conducted its annual Caribe Wave Tsunami Awareness exercise at 11:00 a.m., and the local agency has deemed the exercise a success with 18,000 residents having pre-registered to participate.

Participants were asked to review their emergency evacuation procedures and to assemble at an elevation 82 feet above sea level, which is the minimal elevation recommended when tsunami alarms are sounded, according to VITEMA.

Exercise participants were encouraged to drop, cover, and hold on for sixty seconds when the test began as if an earthquake had occurred, then to practice proceeding inland or to higher ground.

Participating groups included families, businesses, schools, government agencies, faith-based organizations, as well as private citizens.

The exercise included the monthly testing of the territory's tsunami warning system in the form of a 60-second tone. The tone was scheduled to sound on St. Croix at 11:00 a.m., and in the St. Thomas/St John/Water Island district at 11:15 a.m.

Residents and visitors to the territory were alerted of the test using two warning systems. Subscribers to the AlertVI system were notified of the event via email, text and/or phone, depending on the preferred method they've selected. VITEMA also synchronized its monthly testing of the Integrated Public Alert & Warning System (IPAWS), which consisted of a series of tones and a standardized message via cellular phone that stated this is a TEST only, according to the release.

Tsunamis are enormous waves caused by an underground disturbance such as an earthquake. The U. S. Virgin Islands, along with the rest of the Caribbean, is considered a region with high levels of vulnerability and threat for tsunamis.

VITEMA's "Know the Tone" monthly tsunami warning system testing will continue to take place on the third Thursday of every month, according to the release.