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As Heatwave Over 100 Degrees Scorches Islands, Authorities Gear Up for Hurricane Season

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During Monday's Government House press briefing, VITEMA Director Daryl Jaschen noted the severe heat wave sweeping across the islands and urged residents to be ready for this year's Atlantic hurricane season.

Jaschen reported a heat index of 105 degrees on St. Croix, and says forecasters expect even more sweltering temperatures in the week ahead. "Remember, the heat index will be in the range of 102-107 degrees each day from 10:00 a.m. to 5:00 p.m. The height of the heat index, coupled with hazy skies due to Saharan dust, will exacerbate the conditions," Jaschen warned. "Sadly, rainfall is limited for the first half of the work week."

Jaschen advised individuals with respiratory illnesses to minimize outdoor exposure and limit their physical activities, as these weather conditions might worsen their health. Vulnerable individuals should monitor themselves closely while the scorching temperatures persist.

"Symptoms of heat exhaustion such as dizziness, thirst, sweating, nausea, weakness should not be overlooked," the VITEMA director urged, and shared guidelines issued by the Department of Health. "Stay hydrated, refrain from consuming alcohol and caffeine, seek air conditioning cool spaces during peak hours today whenever possible, dress appropriately with loose lightweight clothing, and check on your relatives, friends, and neighbors," he advised.

Those experiencing symptoms of heatstroke, said Jaschen, should seek medical help immediately.

Turning his attention to the now-active hurricane season, Jaschen announced the list of shelters in the territory and their capacity, noting that the shelter openings will be announced by Governor Albert Bryan Jr. at least 24 hours before the arrival of tropical storm-force winds. On St. Thomas, the Lockhart School will be able to hold 248 individuals, while the Eudora Kean High School will shelter up to 641 people between its gymnasium and cafeteria.

On St. Croix, Complex High School has a capacity of 739 people, while the DC Canegata Community Centre will be able to accommodate 161.

The Adrian Senior Center on St. John can serve as an emergency shelter to 15 people. Jaschen advised residents of Water Island to seek shelter on St. Thomas, should they not be able to weather out a storm or hurricane in their homes or with relatives or friends.

"The maritime community is encouraged not to ride out any storms onboard a vessel but to properly secure your vessel and seek shelter with friends or come to one of the shelters on St. Thomas or St. Croix," he said.

Jaschen explained that everyone arriving at shelters would undergo a health screening survey, with those suspected of being symptomatic for Covid-19 being placed "in a separate location for monitoring." Each shelter, Jaschen said, would be equipped with a nursing station to manage the process. "Please be prepared. Stay informed and be vigilant."

Residents of the Virgin Islands are advised to visit [VITEMA](#) or the U.S. Department of Homeland Security's [hurricane preparedness website](#) for additional information about hurricane preparedness. VITEMA's website also has the option to sign up for emergency text message notifications of hurricane and flash flood warnings.