

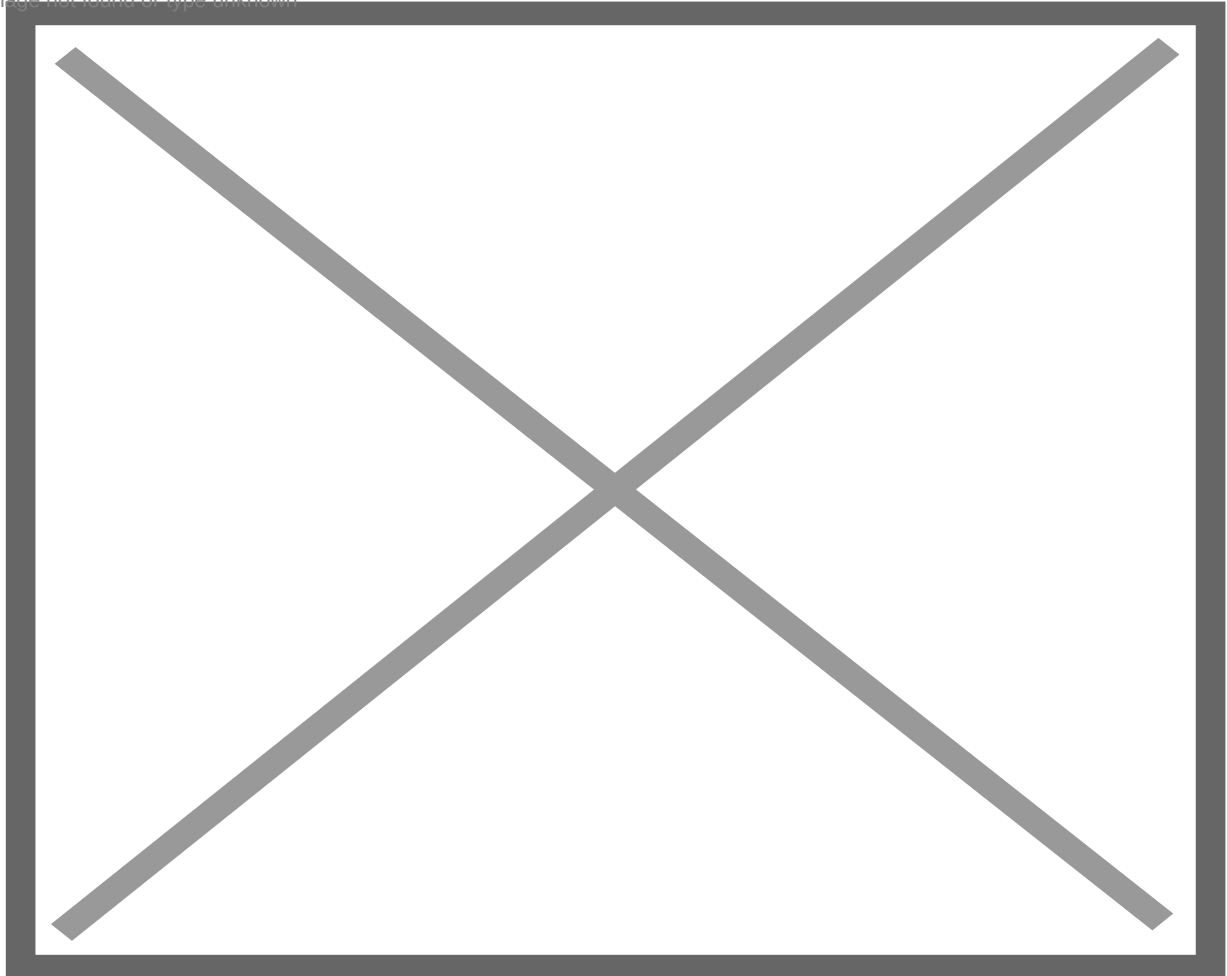
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Evacuation Shelter Pre-Registration Re-opens This Week As Hurricane Season Enters Peak

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As the 2023 Atlantic hurricane season hits its peak, this week's Government House press briefing on Monday focused on ensuring Virgin Islands had information on the best ways to get prepared for, and stay safe during, a storm or other natural disaster.

VITEMA Director Daryl Jaschen, Department of Health Commissioner Justa Encarnacion, and Department of Human Services Commissioner Kimberly Causey-Gomez all provided updates based on their area of expertise.

Ms. Causey-Gomez announced that pre-registration for evacuation shelters is open again this week. "This just helps us to be more prepared for who will be coming to the shelters," she said. People who do not feel safe at home during a disaster are encouraged to contact (340) 715-6935

between 9 a.m. and 5 p.m. to register, or to do so online at www.vitema.vi.gov.

Health Commissioner Encarnacion noted that her department, during emergencies, opens a special needs medical shelter catering to those who have “physical or mental conditions that require medical or nursing oversight that cannot be accommodated or provided for in general population shelters.” According to Ms. Encarnacion, this includes people with chronic conditions that require assistance with daily living activities, and those who require professional assistance with readings, checks, and the dispensation of medication on a regular basis. Medical emergencies, said Encarnacion, should be directed to 911 or the hospitals.

The health commissioner encouraged residents to consult with their doctor and pharmacist when putting together emergency supply kits. “Don’t try to do it on your own, they might actually give you some ideas that you haven’t thought about,” she noted. Coolers and chemical ice packs should be kept on hand to store medicines that need refrigeration, such as insulin.

Meanwhile, providing helpful tips on how best to prepare for potential severe weather, Jaschen, the VITEMA director, advised residents that if they encounter one of the Water and Power Authority’s (WAPA) new composite poles that have been downed, not to attempt to cut it with a chainsaw. “These are not the wooden poles we’re normally used to,” he said. Instead, WAPA must be alerted to the situation. He also advised that the creams and ointments sold as part of first-aid kits usually expire after a year or two, so new kits may need to be purchased.

Speaking about current weather conditions, Jaschen noted that apart from the extra one to two inches of rain expected tomorrow as a result of the passage of Tropical Storm Franklin to the west of the territory, maritime advisories for sea swells are also expected – both as a result of Franklin in the Caribbean sea and post-tropical storm Gert, still dissipating over the Atlantic. Although the storms themselves pose no threat to the Virgin Islands, Jaschen noted the possibility of “rain bands that could result in...flooding impacts. You could have river rises, and even mudslides in areas of steep terrain,” he warned.

Gusting winds and the aforementioned sea swells are also of concerns, especially for small craft navigating local passages, where the “the highest seas and the strongest winds are likely to be,” according to Mr. Jaschen. Even on land, the VITEMA director noted that gusts of up to 40 miles per hour were possible, and urged residents to secure any outdoor items that could blow away.