



For Immediate Release
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Department of Human Services Urges Virgin Islanders to Be Ready 365
Agency Focusing on Preparing for All Disasters, All the Time

ST. CROIX, U.S. VIRGIN ISLANDS – The Virgin Islands Department of Human Services (DHS) is reminding residents that disaster preparedness is not just something to think about during hurricane season. With Hurricane Dorian now in the rearview mirror, it is even more important for residents to reflect on how prepared they are for the next disaster.

“National Preparedness Month takes place each September during the peak of hurricane season, but it’s important to be ready for all types of disasters that could occur any time of the year,” said DHS Commissioner Kimberley Causey-Gomez. “It could be an earthquake, a tsunami, an oil spill – not just a hurricane. We must be prepared and trained up for all hazards, not just during hurricane season.”

The department is doing its part to strengthen its preparedness measures, especially when it comes to preparing for and managing emergency shelters. DHS is the lead agency for the territory for Emergency Support Function 6 (ESF-6), which is responsible for Mass Care during a disaster.

As part of recovery efforts for hurricanes Irma and Maria, the agency has been working closely with the Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA), American Red Cross and the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services (HHS) to improve emergency plans and shelter operations for the future.

“Sheltering in place is always your best bet,” said Commissioner Causey-Gomez. “However, in the event your home is not a safe place, evacuation shelters will be available to keep you safe. Still it’s not going to be luxurious.”

Residents are urged to “Be Ready 365” by always having emergency supplies available to sustain themselves if they must evacuate to a public shelter. Below is a checklist of items residents should plan on bringing with them if they need to evacuate to an emergency shelter:

- Chairs
- Snacks, nonperishable canned or packaged food.
- Medications, nebulizers, eyeglasses, contact lenses, hearing aids, dentures, any medical equipment
- Two extra changes of clothes and footwear
- Pillows/cots/blankets/sleeping bags
- Toiletries – sanitizer, toothbrush, toothpaste, sanitary items.
- Important papers – ID, proof of residency and insurance papers.
- Cash in case your debit or credit card is not working.
- Entertaining items – books, magazines, puzzles, games, toys for children
- Baby food and diapers if you have young children
- Miscellaneous items such as a battery-powered radio, earbuds, flashlight, and cellphone charger.

In honor of National Preparedness Month, DHS challenges all residents throughout the territory to Be Ready 365 by preparing a kit, making a plan and practicing it. For free resources on how you and your family can be prepared for whatever may come your way, visit www.ready.gov.

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