

**ROYAL CARIBBEAN CRUISES TO HELP
TRANSPORT RESIDENTS IN NEED TO THE MAINLAND**
U.S. Virgin Islands recovery efforts continue across the Territory

U.S. VIRGIN ISLANDS - Royal Caribbean's Adventure of the Seas will evacuate residents with medical needs from the Territory this weekend.

In his daily address to members of the media and the public, U.S. Virgin Islands Governor Kenneth E. Mapp reported on several important developments in the joint efforts of the Government and its partners to restore essential services throughout the Territory, evacuate residents with special needs and gradually progress toward normalcy.

He confirmed that the cruise ship will travel from Puerto Rico and arrive on St. Croix on Friday before departing for Fort Lauderdale via St. Thomas on Saturday. The ship will accommodate up to 750 passengers from St. Croix, up to 200 passengers from St. John, and 50 from St. Thomas.

Priority for passage will be given to high risk pregnant women, the elderly and those with urgent medical needs. Through the Emergency Operations Command, the Department of Tourism has pre-registered the St. Thomas passengers and approximately 400 individuals from St. Croix for evacuation. Passengers are responsible for their onward travel arrangements from Fort Lauderdale.

Registration for the remaining passenger allotment will take place on Wednesday from 12:30 to 3:30 p.m. in person at information centers set up at the following locations: Ann E. Abramson Pier, Cotton Valley Fire Station and VI Cardiac Center (St. Croix) and Visitor Center in Powell Park (St. John). Online registration will not be available. To date, the Government of the U.S. Virgin Islands has assisted with the evacuation of more than 2,000 passengers from St. Thomas since Hurricane Irma.

One hundred individuals with similar needs have been identified for travel on a mercy flight operated by JetBlue Airways, leaving St. Croix on Wednesday and destined for Orlando. The Governor cautioned Virgin Islanders against taking advantage of the mercy missions without having access to adequate resources or in the absence of appropriate arrangements for accommodations once they arrive on the mainland United States. The Virgin Islands Government cannot assume responsibility for feeding or housing individuals once they leave the Territory.

Earlier in the day Tuesday, Governor Mapp met with members of the St. Thomas business community along with Commissioner of Tourism Beverly Nicholson-Doty to discuss opportunities to welcome cruise ship passengers as early as next month. He called the meeting very productive and said the group is hopeful that Charlotte Amalie and several key visitor attractions can be readied to receive visitors in the near future.

To further assist businesses in the recovery, the Governor said Disaster Survivor Assistance officials from the Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA) will have representatives from the Small Business Administration in the Territory shortly to meet with business owners, assess damages and help them negotiate the process for receiving aid.

Lieutenant Governor Osbert E. Potter is likely to head a group including members of the cabinet from the Department of Licensing and Consumer Affairs, the Bureau of Internal Revenue and members of the Lieutenant Governor's staff, to get corporate activities moving so that residents and businesses can complete important business transactions such as closing loans and mortgage transactions.

The Governor expressed his optimism that the Territory's telecommunications challenges will be addressed with the appropriate level of priority needed to restore normal business and personal activities. Governor Mapp spoke with President of AT&T Florida, Puerto Rico and the U.S. Virgin Islands Joe York, who indicated the telecommunications company is prepared to provide the supplies needed to assist in the restoration of service. In addition, AT&T will be issuing credits on customer bills for the period during which service was interrupted.

Incidentally, the Governor noted that the generator previously stolen from an AT&T site has been returned and put back into service.

Governor Mapp reported that the Virgin Islands Water and Power Authority (WAPA), the Waste Management Authority, Viya and the Department of Public Works are meeting daily to coordinate debris removal, road clearance, restoration of power lines and poles, and other issues to help restore the Territory's infrastructure. He reminded the public that the purpose of the Territory-wide curfew is to maintain public safety and cautioned residents to be extremely careful when driving, as the integrity of telecommunications and power supply lines may be compromised, despite appearances to the contrary.

The 319 members of the Puerto Rico National Guard who had been critical members of the recovery effort have returned to Puerto Rico. On behalf of Governor Mapp and the people of the U.S. Virgin Islands, Adjutant General Deborah Howell expressed the Territory's gratitude for the extraordinary work they contributed to the recovery of the Virgin Islands.

Getting people back to work on a regular - even if limited - basis, is an important aspect of restoring normalcy to daily life in the Territory. To that end, Governor Mapp exhorted government employees to check in and report for duty by Friday. Government officials acknowledged that many public sector employees have demonstrated commitment and dedication by working long days without rest in an effort to contribute to the recovery of the U.S. Virgin Islands.

While several hundred residents remain in shelters in the Territory and thousands were served at Points of Distribution (POD) on Tuesday, grocery stores, gas stations and pharmacies are opening for business. There will be no distribution of supplies at PODs on Wednesday.

The curfew will be relaxed to allow for the potential resumption of some classes at private schools, as well as the management of normal activities. On Wednesday, September 27, the curfew on St. Croix will be reduced by three hours, with residents permitted to be outside of their homes between 11 a.m. and 6 p.m. On St. Thomas, St. John and Water Island the curfew will be in effect from 6 p.m. to 8 a.m., giving residents an additional hour outside their homes.

"Now is the time for us to come together and find some commonality and good purpose for the recovery," the Governor remarked.

Residents can register for disaster assistance by calling 1-800-621-3362 or visiting www.disasterassistance.gov.

The official website to donate to the U.S. Virgin Islands recovery effort is usvirecovery.org.

Other resources for information include:

Government House: informusvi.com

VITEMA: vialert.gov

VITEMA Facebook: <https://www.facebook.com/vitema>

Government House Facebook: <https://www.facebook.com/GovernmentHouseUSVI/>

The Department of Tourism: www.usviupdate.com

Emergency Operation Centers:

(340) 773-2244 (St. Croix)

(340) 776-2244 (St. John)

(340) 774-2244 (St. Thomas)



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