

COMMERCIAL FLIGHTS RESUME IN ST. THOMAS

Progress continues on power restoration, road clearing, debris collection

U.S. VIRGIN ISLANDS - Noting "today was a better day than it was yesterday", Governor of the U.S. Virgin Islands Kenneth E. Mapp reported on Thursday not only were roads being cleared but also debris was being collected from the sides of the roads. The restoration of power, he added, was "inching its way forward", while the Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA), working with local counterparts, was progressing with its provision of water to homes.

Updating members of the media at his daily press conference following Hurricanes Irma and Maria, which devastated large swaths of the Territory, Governor Mapp also reported St. Thomas' Cyril E. King Airport opened to commercial flights as planned with both American Airlines and Delta Air Lines operating services to the mainland United States on Thursday.

Seaborne Airlines has resumed limited seaplane services between the downtown areas of St. Croix and St. Thomas, offering about three flights a day and walk-up one-way fares of \$70 between the two islands. Flights between airports in St. Croix and St. Thomas will resume soon. "We can expect to see more robust travel as we move ahead," the Governor said.

About a thousand people are expected to sail tomorrow on Royal Caribbean Cruises' Adventure of the Seas mercy mission to Fort Lauderdale. The vessel, docking in St. Croix Friday morning, will collect additional passengers from the St. Thomas/St. John district before its two-day sail to South Florida.

Limetree Bay Terminals operated a charter flight to Miami Thursday evening, offering 50 complimentary seats to passengers. Visitors who had remained on the island as well as local residents with special medical needs were evacuated on the special charter operation. JetBlue Airways will operate an additional mercy flight Friday, accommodating 100 passengers from the St. Thomas airport.

The business community on St. Croix is invited to a meeting with the Governor and his leadership team to discuss recovery efforts at Government House on Saturday, September 30 at 1 p.m. The Governor said he wanted feedback from the business community and to hear how the government could help them with their recovery. Commissioner of Tourism Beverly Nicholson-Doty; Police Commissioner Delroy Richards, Sr.; Executive Director of the Virgin Islands Port Authority (VIPA) David Mapp; Executive Director of the Virgin Islands Water and Power Authority (WAPA) Julio Rhymer; and Marvin Pickering, Director of the Bureau of Internal Revenue, were invited to join the Governor at the meeting.

On Friday and Saturday, the Points of Distribution (POD) for food and water supplies will operate on St. Croix only, between the hours of 12 p.m. and 4 p.m., before resuming across the Territory on Monday. Once again the Governor encouraged Virgin Islanders to use time over the weekend to attend services at places of worship.

Bureau of Internal Revenue Director Pickering advised that all remaining 2017 income tax due dates have been extended to January 31, 2018.

On the challenges with cell phone service, the Governor told reporters AT&T had a barge en route from the mainland U.S. to the Territory filled with equipment needed to get the cell towers operational.

Anyone experiencing psychological distress as a result of the hurricanes can call the Disaster Distress Helpline at 1-800-985-5990 (press 2 for Spanish). The helpline provides free, confidential and multilingual counseling and crisis support. The helpline can also be reached via SMS by texting *talkwithus* (for English) or *hablanos* (for Spanish) to 1-212-461-4635.

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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