GOVERNMENT OF THE VIRGIN ISLANDS

PRESS RELEASE

Tel: (284)468-2730
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VI to Host Regional Emergency Responders Training

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The Virgin Islands is hosting a team of 15 Caribbean first response personnel as they carry out a field deployment training and exercise from February 23 to 28.

The training is being led by the Caribbean Disaster Emergency Management Agency (CDEMA) and will also include 16 VI police and fire officers. The main objective is to prepare participants for deployment as part of the CARICOM Disaster Relief Unit to support requests by CDEMA participating states who need assistance responding to a disaster.

Director of Disaster Management Mr. Jasen Penn said the training will improve response capacity for the Caribbean by enabling rapid deployment of qualified personnel.

“Training like this enhances the resilience of the entire region,” Mr. Penn said, adding, “Our officers and the participants from neighbouring islands gain experience working together and practise responding to a major multi-island impact.”

The session will also be an opportunity for regional responders to get to know local officers and geographic challenges in the event of a major impact in the Virgin Islands, Mr. Penn said. He noted that previous deployments assisted in the responses to Hurricane Beryl, the La Soufriere eruption, and Hurricane Melissa. The last time a team was deployed to the Virgin Islands was in 2017 after Hurricane Irma.

Training will begin with classroom type sessions on Emergency Operations Centre procedures, telecommunications and other field skills necessary for setting up operations in a recently impacted location.

Participants will test their skills in the field with a practical exercise on Friday and Saturday. The scenario will be a Category 4 hurricane that impacts Tortola and Virgin Gorda, requiring participants to establish a base of operations on the sister island, then connect with the Virgin Islands national emergency operations centre and regional operations centre.

About the Department of Disaster Management:

The Department of Disaster Management was established to protect lives and maintain a resilient, sustainable economy and society by fostering comprehensive disaster management and climate change adaptation as a way of life. The Virgin Islands disaster management programme is accredited by the Emergency Management Accreditation Programme.

About the CARICOM Disaster Relief Unit:

The unit is comprised of 35-40 officers with varying skill sets spanning command and coordination, logistics and relief management, emergency telecommunications, medical care, engineering, and the skilled trades. CDRU officers are ordinarily members of the disciplined forces across the Caribbean, including: Royal Antigua and Barbuda Defence Force (ABDF), Royal Bahamas Defence Force (RBDF), Barbados Defence Force (BDF), Belize Defence Force (BzDF), Guyana Defence Force (GDF), Jamaica Defence Force (JDF), Saint Kitts and Nevis Defence Force (SKNDF), Trinidad and Tobago Defence Force (TTDF), Defence Force of Haiti (HDF), the Suriname National Army (SNA); or the Police Service Departments, Fire Service Departments, Coast Guard Units, Marine Police Units, or Military Air Wings of CDEMA participating states

Note to editors: Photo included

Caption: Participants take part in the March, 2025, CARICOM Disaster Relief Unit (CDRU) training programme held in Barbados. (Credit: CDEMA)

For Additional Information Contact:

Chrystall Kanyuck-Abel

Information & Education Manager

Department of Disaster Management

Telephone: 468-4200

Email: ckanyuck-abel@gov.vg

Additional Documents or Media

- press_release_vi_to_host_regional_emergency_responders_training.pdf