GOVERNMENT OF THE VIRGIN ISLANDS

PRESS RELEASE

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More Than 6,000 Join Tsunami Exercise in VI

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Six thousand thirty-two students, public officers and others in the Virgin Islands took part in the Caribe Wave tsunami preparedness exercise on March 19.

The exercise saw participants beginning with the earthquake preparedness response of drop, cover and hold; followed by evacuation to high ground or inland for those along the coast, in keeping with best practices for tsunami safety, explained Director of Disaster Management Mr. Jasen Penn.

“A major goal of this exercise is to give the community a chance to walk through the steps they would take in the event of a tsunami warning,” Mr. Penn said, adding that the Virgin Islands is in a highly seismically active area, so tsunamis are a serious threat.

Mr. Penn said he was pleased to note an increase in participation this year from the private sector, including some key hotels who are refining emergency and contingency plans.

“We appreciate that so many in the private sector are willing to join these critical but voluntary safety exercises, as we know this is a very busy time of year for the hospitality industry,” Mr. Penn said, adding that Department of Disaster Management officers look forward to supporting a number of tourism businesses who were unable to join Caribe Wave with site-specific exercises later this year.

This year was also the first time Caribe Wave was integrated with the National Science Fair, with attendees practising vertical evacuation together, and learning about tsunami safety from DDM and Ministry of Education, Youth Affairs and Sports officers.

Early feedback indicates that the exercise was valuable, with participants noting that sirens, the app, and social media messaging were widely heard or received. The public is encouraged to continue to share observations or suggestions on the Caribe Wave exercise at www.surveymonkey.com/r/feedbacksurvey2026.

Regionally, the exercise allows authorities to test communication and coordination procedures.

Tsunami information statements for the Virgin Islands originate with the Pacific Tsunami Warning Centre. After that, either DDM or the Royal Virgin Islands Police activates the National Early Warning Multi-hazard Alert System to alert the Virgin Islands population.

Individuals or organisations with questions about their tsunami or other emergency plans can contact the Department at (284) 468-2400 or ddm@gov.vg for free advice and support.

Caribe Wave is coordinated locally by the DDM. It is sponsored by the UNESCO/IOC Intergovernmental Coordination Group for Tsunami and Other Coastal Hazards Warning System for the Caribbean and Adjacent Regions (ICG/CARIBE-EWS), in coordination with the Caribbean Emergency Management Agency (CDEMA), the Centro de Coordinación para la Prevención de los Desastres Naturales en América Central (CEPREDENAC), EMIZA Antilles, and the U.S. National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration (NOAA).

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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.

For Additional Information Contact:

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