



PRESS RELEASE

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Environmental Health Advises on Sargassum and Pipe Water Safety

Thursday August 28—The Environmental Health Division is advising the public of the associated dangers of the heavy accumulations of sargassum seaweed and its impact on the Territory's water systems.

Acting Chief Environmental Health Officer, Ms. Henrietta Alexander said when large amounts of sargassum decompose, they release substances that may affect the taste and smell of pipe-borne water, damage water pipes and treatment plants and increase the risk of bacterial growth in the water supply.

The division is therefore advising the public of the following measures to keep themselves and their families safe:

- Do not drink if pipe water has an unfamiliar smell, taste or color.
- Use bottled water for drinking, cooking and brushing teeth if there are changes in water quality.
- Ensure cistern water is properly disinfected and filtered before household use. Cisterns should be cleaned biannually or annually and chlorinated routinely especially after consistent rainfall to reduce the risk of contamination.
- Report any concerns with water quality to the Water and Sewerage Department or Environmental Health Division.

Sargassum is a type of free-floating brown algae that forms large, floating mats in the world's oceans, particularly in tropical and temperate waters. Unlike most seaweeds that attach to the seafloor, Sargassum remains buoyant due to its gas-filled bubbles. It also serves as a vital habitat, food source, and nursery for a diverse array of marine life, including turtles, fish, crabs, and birds.

MORE

The Environmental Health Division continues to closely monitor the sargassum situation and will provide further updates as necessary. For more information, contact the Environmental Health Division at (284) 468-5110 or ehd@gov.vg.

The Ministry of Health and Social Development is committed to improving the health of the people of the Virgin Islands.

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