

WSVI-WZVI-Quarterly Issues and Problems Report
From April 1, 2022-June 30 2022

WSVI TV returned to the air on September 20, 2019. On September 21, 2018 WZVI returned to the air in a testing mode at low power. It remains our goal to return to the air as soon as possible. To serve the public during this time Alpha Broadcasting attempted to maintain a 24/7 live stream of its programming incorporating many of its program elements. This report is prepared for continuity for the public file system and reflects some of the issues and concerns guiding our online and streaming coverage of our community.

Unsolved Murders and Crime Wave addressed

WSVI-TV Channel 8 aired a 37 minute plea complete with video from the Virgin Islands Police Department regarding unsolved crimes from January 1 2022 to June 30, 2022. The broadcast featured the Criminal Investigation Bureau Chief, Lieutenant Naomi Joseph where she pleaded with residents to help the police solve numerous serious crimes in the territory.

“When we get to the crime scene the crime has already happened. The individual is already dead or removed and taken to the hospital. We get to a crime scene where all the witnesses that were there have already vacated.

“We then have to come and put a puzzle together without all the pieces and the pieces that we’re missing are the individuals who were there, who saw, who know,” Lieutenant Joseph said in the broadcast.

She shared that from January to June 2022, officers had already recorded 169 cases and had arrested 35 people. Seventeen (17) of those arrested were in connection to gun crimes.

She said that a total of 43 guns were removed from the streets between January 2022 to June 2022 which include 35 hand guns, 2 air pistols, 4 rifles, 1 BB-gun and 1 air rifle. This was accomplished with tips from residents and police patrols, she added.

“By the 20th of July we had 24 homicides. I pray not to pass this but I know I’ll be unrealistic in believing that we have all decided to put our guns down but I’m hoping that the community can help these families,” the officer remarked.

On January 17, 17-year-olds Odonnie Heywood and Jahny Ledesma were gunned down in Castle Coakley, becoming the first two homicide victims for 2022.

Lieutenant Joseph said officers found over 250 spent cases on that scene describing it as “a war with two 17-year-olds and an adult who was the driver.”

A number of people were also killed inside their homes in the first half of this year. According to information from the police, in 2019, they recorded 22 homicides, 26 in 2020 and 32 in 2021. So far this year, only 13 homicides have been reported to police. For the 2022 homicides, the department has been able to solve only one so far.

Meanwhile, Lieutenant Joseph spoke on the need for more prosecutors, telling Virgin Islanders that the police is only a part of the system required to solve crimes.

"Maybe what we need is more prosecutors on the bench but until that happens, because we only have one, we're stuck with what we have."

She emphasized that the police alone cannot prosecute and bring justice to these crimes, explaining that the other arms of law enforcement including the court must work with them to accomplish this.

"If the court tells me I cannot get a warrant to come and search the house that you told me have guns, and you know have guns and the court is telling me I can't go in, [then] I can't go in," she said.

WSVI-TV aired the program with constant reminders to the audience they can help the police by calling the toll free anonymous tip line 800-222-TIPS and possibly receive a reward of up to \$25,000.

Covid 19 in the Virgin Islands

While Covid numbers in the Virgin Islands are down quarter over quarter, economic suffering continues to be an issue. WSVI-TV provided extensive coverage weekly throughout the quarter to the Virgin Islands government update. USVI Government Communications Director Richard Motta announced that assistance will be made available through the Department of Human Services.

Low-income families with children who currently receive assistance through the Temporary Assistance for Needy Families (TANF) are being told that Pandemic Emergency Assistance (P-EBT) is now available to them between July and September this year. The fund will cover Virgin Islands family households with a combined maximum income of \$50,000 and a minor younger than 18 years old. Families must apply to receive these funds.

The funding for the Pandemic Emergency Assistance is authorized under the America Rescue Plan which provides funding to states and territories to assist needy families impacted by Covid-19. DHS Commissioner Kimberly Causey-Gomez told the Consortium that 100 households in the territory are currently on the program, which is administered through D.H.S.'s Division of Family Assistance.

Individuals with questions are asked to contact the Territorial PEAFF2 Hotline at (340) 772-7120.

WSVI-TV reported in the quarter the territory has also significantly loosened COVID-related travel restrictions and requirements for domestic and international travelers alike.

WSVI-TV carried as it does each week the update from the Virgin Islands Department of Health on the Covid situation. At the end of the quarter, Dr. Esther Ellis, the territory's epidemiologist, said there are 178 cases of the virus in the Virgin Islands. There are 98 on St. Croix, 68 on St. Thomas, and St. John has 12 for a positivity rate of 10.5 percent. Six people are hospitalized, with one on a ventilator. Juan F. Luis Hospital has four inpatients, and there are two at the Schneider Regional Medical Center.

Ellis announced that the VITEMA services have been discontinued and outlined the new vaccine schedule and locations.

WSVI-TV in its news program broadcast details of the new vaccination schedule that has been reduced because of the lessening of covid cases. On St. Croix, the Charles Harwood Hospital modular 1 will host vaccines on Mondays and Wednesdays from 9 a.m. to 4 p.m. Children's shots will be found under the tent at Charles Harwood on Fridays from 8 a.m. to 4 p.m.

COVID testing will be available in the Harwood parking lot Monday through Friday from 9:30-10:30 a.m. Ellis added that motorists must park in the new parking lot across the street from the modular. The curbside is for drop-offs only.

Every broadcast day during this period Channel 8 TV has been airing 2 two-hour blocks of special programming focusing on the many unique challenges faced by the Caribbean in coping with the Covid Crisis between 2 and 4 PM and 8 to 10 PM. Much of the information from the mainland about covid has scant relevance to the unique geo-socio circumstances of the Virgin Islands. Therefore Channel 8 made a concerted effort to develop unique programming on a daily basis.

Typical topics have been

- Crisis in at Home Schooling and the psychological development of the Caribbean child.
- Domestic Violence issues during stay at home orders
- The shutdown of the tourism industry due to covid
- Issues of import to boat operators who face rules and restrictions in our anchorages.
- Rise in Crime
- Special Education students and the challenges of home schooling.

We have worked closely with the Virgin Islands Department of Health, The Virgin Islands Police Department, The Virgin Islands Department of Education and many other agencies to fill these daily program blocks.

WSVI-TV has been broadcasting four half hour programs everyday since March 15, 2020 focusing on the Covid 19 crisis and the unique challenges faced by the Caribbean community of which the Virgin Islands is part. While all American based media viewed in the Virgin Islands focuses largely on the Covid crisis in the lower 48 states, the social, economic and health issues in Latin America and the Caribbean are of particular relevance to people in the USVI. Additionally, Channel 8 airs 20 public service announcements daily from agencies such as the Caribbean Public Health Authority, the World Health Organizations, the Centers for Disease Control in Atlanta and the Virgin Islands Department of health.

Additionally, WSVI has been reporting through 12 local news broadcasts daily news of the following developments.

Channel 8 news carried news of the Department of Health's concern that researchers and news sources have published that the mortality rate for COVID-19 in the U.S. Virgin Islands could top the world in per capita pandemic deaths.

Channel 8 news carried news of the U.S. Virgin Islands is reinforcing critical public health messaging like symptom-monitoring, infection prevention and ways to avoid the spread of disease into our territory. The health department is monitoring the health trends in the Virgin Islands community on a daily basis to help identify any possible cases of COVID-19.

The 2022 Atlantic Hurricane Season set to begin

WSVI-TV began airing news and other programming in Q1 2022 in advance of the 2022 Atlantic hurricane season is an upcoming event in the annual tropical cyclone season in the Northern Hemisphere.

The 2022 Atlantic hurricane season is the current cycle of the annual tropical cyclone season in the Atlantic Ocean in the Northern Hemisphere. The season officially began on June 1, and will end on November 30. These dates, adopted by convention, historically describe the period in each year when most subtropical or tropical cyclogenesis occurs in the Atlantic Ocean. This year's first named storm, Tropical Storm Alex, developed five days after the start of the season, making this the first season since 2014 not to have a pre-season named storm. [About a month later, Tropical Storm Bonnie formed and quickly made landfall along the Costa Rica-Nicaragua border. While there have been no named storms so far in the WSVI-TV broadcast area, heavy rain and localized flooding developed in June 2022 across the viewing area from some strong but otherwise unorganized tropical waves.

Channel 8 News reporting indicated residents living in the US Virgin Islands should be prepared for "an above-average probability for major hurricanes making landfall" near their homes, researchers said. Hurricane season begins officially in June and lasts through November.

WSVI-TV's news reports on the 2022 predictions quoted one researcher as saying "As is the case with all hurricane seasons, coastal residents are reminded that it only takes one hurricane making landfall to make it an active season for them,". "They should prepare the same for every season, regardless of how much activity is predicted."

Channel 8 began broadcasting programming presented by the territorial emergency management system VITEMA with its director Daryl Jashen urging residents to be prepared by taking particular steps. These programs were aired in the Channel 8 12 daily local news shows and during our special Covid coverage. Particular attention was paid to Covid related precautions that were being prepared for Virgin Islands Shelters by VITEMA

BASIC PREPAREDNESS TIPS

Know Where to Go

If you are ordered to evacuate, know the local hurricane evacuation route(s) to take and have a plan for where you can stay. Contact your local emergency management agency for more information.

Put together a Disaster Supply Kit

Your disaster supply kit should include a flashlight, batteries, cash, first aid supplies, medications, and copies of your critical information if you need to evacuate.

Take pictures of your important documentation and email them to your secured email to ensure you are able to access them, keep copies and files on a flashdrive that you can carry with you on your house or car keys.

If you are not in an area that is advised to evacuate, and you decide to stay in your home, plan for adequate supplies in case you lose power and water for several days and you are not able to leave due to flooding or blocked roads.

Pet Emergency Kits

In an emergency, your pets will be even more dependent on you for their safety and well-being. Your family's disaster plans must include your furry family members too.

Communicate

Talk with your family about what to do if a hurricane strikes. Include emergency plans for elderly and disabled family members. Discussing hurricanes ahead of time helps reduce fear, particularly for younger children. Make an emergency communication plan (visit ready.gov Make a Plan) and ensure all household members are aware of the plan.

WSVI-TV devoted extensive coverage the tropical weather predictions as it does every year.

WSVI TV began extensive hourly updates on the tropical weather conditions of the Caribbean in Q1 2017. These reports were carried in Spanish and English with open captions for the hearing impair and using Charts from the National Weather Service in San Juan Puerto Rico. These programs were also broadcast on WSVI-TV's Facebook page and regular updates on rip currents and tides as well as a Marine Forecast were reported.



Natural Disasters effective the Virgin Islands and its neighbors

Earthquakes Rattle the Virgin Islands

A series of earthquakes and aftershocks rattled through the Virgin Islands during Q4 2021 raising many questions in our news programs by newsmakers and local residents about just how prepared the Virgin Islands to defend against hurricane and Tsunami destruction.

CHANNEL 8 REMAINS OPERATIONAL ON INTERNET THROUGHOUT THE PERIOD.

Channel 8 maintained contact with its viewers in the Virgin Islands and outside the territory through social media and online via its website at www.wsvi.tv.