

WSVI-WZVI-Quarterly Issues and Problems Report  
From October 1, 2023-December 31, 2023

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.

### Financial woes beset the Virgin Islands

Governor Albert Bryan acknowledged and addressed concerns about the administration's finances, including its ability to pay vendors across the territory. He explained that work is ongoing to secure government vendor funding until additional revenue is collected later this year during tax season. Bryan offered assurance that funds would be available for local vendors to continue operations and services across the islands.

### Government Finances and Tax Amnesty Program Extension

"I want to take the opportunity to clarify some of the current financial challenges that the territory is facing, particularly regarding the timely payment to our government vendors," Bryan said.

Bryan explained that government funding typically slows down before tax season each year, and government cash flow is currently limited. Financial options are being considered to obtain additional resources to bridge any gaps in incoming revenue in the short term. The governor said he is confident that economic issues will improve. More detailed information about the current state of the V.I. economy will be shared during the "2024 State of the Territory Address" on Jan. 22.

"I want to assure you that there is absolutely no cause for alarm," Bryan said. "We fully expect our revenue collections will increase and align with our projects in the next month or two," he continued.

"My team and I are actively working to address our immediate cash flow problems. More importantly, we are focusing on developing a long-term solution to stabilize our government expenses, especially when our government expenses outpace our revenue collection," Bryan stated.

In addition to addressing concerns about revenue collection, Bryan announced an extension of a tax amnesty program through January, allowing residents to avoid penalties on overdue payments for income tax or the gross receipts tax.

“I’m announcing the extension of the penalty abatement program until Jan. 31, 2024. That’s a fancy way of saying, ‘We’re giving you a further tax holiday,’” Bryan said.

“This program applies to corporate and individual income taxes and gross receipts taxes. The program is a short-term incentive program, available to those taxpayers who are willing to meet the requirements of the program,” according to information available on the Virgin Islands Bureau of Internal Revenue website. Channel 8 promoted the government offer to the public in its news programs advising residents that they can read more information about the program at [BIR.VI.GOV](http://BIR.VI.GOV), and individuals with questions can call the IRB office on St. Croix at 340-773-1040 or the IRB office on St. Thomas at 340-715-1040.

Atlantic Hurricane Season impact the US Virgin Islands and surrounding areas  
Channel 8 news daily covered the early forecasts and predictions about the Atlantic Hurricane season 2023 to give the community an opportunity to prepare accordingly. AccuWeather forecasters issued early predictions for the 2023 Atlantic hurricane season that expect activity to be lower than the majority of seasons since 1995.

New environmental impacts noted in the Virgin Islands from storms hundreds of miles away.

For example in Q3-September Hurricane Lee generated big swells along northern Caribbean while it churns through open waters Hurricane Lee whipped up waves of more than 15 feet (5 meters) on Monday as the Category 3 storm cranked through open waters just north of the Caribbean region.

The storm was located about 410 miles (655 kilometers) north-northwest of the northern Leeward and Virgin Islands, according to the National Hurricane Center. It had maximum sustained winds of 115 mph (185 kph) and was moving northwest at 7 mph (11 kph).

Channel 8 news issued advisories that a high surf advisory was issued for Puerto Rico and the U.S. Virgin Islands, with the National Weather Service warning of breaking waves of up to 15 feet (5 meters) for north and east-facing beaches.

Following a prolific pair of hurricane seasons in 2020 and 2021, last year’s storm activity in the Atlantic Ocean fell short of those record-breaking totals after just 14 storms formed off the back of a slow start to the season. Forecasters said coastal cities could bank on a similar frequency of tropical storms and hurricanes in the coming months.

Scientists at NOAA’s Climate Prediction Center — a division of the National Weather Service — have increased their prediction for the ongoing 2023 Atlantic hurricane season from a near-normal level of activity to an above-normal level of activity with today’s update. Forecasters believe that current ocean and atmospheric conditions,

such as record-warm Atlantic sea surface temperatures, are likely to counterbalance the usually limiting atmospheric conditions associated with the ongoing El Nino event.

NOAA forecasters have increased the likelihood of an above-normal Atlantic hurricane season to 60% (increased from the outlook issued in May, which predicted a 30% chance). The likelihood of near-normal activity has decreased to 25%, down from the 40% chances outlined in May's outlook. This new update gives the Atlantic a 15% chance of seeing a below-normal season.

NOAA's update to the 2023 outlook — which covers the entire six-month hurricane season that ends on Nov. 30 — calls for 14-21 named storms (winds of 39 mph or greater), of which 6-11 could become hurricanes (winds of 74 mph or greater). Of those, 2-5 could become major hurricanes (winds of 111 mph or greater). NOAA provides these ranges with a 70% confidence. These updated ranges include storms that have already formed this season. Current projections show the 2023 season will have between 11 to 15 named storms, with four to eight of those storms reaching hurricane strength.

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

Channel 8 promoted in its news programs public awareness of the availability of Sandbags for using in preventing in home flooding

#### Filling:

- Fill sandbags one-half full.

- Use sand if readily available.

- Fold the top of sandbag down and rest the bag on its folded top.

#### Placing:

- Take care in stacking sandbags.

- Limit placement to three layers unless you have a building or wall to use as a backing. You can also stack sandbags in a pyramid.

- Tamp each sandbag into place, completing each layer before starting the next layer.

- Clear a path between buildings for debris flow.

- Lay a plastic sheet in between the building and the bags to control the flow and prevent water from seeping through openings like sliding glass doors.

### 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](https://www.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.

#### Disaster Preparedness in the Virgin Islands

Channel 8 News promoted attendance at and aired extensive excerpts from the USVI's Governor's Americans with Disabilities Act) ADA Office and the Department of Human Services have partnered with VITEMA, VI Association of Independent Living, Disability Rights Center of the VI, VI University Center of Excellence for Developmental Disabilities (VIUCEDD), and many other government, disability and aging partners in the community hosted a territory-wide "Disaster Preparedness in a COVID-19 Environment Expo" for adults with disabilities and independent senior citizens.

Apart from the ADA Office and the Department of Human Services, participating agencies include the Department of Health, VI Association for Independent Living, Disability Rights Center of the VI, VIUCEDD, FEMA, VITEMA, VIPD, Department of Public Works, VI Fire Services, Office of Gun Violence Prevention, American Red Cross, WAPA, VIYA, AARP, viNGN, St. Thomas and St. Croix Rescue, and other divisions.

The event highlighted local health and disaster preparedness efforts by these entities to include critical information you may need in the coming months,

registration for free services, COVID-19 testing, education on monkeypox, sandbag distributions, 'go bags' and what should be in them, procedures to both secure and store medication and equipment before, during and after disasters, emergency radio demonstrations for people with and without hearing impairments, and much more. Personal Protective Equipment (PPE), along with other health and disaster preparedness resources, will be distributed at each station and light refreshments and lunch will be provided.

The Virgin Islands Department of Health published information for our viewers that is specific to the Virgin Islands. We have incorporated this information into our broadcasts.

### Staying with Friends or Family

If you plan to stay with friends or family outside your household when you evacuate from a storm, talk to them about how to protect yourselves and those you are staying with from COVID-19:

Does either household have someone at high risk of getting very sick from COVID-19, including older adults or people of any age who have certain medical conditions? Make sure everyone knows what they can do to keep them safe from COVID-19. Consider taking rapid COVID-19 tests if possible before sharing living spaces. This is especially important before gathering with individuals with certain medical conditions, older adults, those who are immunocompromised, or people who are not up to date on their COVID-19 vaccines, including children who cannot get vaccinated yet.

Ventilate the home to the extent you can. If you have power, you can use fans and portable HEPA air cleaners, and run your HVAC fan continuously. After the storm passes, if it is safe to do so, you can open windows and doors. Follow everyday preventive actions, including covering coughs and sneezes, washing your hands often, and avoiding touching your eyes, nose, and mouth with unwashed hands. Know what to do if someone in your family or in the household you are staying with becomes sick with COVID-19.

### Further impacts of Climate change felt in the Virgin Islands

Recently viewers of Channel 8 experienced high temperatures and excessive heat indices experienced across the USVI and Puerto Rico which have created dangerous conditions for the health of individuals across the islands. The extraordinarily high heat index levels resulted in multiple weather alerts, including a "Heat Advisory" for portions of the USVI. The hot temperatures even made national headlines, including weather alerts on Fox Weather and NBC News.

With the hot weather occurring relatively early in the season, residents and visitors in the USVI may be wondering if this type of heat is expected to be typical according

to historical records, as well as questioning whether or not the high temperatures are expected to continue, especially if related to climate change.

### 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.

There was an uptick in cases in the USVI and the neighboring territory of the British Virgin Islands during the quarter.

During weekly broadcast updates aired on Channel 8, Commissioner of Health Justa E. Encarnacion expressed gratitude to the Virgin Islands Community for their continued attention during COVID-19 and urges everyone to remain vigilant as active cases are rising throughout the Territory. Though increases in numbers is expected based on national trends, Commissioner Encarnacion wishes to reinforce the importance of the critical messages and overarching requirements provided to the public during the pandemic.

The BVI's Chief Medical Officer Dr. Ronald Georges is advising persons to self-isolate if they have tested positive for the COVID-19 disease.

Dr. Georges said while the disease is no longer a global health emergency and infection rates, hospitalisation and deaths are at the lowest levels in two years, persons are still advised to self-isolate.

The CMO stated, "COVID-19 continues to be present albeit at much lower levels than previously. Exposure risk will vary based on multiple factors and most persons who test positive with the disease continue to have mild disease."

According to Dr. Georges, factors which increase the risk of severe disease are persons 50 years and older, those with immunocompromised or weakened immune systems and individuals with underlying health conditions especially diabetes, hypertension, and heart disease.

Persons who are concerned or have symptoms of the disease should conduct a home test or visit a health care provider who can carry out a COVID-19 rapid test.

"Those who have tested positive for COVID-19 should see their physician or general practitioner to obtain the necessary sick leave certificate to facilitate home self-isolation," Dr. Georges advised. He added, "Individuals who test positive should also take the necessary precautions to protect others in their household and refrain from contact with persons outside their household until symptoms have cleared."

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.

#### Additional Public Health Threats in the US Virgin Islands

While much of the coverage on WSVI was given over to Covid 19, researchers recently discovered the severity of the dengue fever prevalence in U.S. territories in the Caribbean, with a study revealing that more than half of kids in the U.S. Virgin Islands have had the illness and this has been covered extensively by us in alerting the public to a resurgence of dengue fever.

Last month, the U.S. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) released an updated report on the dengue fever cases among children and adolescents in the U.S. Virgin Islands.

After examining blood samples from more than 350 children aged 9 to 13 in the area between April and May 2022, the research team found that about 51% have had dengue fever based on the antibodies present in their blood.

Testing for a prior infection is needed because a second dengue infection is more dangerous and deadlier than the first bout. Also, only those who have had a prior infection could receive the dengue vaccine.

In the U.S., the only vaccine approved by the Food and Drug Administration (FDA) is Dengvaxia. It was approved by the agency in 2019 and became available last year for children aged 9 to 16 who have had a previous infection, according to USA Today.

Puerto Rico also witnessed a spike in cases last year. It recorded more than 800 cases, up from 2021's 509. It is worth noting that dengue is endemic to the two tropical U.S. territories in the Caribbean Sea.

"Diseases like dengue are increasing in many impoverished communities. Communities in the global south contribute to climate change much less — orders of magnitude less — than developed countries. And yet, they're bearing the burden," Dr. Gaurab Basu told the news outlet.

Basu is a primary care physician and health equity fellow at Harvard University's Center for Climate, Health and the Global Environment.

Based on CDC data, cases and hospitalizations across Puerto Rico and the U.S. Virgin Islands are highest among children and teens aged 10 to 19. About 44% of kids and adolescents in Puerto Rico have had dengue infection.

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 Q3 2023 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. The local Virgin Islands Emergency Management Agency (Vitema) used Channel 8 to promote a text message service provided to the public to advise on all significant earth tremors. We have also put out the message about the month Tsunami warning tests through the USVI.

A moderate quake rocked the U.S. Virgin Islands toward the end of Q3 but fortunately, it wasn't strong enough to trigger a tsunami there and there's no tsunami threat to nearby Puerto Rico or the U.S. East Coast at this time. According to USGS, at 4:27 am ET this morning, a magnitude 3.9 earthquake struck from a depth of 49 km just north of the U.S. and British Virgin Islands. There have been no reports of any injuries or damage.

The earthquake was the strongest to strike the Virgin Islands in the last 30 days according to USGS. The earthquake was one of hundreds that have struck the area near Puerto Rico and the Virgin Islands over the last 30 days. According to USGS, there have been 332 earthquakes in this region over the last 30 days, with 216 at a magnitude 2.5 or greater and 8 a magnitude 4.0 or greater event. Generally, earthquakes with a magnitude of 2.0 or greater can be felt by most people.

**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](http://www.wsvi.tv).