



PRESS RELEASE

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EARTHQUAKE AND TSUNAMI EXERCISE SET FOR MARCH 21

The Department of Disaster Management (DDM) is encouraging Virgin Islands residents to participate in the 2024 Caribe Wave regional earthquake and tsunami exercise set for March 21.

The purpose of the exercise is to evaluate Territorial tsunami response plans, increase tsunami preparedness, and improve coordination throughout the region.

Director of Disaster Management Mr. Jasen Penn said the 2021 New Zealand and Tonga tsunamis have reminded us all that tsunamis are more than hazards of history.

Mr. Penn said, “Worldwide, there is an urgent need to be more prepared for such events. “This year, we will be testing internal response plans, activating components of the National Early Warning Multi-hazard Alert System, and encouraging schools and businesses to test their tsunami evacuation procedures along with us.”

The exercise will include public notification via the early warning sirens, National Emergency Broadcast System, the DDM Alert mobile app and VHF radio. The entire Public Service is expected to participate, and individuals and private sector businesses are urged to join.

DDM will join partners from the Pacific Tsunami Warning Centre for a regional emergency communications test as part of Caribe Wave.

This year’s exercise scenario is a magnitude 8.7 earthquake in the Puerto Rico Trench at approximately 10:00 a.m., followed by a tsunami. It is based on the 1787 Boricua Earthquake, which caused extensive damage in Puerto Rico.

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To sign up, persons are asked to complete the brief survey at <https://www.surveymonkey.com/r/caribewave2024>. Then, on March 21st, listen for the activation of the National Early Warning Multi-hazard Alert System a few minutes after 10:00 a.m. Persons are asked to begin by practising the earthquake safety response of DROP, COVER and HOLD for 60 seconds, then proceed to your tsunami assembly area.

The Virgin Islands has participated in annual tsunami exercises since 2009. The Territory was first recognised by UNESCO/IOC as Tsunami Ready in 2014. Persons planning a home or business evacuation as part of the exercise are encouraged to use tsunami evacuation maps available on the [DDM website](#).

If any real threat occurs during the exercise, the exercise will be terminated.

Caribe Wave is coordinated locally by DDM. Regionally, 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 Disaster Emergency Management Agency (CDEMA), the Centro de Coordinación para la Prevención de los Desastres Naturales en América Central (CEPREDENAC), EMIZA Antillas, and the U.S. National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration (NOAA).

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Note to editors: Image attached

Caption: Elmore Stoutt High School students join a previous Caribe Wave tsunami evacuation by heading to their assembly area. (Credit: DDM file photo)