

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE**Government House Communications****Contacts:** _____ Kimberly Jones, Director

Samuel Topp, Deputy Director

**GOVERNOR MAPP PROCLAIMS THE MONTH OF MARCH
TSUNAMI AWARENESS MONTH**

(St. Croix, USVI, March 13, 2015) Kenneth E. Mapp, Governor of the United States Virgin Islands, by virtue of the authority vested in him, by the Revised Organic Act of 1954, as amended, proclaimed the month of March 2015, as *Tsunami Awareness Month* within the United States Virgin Islands and encourages our residents and visitors to learn all they can regarding tsunamis in order to evacuate as quickly as possible when necessary.

The Virgin Islands has not experienced a tsunami event since 1867, when 30 people lost their lives and physical damage to coastal communities and shipping was immense, demonstrating that tsunamis are a very dangerous natural threat to the Territory. Tsunamis are rare but they can occur at any time of the day or night. There is no season for tsunamis. Therefore, education is the key to saving lives. Everyone should know the natural warning signs for a tsunami because there may not be time to issue an official warning.

While residents and visitors in some regions of the world may have between 4 and 10 hours of preparation time to evacuate to higher ground in anticipation of a tsunami, the Virgin Islands remains at greater risk for tsunamis from local sources, from which the deadly waves may arrive within just 10 minutes. There would be no time for official warnings or evacuations. Although they occur with less frequency, regional tsunamis may also be triggered from across the Caribbean, arriving in 1 to 3 hours or across the Atlantic, taking 8 hours to arrive. Residents and visitors should immediately evacuate to high ground if they are near the water and feel a strong shaking from an earthquake or a tsunami warning is issued.

Between the Atlantic Ocean and the Caribbean Sea, and with daily seismic activities, the United States Virgin Islands is vulnerable to tsunamis, which are defined as ocean waves created by earthquakes, landslides, volcanic eruptions and other violent activities. Tsunamis have the potential to be devastating and deadly, as witnessed by the destruction in the Indian Ocean in 2004, American Samoa in 2009 and Japan in 2011. The potential threat of a tsunami urges us to test our warning system and practice safety and orderly evacuation..

The National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration (NOAA) and the National Tsunami Hazard Mitigation Program (NTHMP) have designated March 21-27, 2015 as Tsunami Awareness Week. In observance, NOAA's National Weather Service (NWS) together with the UNESCO

Intergovernmental Coordination Group for the Tsunami and Other Coastal Hazards Warning System for the Caribbean and Adjacent Regions (CARIBE EWS) will conduct tsunami response exercises on March 25 along the U.S. Gulf of Mexico, Atlantic and Pacific coasts, including Puerto Rico, the U.S. Virgin Islands, the British Virgin Islands, Alaska and Hawaii as well as 45 other countries and territories in the Caribbean and Northwestern Atlantic.

On March 25, 2015, a kickoff event in conjunction with Lantex Caribe Wave 15 will be held throughout the territory. Organized by NOAA, UNESCO CARIBE EWS, Caribbean Tsunami Warning Program (CTWP) and VITEMA, the event emphasizes tsunami education as the key to saving lives. The event will engage all segments of the community, including schools and faith-based organizations.

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