



19 August 2026

Government Calls for Stronger Safety Culture Across Marine Tourism Industry

The Government of The Virgin Islands, through the Marine Safety Investigation and Reporting Authority (MSIRA), is calling on marine operators and charter companies to strengthen safety practices following the recording of 20 accidents including collisions, groundings, and fires so far this year.

Chief Marine Accident Investigator Mr. Jerome Padmore said the figures reinforce the importance of competent operators, compliant vessels and the timely reporting of accidents and incidents. He warned that this data underscores the urgent need for better reporting, sharper situational awareness, and stronger operator competence.

Of the 20 accidents recorded, nine were collisions, representing 45 percent, nine were groundings, also accounting for 45 percent; and two were fires, representing 10 percent. Collisions and groundings combined accounted for 90 percent of all recorded occurrences.

“Statistics do not establish the cause of an individual accident, but they help identify where exposure is occurring and where attention may be needed,” Mr. Padmore said, adding: “These figures highlight the importance of navigational preparation, situational awareness, operator competence, effective lookout and sound decision-making.”

He made the remarks during the Marine Tourism Forum held on Wednesday 18 August at The Moorings and hosted by the Ministry of Financial Services, Economic Development and Digital Transformation and the Ministry of Tourism, Culture and Sustainable Development.

The Chief Marine Accident Investigator outlined four interconnected pillars of marine safety: competent operators, code-compliant vessels, effective accident reporting, and a strong safety culture, adding that no pillar can operate effectively on its own.

He reminded operators and charter companies that they have a legal responsibility to report marine accidents and incidents and to cooperate with safety investigations. MSIRA conducts impartial, independent investigations to determine what happened, why it happened and how recurrence can be prevented, in support of the Territory’s obligations under the relevant International Maritime Organization (IMO) framework.

Mr. Padmore reminded the marine industry stakeholders that, “Safety is a shared responsibility; no one individual or organization can make the change we need; it needs to be a collective effort. By raising standards together, we protect customers, businesses, the marine environment, and the reputation of The Virgin Islands as a leading marine tourism destination.”

He reiterated that a strong safety culture must be reflected in daily operations, including promptly addressing vessel defects, maintaining safety-critical equipment, conducting emergency drills, and ensuring that proper personal protective and life-saving equipment is always used.

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About:

The Marine Safety Investigation and Reporting Authority (MSIRA) operates under the Premier's Office and is the official body responsible for the independent investigation of marine accidents and incidents within the territorial waters of The Virgin Islands. Guided by the Merchant Shipping (Accident Reporting and Investigation) Regulations, 2020 and the International Maritime Organisation (IMO) Casualty Investigation Code, MSIRA's primary objective is to enhance maritime safety through fact-based investigations, the identification of safety issues, and the issuance of recommendations aimed at preventing future occurrences. MSIRA investigations do not seek to apportion blame or establish liability.