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DDM Joins Regional Call to Drought Preparedness

Director of Disaster Management Mr. Jasen Penn is encouraging the Virgin Islands community to take steps to protect and conserve water in light of regional forecasters' warnings that El Niño will continue into 2027.

"Hot and dry conditions in our region are a typical result from El Niño," Mr. Penn said, adding "Forecasters have warned that this present cycle will be a strong one, and may bring record high temperatures to the Caribbean into next spring."

Mr. Penn added that excessive heat and dry conditions leave the Territory at higher risk of certain hazards, especially drought and wildfire.

Mr. Penn said, "Slow onset hazards like drought sometimes take a backseat in the face of hurricane season and other pressing matters. The advice from our regional forecasters is a reminder that we must continue to treat water as a precious resource, and take extra precautions where fire is concerned."

In a statement from the Caribbean Institute of Meteorology and Hydrology (CIMH), Climatologist Dr. Cedric Van Meerbeeck warned that historically, El Niño is linked to severe droughts such as those in 2009–2010 and 2014–2016; and that it increases the risk of extreme humid heat, wildfires, and marine heatwaves that can trigger coral bleaching.

Dr. Van Meerbeeck also said that the forecast points to continued hot dry conditions in the Eastern Caribbean until at least October, adding that the combination of these conditions "will likely translate into drought conditions over most of the Windwards, Leeward and ABC Islands, portions of the Greater Antilles including parts of Jamaica and Hispaniola, as well as portions of The Bahamas by October/November 2026."

Mr. Penn also joined the CIMH forecasters in reminding residents that while the Atlantic Hurricane Season has been relatively quiet so far, residents should also remain storm ready as they head into the historically busiest portion of the season.

"The unfortunate reality is that risks like excessive heat and storms can occur together, so as a Territory we must work together to be as prepared as possible," Mr. Penn said.

Residents can access a variety of preparedness resources at <https://www.bviddm.com>.

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About the Department of Disaster Management:

The Department of Disaster Management was established to protect lives and maintain a resilient, sustainable economy and society by fostering comprehensive disaster management and climate change adaptation as a way of life. The Virgin Islands disaster management programme is accredited by the Emergency Management Accreditation Programme.

About the CIMH:

The Caribbean Institute for Meteorology and Hydrology (CIMH) is a training and research organisation formed by the amalgamation of the Caribbean Meteorological Institute (CMI) and Caribbean Operational Hydrological Institute (COHI). The role and mission of the CIMH is to improve the meteorological and hydrological services and to assist in promoting the awareness of the benefits of these services for the economic well-being of the CMO countries.

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