

ACT NO. 7185

BILL NO. 28-0221

TWENTY-EIGHTH LEGISLATURE OF THE VIRGIN ISLANDS

Regular Session

2010

An Act appropriating \$40,000 to VITEMA to identify tsunami escape routes and for other tsunami related purposes

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WHEREAS, a tsunami is a series of great sea waves caused by an underwater earthquake, landslide, volcanic eruption or, more rarely, a giant meteor impact with an ocean; and

WHEREAS, an earthquake is a natural tsunami warning. Earthquakes generate a tsunami, if they are of sufficient force and there is violent movement of the earth so as to cause a substantial and sudden displacement of a massive amount of water; and

WHEREAS, the Caribbean has been hit by 57 verified tsunamis since 1498, some being generated locally, others being the result of far away events, and all resulting in a combined human death toll of approximately 9,500; and

WHEREAS, on November 18 1867, a magnitude 7.5 earthquake occurred in the harbor of St. Thomas, causing a wave to sweep the side-wheel steamer *DeSoto* from its moorings, snapping both of its chains, throwing the ship into the iron pilings of a new wharf and later causing a wave to lift the ship off the wharf and carry her back to deep water, with only minor damage; and

WHEREAS, less fortunate was the screw sloop-of-war *Monongahela* which was anchored off Frederiksted, St. Croix. A massive wave lifted the ship over the warehouses along the shore and into one of the streets of the town. The ship came back with the returning sea and was left on a reef at the water's edge, with five of her crew lost; and

WHEREAS, tsunami waves can be very long (as much as 60 miles, or 100 kilometers) and be as far as one hour apart. They are able to cross entire oceans without great loss of energy; and

WHEREAS, tsunamis can travel unnoticed on the surface of an ocean at speeds up to 500 miles an hour (800 kilometers an hour), crossing an ocean in a day or less; and

WHEREAS, a tsunami may be less than a foot (30 centimeters) in height on the surface of the open ocean, which is why tsunami are not noticed by sailors, but the powerful shock wave of energy travels rapidly through the ocean as fast as a commercial jet. The top of the wave moves faster than the bottom, causing the sea to rise dramatically; and

WHEREAS, in some places a tsunami may cause the sea to rise vertically only a few inches or feet. In other places tsunamis have been known to surge vertically as high as 100 feet (30 meters); and

WHEREAS, scientists are able to calculate arrival times of tsunamis in different parts of the world based on their knowledge of water depths, distances, and when the event that generated them occurred; and

WHEREAS, entire beaches have been stripped away by tsunamis and flooding can extend inland by a thousand feet (300 meters) or more. The enormous energy of a tsunami can lift giant boulders, flip vehicles, and demolish houses; and

WHEREAS, the Virgin Islands must be prepared to meet the devastating challenges presented by these naturally occurring events known as tsunamis; Now, therefore,

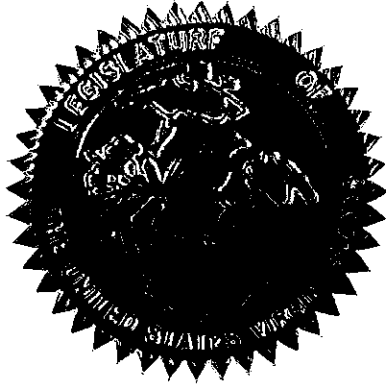
Be it enacted by the Legislature of the Virgin Islands

SECTION 1. There is appropriated, in the fiscal year ending September 30, 2010, the sum of \$40,000 from the Peace Officer Training Fund of the Treasury of the Virgin Islands to the Virgin Islands Territorial Emergency Management Agency ("VITEMA") to identify tsunami hazard areas in the St. Croix District areas of Frederiksted Town and Gallows Bay; purchase and erect signs and sirens that designate tsunami evacuation routes; to train police, fire and other emergency personnel stationed in or who are in close proximity to tsunami hazard areas; and to create or purchase tsunami preparedness brochures to increase public awareness and enhance public safety.

SECTION 2. The sum appropriated in section (1) remains available until expended.

Thus passed by the Legislature of the Virgin Islands on July 26, 2010.

Witness our Hands and Seal of the Legislature of the Virgin Islands this 6th
Day of August, A.D., 2010.



Handwritten signature of Louis Patrick Hill in cursive.

Louis Patrick Hill
President

Handwritten signature of Samuel Sanes in cursive.

Samuel Sanes
Legislative Secretary



Bill No. 28-0221 is hereby approved.

Witness my hand and the Seal of the
Government of the United States
Virgin Islands at Charlotte Amalie,
St. Thomas, this 20th day of August,
A.D., 2010.

Handwritten signature of John P. de Jongh, Jr. in cursive.
John P. de Jongh, Jr.
Governor