

**VIRGIN ISLANDS FIRE AND EMERGENCY MEDICAL SERVICES
BUDGET TESTIMONY
FISCAL YEAR 2027**



**COMMITTEE ON BUDGET, APPROPRIATIONS AND FINANCE
36th LEGISLATURE OF THE VIRGIN ISLANDS**

June 23, 2026

Presented By: Antonio O. Stevens, Director

Good afternoon Honorable Senator Novelle Francis Jr., Chairperson of the Committee on Budget, Appropriations, and Finance, other distinguished members of the 36th Legislature, and the viewing and listening audience.

I am Antonio O. Stevens, Director of the Virgin Islands Fire and Emergency Medical Services (VIFEMS). Accompanying me today are the members of the VIFEMS Executive Team: Assistant Director of EMS Lisle Evelyn, Assistant Director of Fire Clarence Stephenson, Chief Financial Officer Charmaine Akers-Hewlett, Director of HR and Payroll Barbara Williams-Brown, Medical Director Robin Ellett, Territorial Training Coordinator Michael Lewis, St. Thomas/St. John Fire Chief Eustace Grant Jr., St. Croix Fire Chief Klebert Titus, St. Thomas/St. John EMS Chief Victor Adams, St. Croix EMS Chief Robert Bryan, St. John Deputy Chief Magabe Calixte, St. Croix Deputy Chief Paul Christian, and St. Thomas Deputy Chief Craig Wade.

We appear before you to present the proposed VIFEMS budget for Fiscal Year 2027.

Agency Overview

The Virgin Islands Fire and Emergency Medical Services is an all hazards, emergency services agency, capable of responding to a broad range of natural and man-made hazards.

The agency operates 10 fire stations, 2 EMS bases, and 3 administrative offices; manages an array of response assets to include a fleet of ground and marine response vehicles; and employs 289 personnel, 255 of which are trained first responders.

Based on their roles, agency personnel are assigned to four units: Suppression, EMS, Arson Prevention and Investigation, and Administrative.

The Suppression Unit is staffed by single and dual role firefighters who respond to fires, medical emergencies, technical rescue incidents, and hazardous materials events.

The Arson Prevention and Investigation Unit is comprised of inspectors and led by the Fire Marshal. Members of this unit are responsible for conducting fire investigations, enforcing fire and life-safety codes, and providing public education on fire prevention.

The EMS Unit consists primarily of single-role, nationally registered EMS practitioners

who, along with dual-role fire personnel, provide pre-hospital emergency and non-emergent medical care. This unit also includes the ambulance boat crew, who operate the Star of Life, transporting patients from St. John to St. Thomas.

The Administrative Unit provides essential support to the other three units. It includes the agency's unsworn personnel responsible for managing human resources and fiscal operations, as well as the maintenance division, which repairs and maintains the agency's fleet and mechanical equipment.

Fiscal Year 2027 Budget Overview

VIFEMS' operational costs, which include supplies, utilities, personnel costs, fringe benefits and other services, are supported by legislative appropriations, non-appropriated funds, and grant funding.

General Fund Appropriation

The requested general fund appropriation for Fiscal Year 2027 is \$34,318,681. As personnel costs will account for over 90% of the appropriation, most other operational costs will be covered by other funding sources.

Non-Appropriated Funds

Other local funding that will support operations include monies collected and deposited in the Fire Service Emergency Fund and Emergency Services Fund. Monies in the Fire Service Emergency Fund are collected by VIFEMS for inspections, permits, and other services, and the entire fund is available for VIFEMS' use. Fund projections for Fiscal Year 2027 are \$782,879.

In contrast to the Fire Service Emergency Fund, VIFEMS is entitled to only a portion of the Emergency Services Fund, which consists of monies collected from a surcharge added to telephone lines for emergency services. Projections for Fiscal Year 2027 total \$774,048.

Grants

In the upcoming fiscal year, local funding will be augmented by federal grant awards from the Department of Interior's Technical Assistance and Maintenance Assistance Programs and the US Department of Agriculture's Virgin Islands Fire Service State Fire

Assistance Program.

These awards total \$938,000 and will be used to procure wildland firefighting supplies, SCBAs, an oxygen filling station, mechanical equipment, EMS equipment and a boat trailer. Additional details to include individual award amounts and grant periods can be found in Appendix B.

Fiscal Year 2026 Accomplishments

In Fiscal Year 2026, VIFEMS continued to advance the phased integration of fire and emergency medical services, build capacity as an EMS organization, and enhance operations with the following key accomplishments:

EMS Workforce Development

- Successfully conducted EMS continuing education and protocol in-service training sessions territory-wide.
- Graduated 13 Firefighter/EMTs from the inaugural VIFEMS EMT Academy with a 100% National Registry EMT examination pass rate.
- Increased the number of existing firefighters who are Nationally Registered EMTs by providing EMS training
- Supported professional development initiatives for EMS personnel.
- Conducted BLS, ACLS, PALS, PHTLS, and emergency preparedness training programs.

Fleet & Equipment Enhancements

- Received seven new ambulances to improve territorial EMS response capability and fleet reliability.
- Ordered four quick response vehicles, 2 rescues and 1 brush truck utilizing grant funding
- Expanded acquisition planning for ZOLL monitors, radios, and communications equipment.

Emergency Preparedness & Response

- Participated in multiple territorial exercises, tabletop drills, and disaster preparedness initiatives.
- Strengthened EMS response capabilities for hurricane preparedness and mass casualty incidents.

EMS Billing & Revenue Recovery

- Successfully obtained a dedicated EIN and National Provider Identifier (NPI) for VIFEMS EMS operations.
- Continued coordination with Medicare and Digitech to improve revenue recovery processes.

Policy, Compliance & Administration

- Developed and revised multiple EMS operational policies and procedures.
- Improved administrative oversight, accountability, and operational standardization territory-wide.

Community & Public Health Engagement

- Strengthened partnerships with the DOH Office of EMS, hospitals, healthcare facilities, and community organizations.

Facility Repairs and Capital Projects

- Installed new air condition units at the Cruz Bay Fire Station
- Repaired apparatus bay doors at the Omar Brown Sr. Fire Station
- Began the preconstruction phase for the Cotton Valley, Cruz Bay, Tutu and Fortuna Fire Station rebuilds with the assistance of ODR's SPMO
- Began clearing future site of the agency's training facility and Junior Firefighter headquarters

Goals for Fiscal Year 2027

Strategic priorities for Fiscal Year 2027 include:

Personnel & Staffing

- Recruit and retain additional paramedics and Firefighter/EMTs
- Continue to increase the number of dual-role firefighters through training
- Expand advanced life support (ALS) coverage territory-wide.

EMS Billing & Financial Sustainability

- Fully operationalize the EMS billing system for improved revenue generation.
- Increase billing efficiency for Medicare, Medicaid, private insurance, and self-pay.

Fleet Modernization & Equipment

- Acquire additional cardiac monitors, AEDs, radios, and EMS medical equipment.
- Procure three new brush trucks

Clinical Excellence & Quality Improvement

- Expand EMS quality assurance and continuing education initiatives.
- Strengthen data-driven patient care review and performance improvement.

Emergency Preparedness & Disaster Readiness

- Participate in additional full-scale exercises and disaster simulations.
- Enhance hurricane preparedness and mass casualty response capabilities.

EMS Infrastructure & Operations

- Continue development of EMS station deployment models and QRV initiatives.
- Improve operational efficiency and response time performance.

Strategic Organizational Development

- Strengthen the EMS Division as a modern, integrated territorial EMS system.
- Pursue additional grant funding and strategic partnerships.

Conclusion

This concludes my testimony today. Thank you for the opportunity to testify. My team and I await your questions.

APPENDICES

APPENDIX A - VIFEMS COLLECTIONS

2026 Revenues						
	DATE	ST. THOMAS	ST. JOHN	ST. THOMAS DISTRICT	ST. CROIX	TOTAL
1	OCT-25	\$36,352.00	\$8,750.00	\$45,102.00	\$ 20,635.00	\$65,737.00
2	NOV-25	\$28,570.00	\$6,330.00	\$34,900.00	\$ 19,130.00	\$54,030.00
3	DEC-25	\$35,105.00	\$5,510.00	\$40,615.00	\$ 24,510.00	\$65,125.00
4	JAN-26	\$37,988.00	\$7,640.00	\$45,628.00	\$ 18,090.00	\$63,718.00
5	FEB-26	\$33,720.00	\$6,850.00	\$40,570.00	\$ 21,240.00	\$61,810.00
6	MAR-26	\$46,026.00	\$3,705.00	\$49,731.00	\$ 25,308.00	\$75,039.00
7	APR-26	\$37,135.00	\$0.00	\$37,135.00	\$ 25,490.00	\$62,625.00
8	MAY-26	\$48,528.00	\$0.00	\$48,528.00	\$ 22,690.00	\$71,218.00
9	JUN-26			\$0.00		\$0.00
10	JUL-26			\$0.00		\$0.00
11	AUG-26			\$0.00		\$0.00
12	SEP-26			\$0.00		\$0.00
	GRAND TOTAL	\$303,424.00	\$38,785.00	\$342,209.00	\$ 177,093.00	\$519,302.00

