



# Committee on Homeland Security, Justice, and Public Safety

## Crucian Christmas Festival Operational Plans



Dodson James  
Deputy Commissioner

12/12/2023

Good day Senator Kenneth L. Gittens, Chairperson of the Committee on Homeland Security, Justice, and Public Safety; committee members; all other senators in attendance today; all those seated in the senate chambers; as well as those in the listening and viewing audience.

My name is Dodson James, and I am the St. Croix Deputy Commissioner of Operations at the Virgin Islands Department of Public Works (DPW). Thank you for the opportunity to provide an update on the status of DPW's operational plans and collaborative efforts ahead of this year's Crucian Christmas Festival.

DPW started meeting with Festival committee members, the Virgin Islands Police Department (VIPD), and the Virgin Islands Waste Management Authority (WMA) earlier this year to prepare for the upcoming festival. In those meetings, we were able to outline our different areas of responsibility.

The Department of Public Works' first responsibility was preparing the grounds for the parking lot, village booths, and rides. Those tasks began in the middle of November, just before our Thanksgiving break. We started using our heavy equipment (i.e. sweeper, skid steer, and backhoe) to clear the grounds. We have also cleared the gut between the festival grounds and the festival rides to the limits allowed by the Department of Planning and Natural Resources.

In addition, we are working with our roadside contractors to maintain our roadsides, specifically in the highly trafficked areas during the season, and patch roads when possible. We will cut low-hanging branches and other vegetative obstructions in the main town of Frederiksted to allow for better lighting and security.

The department will also work with VIPD to block off parking where they see fit. We are working with a private citizen who has made some of their land available in the past to provide additional parking for village attendees. Special thanks to the Department of

Sports, Parks, and Recreation for their assistance with cutting the parking lot at the Paul E. Joseph parking area.

Lastly, DPW is responsible for constructing three viewing stands: the Governor's stand, the Legislature's stand, and the senior citizen's stand.

It should be stated that the department does not receive any additional funds to cover the cost of preparing for the Crucian Festival, St. Thomas Carnival, or the St. John Celebration. Whether it is overtime or material costs, they come from our normal operating costs. This is an immense cost that the department incurs for preparing for these events and it is never budgeted for. We have made requests in the past for additional funds to be included in our budget specifically for this, but our requests were denied.

Thank you for the opportunity to provide this testimony. I am available to answer any questions.