



**STATEMENT BY CHIEF MINISTER
DR. THE HONOURABLE D. ORLANDO SMITH, OBE
THIRTY FIRST SITTING OF THE FIRST SESSION OF THE FIFTEENTH
LEGISLATIVE COUNCIL OF THE VIRGIN ISLANDS
Tuesday, 11th October, 2005
10:00 a.m.**

UPDATE ON HEAVY RAINS

Madam Speaker, it is not unusual around this time of the year for our Territory to experience heavy rain. As predicted, we did indeed experience heavy showers and I will like to pay tribute to the hardworking men and women who braved the rains to ensure that our roads were passable.

Madam Speaker, on Monday morning, I took a tour around the island to see if and how the heavy rains affected us. Throughout my drive around the island, I either saw private individuals lending a helping hand or the hardworking crews of our emergency personnel including the Department of Disaster Management, Police, Public Works Department, Water and Sewerage, Conservation and Fisheries, Fire and Rescue, Facilities Unit, Red Cross, and the Hospital team.

I would also like to thank the Acting Governor Ms. Dancia Penn and the Acting Commissioner of Police for keeping me abreast of developments throughout the day.

Madam Speaker, I must also thank the private sector and those persons who assisted with clearing the Huntum's Ghut road and other areas. Along with the private sector I must also thank the media houses who assisted DDM and the police in getting timely information to the public and they also toured the island to update their viewers and listeners.

Madam Speaker we must all be thankful to God that what could have been a catastrophic situation at the Delta Gas Station was brought under control by their staff and the staff of various government departments. I stopped by the Delta Gas Station on my tour and was briefed on the situation as decisions were quickly taken to close the road and evacuate the area.

I am also pleased that despite the weather conditions the Terrance B. Lettsome International Airport remained open all day yesterday.

This weather system created unstable atmospheric conditions across the Territory resulting in flooding, closing of government offices, schools and most businesses. More rain is predicted so I urge the motoring public to continue to exercise caution while driving on the western end of the island, the Ridge Road and other areas susceptible to flooding including the Flemming Street, Joe's Hill Road and the Purcell Estate vicinity. Residents on Virgin Gorda are also asked to exercise caution in those affected areas as well.

Residents and visitors are still urged to continue to remain alert to the rapidly changing weather conditions for the next couple of days.

While touring the island I was able to review some long term problems with our roads network which contribute to flooding and mud slides, in addition to areas damaged by the 2003 rains. As we all know this government moved with haste to address the damage to our roads following those rains, and we were able to effect substantive repairs, but lack of funds prevented the completion of that task.

The recent borrowing of \$10 million from the BVI Social Security Board for our road rehabilitation programme from Anegada to Jost Van Dyke, will allow us to address those long standing problems as well as to complete the repairs to those damaged areas, some of which projects are now ready for implementation.

Thank you.