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## **NHI SAYS PUT 'SAFETY FIRST' AFTER RECENT BVI FLOODING**

### **NHI's Medical Director Gives Health and Safety Tips**

**Road Town, Tortola, August 15, 2017**– The National Health Insurance (NHI) of the Virgin Islands is encouraging residents to put safety first after the recent flooding, as part of its mandate to improve health outcomes for all residents throughout the Territory.

NHI Medical Director Dr. Harlan Vanterpool said, “Flooding can seriously impact the health and safety of residents. While persons are still in the cleanup and recovery phase, we are asking that persons be mindful and always put health and safety first.”

Dr. Vanterpool said water should be tested by the Water and Sewerage Department to confirm it has not been contaminated, adding, “Residents should boil or disinfect all drinking water if they are unsure.”

The medical director also warned, “Please refrain from bathing at beaches, especially in areas where large quantities of flood waters may have entered, as bacterial content may be above acceptable safe levels.”

Dr. Vanterpool asked persons to exercise caution when cleaning or handling flood water contaminated items. Use personal protective equipment such as gloves and face masks to reduce exposure to harmful pathogens.

The medical director also encouraged residents to heed the advice of the Premier of the Virgin Islands Dr. the Honourable D. Orlando Smith, OBE; Department of Disaster Management (DDM); and the BVI Red Cross.

Premier Smith encouraged residents to assess and mitigate against further damage. The BVI DDM has consistently asked residents to keep drains clear and overturn bins and other receptacles than collect water to prevent mosquito breeding.

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BVI Red Cross also called on residents to wear protective gear like gloves and dust masks while cleaning up to prevent illness caused by waterborne and airborne diseases.

The Virgin Islands experienced flash flooding during a tropical wave on Monday, August 7 (August Monday), which resulted in an unprecedented 17 inches of rain.

For more information about NHI, please visit the website – [www.vinhi.vg](http://www.vinhi.vg). Beneficiaries are also encouraged to like and follow @NHIBVI on Facebook and @BVINHI on Twitter for more updates.

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**Notes to Editor(s): Photograph and audio clip are attached.**

Photo caption: Dr. Harlan Vanterpool **(Photo credit: NHI/ April Glasgow)**

Audio Clips 1, 2 & 3: Dr. Harlan Vanterpool