

# ENERGY BLAST

Newsletter of the Virgin Islands Energy Office



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# USVI Energy REnewal



Kyle D. Fleming  
Director, Virgin Islands Energy Office

Our focus over the last two years at the VIEO has been centered on securing a transformational cache of federal funding, a job that I am proud to say we have more than succeeded in. Through the efforts of our hardworking and dedicated staff VIEO has steered over \$100 million in federal dollars to the territory, money that has the potential to help Virgin Islanders invest in renewable energy generation, reliable solutions to prevent power interruptions during utility blackouts, and cutting edge technologies that will reduce their energy consumption needs.

With this generational funding secured, VIEO is now reallocating its resources to better allow the agency to focus on deploying our programs so that they bring the maximum benefit to as many Virgin Islanders as possible. As you read along and learn about how VIEO commemorated National Clean Energy Action Month, you'll get a look at how we are delivering relief now, and an idea of what more we plan to accomplish in the near future.

## Solar For All Ah We!!!

On September 1, 2024, The Virgin Islands Energy Office (VIEO) was officially awarded \$62.5 Million from the Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) for the Virgin Islands Solar For All Program. This milestone kicked off the one-year program planning phase which aims to expand access to solar energy across the U.S. Virgin Islands, particularly for low-income households and communities that have historically faced challenges in accessing clean energy.

At this time, 2% of the total awarded funds are available for expenditure to support the early administrative aspects of the One-Year Planning period. This includes hiring essential staff, such as the **Solar for All Program Director**, coordinating program design consulting engagements, and developing the technical designs that will leverage the program funding during the 5-year grant cycle. Solar for All residential & community solar projects will begin deployment in the 4<sup>th</sup> Quarter of 2025. And the VIEO promises to keep the community well informed as we make meaningful progress towards enabling **Solar for All Ah We!!**

### **SOLAR FOR ALL**

60 selected applicants will receive **\$7 billion** to enable nearly a million low-income and disadvantaged households across the country **access affordable, resilient, clean solar energy.**



# Energy Action Month 2024

## We're Here to Make Energy More Affordable

October brought spooky spirits, rainy weather, and a flurry of community engaging activities from the Virgin Islands Energy Office (VIEO) as the agency commemorated National Clean Energy Action Month (NCEAM). While promoting clean energy policies that foster greater penetration of renewable generation onto our grid and administering programs that help Virgin Islanders invest in money saving appliances and efficient solutions is VIEO's mission all year long, during NCEAM we took the opportunity to showcase the progress we've made on delivering those goals.

*For more information, please visit our website at [energy.vi.gov](http://energy.vi.gov).*

## Equipping the Next Generation

NCEAM got off to a rollicking start when Melissa Carter, VIEO Program Specialist, hosted the first of a series of educational programs with the Caribbean Centers for Boys & Girls of the VI on October 2<sup>nd</sup>. Over the course of the month, Ms. Carter used her gift for making learning fun to teach dozens of children about how electricity powers our world, and ways young people can help their parents save on their utility bills. The after schoolers particularly delighted in receiving a hands on demonstration of how an electric car works, as well as the informational coloring books they got to take home.



# Governor's 2024 Workforce Development Summit

## Showcasing the Careers of Tomorrow

VIEO's Deputy Director Michael Jaffurs was on hand to tell scores of high school students and life long learners what steps they need to take in order to pursue an exciting career as an electric vehicle technician during the Governor's 2024 Workforce Development Summit at the Caribbean Cinemas.

The Virgin Islands Department of Education, with support from VIEO, is planning to launch an electric vehicle technician training course come January 2025. The courses, which will be hosted on St. Croix at the Career & Technical Education Center, and on St. Thomas at the Ralph O. Wheatley Skills Center, will consist of hands-on instruction that will see students assemble from the wheels up an electric vehicle, as well as master the technical coursework necessary to become a first-rate electric vehicle technician.

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# Solar Trailer Powers the Party at the Sejah Farm Bush Cook Event

## VIEO Goes Down to the Farm



Sejah Farm's Chef Cook Bush Cook was a family friendly good time for all that served up delicious meals, fostered community spirit, and brought people in touch with their local farmers and ranchers. Over the course of the weekend long event, VIEO kept the party jumping, providing a continuous uninterrupted source of power for the venue's DJ thanks to our mobile solar trailer.

The hundreds of attendees who came on down to the farm were treated to innovative dishes crafted by amateur "bush" cooks and professional "chefs." Each meal consisted of produce sourced from St. Croix's farm scene, as well as locally raised livestock slaughtered specially for the event.

On top of the plentiful opportunities to fill your belly, the event also served up nourishment for the mind through engaging and thought provoking presentations. Over the last 47 years the market share of the four largest meat processing companies in the US has grown 60%, accounting for more than 85% of the domestic meat market, Dr. Derris Burnett, Director of the Tuskegee University Meat and Poultry Processing Technical Assistance Program (MPPTA) said. That domination has led to increased efficiencies, but also the potential for incredible supply chain disruption when bottlenecks occur, he said, pointing to the national meat crisis that unfolded during the coronavirus pandemic to illustrate the point.

In order to protect the meat supply and empower smaller producers ranchers need options on where they can slaughter their stock, Burnett said. In his work with MPPTA Burnett has helped to craft a certification program for workers processing livestock in a mobile abattoir, an innovative slaughterhouse on wheels. Burnett said that the unit is perfect for smaller livestock, noting that as many as 48 goats can be processed in one eight hour workday. Sejah Farm co-founder Dale Browne noted that the information was especially timely, given the fact that the St. Croix Abattoir had been closed for six months this year.

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# Weatherization Assistance Program Community Outreach



The Weatherization Assistance Program (WAP) has impacted hundreds this year as VIEO works diligently to provide as many eligible homes with life changing zero-cost energy efficient retrofits. The simplest, easiest, and most effective way to reduce utility bills is to increase the energy efficiency of your household. WAP is designed to help those with the least energy efficient homes, and direst economic situations, access new, highly rated, energy efficient appliances and solutions.



VIEO's WAP team has made great strides in 2024, retrofitting the homes of dozens of Virgin Islanders, and hosting numerous informational sessions like the one VIEO Administrative Coordinator Vernicia Joseph hosted last week at the D. Hamilton Jackson Housing Community. #WAPWednesday

*For more information, please visit our website at [energy.vi.gov/wap/](http://energy.vi.gov/wap/).*



# We Got A Fleet of Ford F-150 Lightnings

The Virgin Islands Energy Office (VIEO) is pleased to announce the recent procurement of eight Ford F-150 Lightnings. These fully electric vehicles will augment the Government of the Virgin Islands' (GVI) fleet and help reduce its carbon footprint within a critical vehicle class within the GVI, the Light-Duty Truck. Light-Duty trucks make up a significant portion of the GVI's existing fleet and this procurement represents a significant opportunity to reduce fossil fuel consumption in one of the highest-utilized vehicle segments of the Fleet. Additionally, GVI utilization of these all-electric trucks will provide a tangible demonstration for the broader contractor and consumer market of the benefits of adopting transportation electrification. The purchase was funded through a Department of the Interior (DOI) Energizing Insular Communities (EIC) grant and represents just the latest in a series of steps VIEO has implemented to help diversify and modernize the GVI fleet.



Decoupling the GVI's fleet from its total dependence on internal combustion engine vehicles began in earnest in 2022 when VIEO introduced 20 light duty passenger vehicles into the motor pool. That trend accelerated earlier this year when the agency brought in three all-electric converted Ford Transit Vans, two of which have gone into service bolstering the territory's VITRAN bus resource, and the final bus splitting duty between VIEO's outreach activities and the Department of Human Service's Home Health Care program.

Capable of towing up to 10,000 pounds and with an Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) estimated range of up to 230 to 300 miles, the new trucks will be capable of displacing a range of workhorse vehicles that VIEO's earlier procurements could not directly compete with. Bringing in new classes of electric vehicles is a strategic move, VIEO Director Kyle Fleming said. The electric vehicle market has evolved to the point where established, trusted brands are churning out makes and models that can fulfill nearly every use the government's legacy fossil fuel fleet was put to, he said, which has made it easy for VIEO to advocate for the technology's uptake.



With several discount programs, Ford has been making it easier than ever to go electric. The company launched its new year-end sales event boosting discounts on 2024 Lightning Models as well as an assortment of low-mileage used F-150 Lightnings on the market right now.

The GVI has been taking advantage of these favorable pricing deals and the **VIEO's Equitable E-Mobility Program** aims to help consumers and businesses make the switch to EVs more affordable by offering **\$5,000 rebates on new & used electric vehicles** like the Ford F-150 Lightning®. The discounts and local incentives

are making the sticker price of EVs comparable and often times cheaper than the gas equivalents.

*For more information, please visit our website at [energy.vi.gov/eem/](https://energy.vi.gov/eem/).*

# VIBES Program Update

The Virgin Islands Battery Energy Storage (VIBES) program got a major overhaul this month when VIEO increased the maximum size of the backup systems eligible for the rebate. Launched this May, the federally funded rebate program aims to help Virgin Islands residents defray the cost of investing in energy storage solutions that can switch on automatically in the event of a power outage.

Since its inception VIEO has worked with local retailers and service providers to compile an extensive list of trusted vendors who sell, and in many cases, install these systems in the territory. Ahead of updating the program regulations, VIEO met with these installers to brief them on the changes and to get their feedback.

VIEO is offering to rebate as much as \$6,000 – up from an initial maximum of \$4,000 – against the cost of installing residential scale battery backup storage solutions, and an automatic transfer switch or smart critical load panel. The maximum capacity of the battery installation has also been increased, with systems as large as 20 kWh now eligible. VIEO has also expanded the purchase options applicable to the rebate and is now allowing consumers to buy battery packs and other hardware from vendors outside of the territory. **Please note, systems purchased from vendors outside of VIEO’s network of vetted suppliers will be subject to additional technical review by VIEO staff and must have an approved Electrical Final Certificate from the Department of Planning and Natural Resources (DPNR) before an application can be submitted to VIBES.**

The first come first serve rebate program has been initially endowed through a \$800,000 grant from the State Energy Program Bipartisan Infrastructure Law (SEP-BIL). To qualify for the program you must be a full time resident of the territory, own a home and or business/non-profit, and have an active Water and Power Authority (WAPA) bill in your name.

*For more information, please visit our website at [energy.vi.gov/vibes/](http://energy.vi.gov/vibes/).*



The Virgin Islands Energy Office offers more opportunities for uninterrupted power!

## VIBES REBATE PROGRAM

Virgin Islands Battery Energy Storage

### Program Changes Effective November 8, 2024

**Now up to \$6,000**  
at \$300 per kilowatt hour (kWh)

**Updated Requirements and Program Reminders:**

- Maximum battery energy storage system (BESS) capacity increased to 20 kWh. (Reminder: applications including a BESS that exceeds 20 kWh will not be eligible for a rebate).
- Automatic whole or partial home battery systems can now be Purchased & installed outside of the VIEO Approved Vendor List, but please note this option may lead to longer rebate processing times due to detailed reviews by the VIEO team. An approved Electrical Final Certificate from DPNR is also required.
- Systems must be battery-backup only! No electrical permit packages including solar installations will be accepted.
- All Battery Energy Storage Systems must be certified UL9540 or UL1973.

**Batteries MUST be INSTALLED and PERMITTED BEFORE applying for a rebate!**

Rebates will be distributed on a first-come, first-served basis and issued to qualifying recipients and are subject to the availability of funds through the State Energy Program Bipartisan Infrastructure Law (SEP-BIL) Grant EE0031035.

SCAN TO APPLY

STX (340) 713-8436  
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<https://energy.vi.gov> @VirginIslandsEnergyOffice @venergyoffice

## MISSION STATEMENT:

To promote energy efficiency and advocate the use of renewable energy technology for the public and private sectors, and residents of the Virgin Islands through energy education, outreach, financial incentives, and technical assistance.



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*"Conserving energy saves money and the environment"*