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## USVI to Receive \$384 Million from FEMA for School Rebuilding

**The department highlights scope of FEMA's funding, emphasizing comprehensive infrastructure enhancements including land acquisition and project management for lasting educational benefits**

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**Portion of the Eulalie Rivera K-8 School. By. V.I. CONSORTIUM**

The U.S. Virgin Islands is set to receive a substantial \$384.8 million investment from the Federal Emergency Management Agency to demolish and rebuild hurricane-damaged schools, marking a significant advancement in the territory's recovery efforts from hurricanes Irma and Maria in 2017.

The funding initiative includes the complete replacement of three elementary schools on St. Croix and one on St. Thomas, as well as repairs to a school lunch warehouse on St. Thomas. This effort is part of FEMA's ongoing collaboration with the Virgin Islands government and its Department of Education to ensure safe and modern educational facilities for the community.

Kristen A. Hodge, the director for FEMA's Recovery Office in the U.S. Virgin Islands, emphasized the agency's commitment, stating, "I am pleased to approve these latest obligations that help bring the Virgin Islands closer to post-hurricane recovery. Our commitment to help the future leaders of the Virgin Islands by providing them safe facilities in which to receive their education remains strong."

### **Key Projects and Funding Details:**

Lew Muckle Elementary School, located on a 3.94-acre parcel in Sion Farm, St. Croix, will undergo prudent replacement of seven out of its 11 buildings.

1. Eulalie Rivera Elementary School in Grove Place, St. Croix, will see the replacement of 12 structures, including classrooms and an athletic field bathroom.
2. Juanita Gardine Elementary School in Estate Richmond, St. Croix, is slated for the replacement of ten buildings including the auditorium and auxiliary buildings.
3. On St. Thomas, the Leonard Dober Elementary School, severely affected by the 2017 hurricanes, will have three of its buildings replaced.
4. Repairs to a 7,000 square foot lunch warehouse on St. Thomas will restore it to its pre-disaster design and functionality.

The funding, facilitated by the Bipartisan Budget Act of 2018, enables the V.I. Department of Education to not only rebuild but also modernize school facilities. This includes merging several schools into modernized campuses like Alfredo Andrews and Alexander Henderson Schools, and closing Leonard Dober Elementary School, which is not currently used for instructional purposes.

The Dept. of Education expressed gratitude for the federal support. "These grant awards signify a pivotal moment for education in the Virgin Islands, allowing for the development of much-needed new schools and the modernization of existing facilities with a focus on equity for all students," the department stated.

The department commented further on the breadth of the grant awards. "It is essential to recognize that these grants cover more than construction. They extend to land acquisition, project management, demolition, and design," the VIDE stated. The all-encompassing approach ensures meticulous planning and execution to meet the highest standards of educational facility development.