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FEMA Deploys Over 200 Federal Personnel to U.S. Virgin Islands for Post-Ernesto Recovery

FEMA teams join local efforts to assess damage and restore essential services; residents urged to follow safety guidelines during power outages and ongoing cleanup operations

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In the aftermath of Tropical Storm Ernesto, the Federal Emergency Management Agency has announced the deployment of Incident Management Assistance Teams (IMATs) and other personnel to the U.S. Virgin Islands.

A total of 112 FEMA personnel, along with 123 individuals from other federal agencies, have been dispatched to support the territory as it navigates the storm's impact.

FEMA's involvement extends to assisting the V.I. Territorial Emergency Management Agency and the local government with ongoing damage assessments. Andrew D'Amora, FEMA Region 2 deputy regional administrator, who witnessed the storm firsthand, underscored the importance of preparedness in light of Tropical Storm Ernesto. "Tropical Storm Ernesto is a reminder for Virgin Islanders to take hurricane preparedness seriously. Now is the time to replenish items in your emergency supply kit and take steps to ensure your loved ones are prepared for the aftermath of a hurricane or tropical storm," said D'Amora.

As the community continues to deal with the storm's aftermath, FEMA provided several safety tips for residents:

- **Power Outages:** Use flashlights or battery-powered lanterns for emergency lighting. Avoid using candles due to the risk of fire. Turn off or disconnect appliances and electronics to prevent damage from power surges when electricity is restored.
- **Generator Safety:** Always operate generators outdoors, at least 20 feet away from windows, doors, and garages. Ensure they remain dry and protected from the elements.
- **Carbon Monoxide Poisoning:** Keep portable gas stoves, camp stoves, or charcoal grills outside, at least 20 feet from windows. Install carbon monoxide detectors with battery backup on every level of your home.
- **Heat Safety:** Stay hydrated, avoid strenuous activities during the hottest part of the day, and check on family members, older adults, and neighbors.
- **Power Line Hazards:** Avoid contact with downed power lines. Do not touch, cut, remove, or drive over downed lines as they may still be live. Also, refrain from piling debris near utility pedestals to expedite repairs.
- **Cleanup Precautions:** Wear protective clothing and appropriate face coverings or masks, particularly when cleaning mold or other debris. Individuals with asthma, lung conditions, or immune suppression should avoid buildings with visible or olfactory signs of mold. Children should not participate in disaster cleanup activities.
- **Emergency Planning:** Ensure you have a plan in place to protect yourself, your family, and pets from flooding and power outages. Be aware of how you will reconnect if separated during a disaster. Visit [Ready.gov](https://www.ready.gov) or [Listo.gov](https://www.listo.gov) for more information on preparing for and responding to floods.

David Warrington, FEMA Region 2 Regional Administrator, reaffirmed the agency's commitment to supporting the territory through this challenging period. "FEMA stands ready to support the territory with the resources they need to help its communities before, during, and after a disaster," he stated. "Together with the Government of the Virgin Islands, FEMA remains committed to supporting recovery efforts for a more resilient future."

Residents are encouraged to stay informed and follow safety guidelines as cleanup and recovery efforts continue.

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