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VITEMA Declares Territory ‘Exceptionally Prepared’ Following Hurricane Simulation Exercise

Emergency officials ran a territory-wide response simulation for a Category 3 hurricane with 115 mph winds and 10-foot storm surge; VITEMA Director Daryl Jaschen says agencies are ready, but public preparation remains essential.

Hurricane Season / **Published On June 17, 2025 06:56 AM /**

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Battered trees and rough seas in St. Thomas while Hurricane Irma was whiplashing St. Thomas on Sept. 6, 2017. By. V.I. CONSORTIUM.

With hurricane season underway, V.I. Territorial Emergency Management Agency Director Daryl Jaschen is assuring residents that the territory is well-positioned to face a major storm. Speaking during a Government House briefing on Monday, Mr. Jaschen said the government’s disaster

response team has completed a rigorous two-week exercise, and that the territory is “exceptionally prepared” to respond.

During the exercise, a category 3 hurricane was simulated, Mr. Jaschen made known. Hurricane “Indigo”, as it was called, “had 115 mile an hour winds. It brought in eight to 10 inches of rainfall, and it had a life threatening surge up to 10 feet.”

In the face of that dangerous hypothetical scenario, emergency responders worked to test their readiness, focusing on aspects including generator installation, fuel management, route clearance to priority sites, and search and rescue. “We worked from H minus 120 hours to H plus 30 hours – what we would be doing, the preparation and response and post-storm activities,” Mr. Jaschen explained.

“We've proved that in this scenario...we are ready,” said Jaschen. In the event of a direct hit by a Category 3 hurricane, “every Virgin Islander can have confidence that the territorial government working hand in hand with federal partners, as well as with the private sector, will respond as soon as it's safe to begin,” he reassured.

Mr. Jaschen urged members of the public to ensure that they too are prepared in the event of an approaching storm.