

VITEMA Urges Storm Preparations Despite Below-Average 2026 Hurricane Season Forecast

Officials said residents should not delay roof, shutter and window repairs, pointing to limited shelter capacity on all three major islands and urging households, businesses and organizations to prepare before a named storm threatens the territory.

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St. Thomas during the passage of Hurricane Irma. By. V.I. CONSORTIUM.

Despite forecasts for a [below-average 2026 hurricane season](#), territorial officials are urging Virgin Islanders to begin storm preparations now, warning that residents, businesses and community organizations should not wait for a named storm before taking action.

“Preparedness is not a one-day conversation,” said Government House Communications Director Richard Motta during Monday’s press briefing. “It is a sustained, whole-of-government effort that requires coordination, clear communication and personal responsibility from every resident, every household, every business and every community organization.”

VITEMA Director Daryl Jaschen warned residents against becoming complacent because of the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration’s forecast, which predicts a relatively calm season with between eight and 14 named storms, three to six hurricanes, and one to three major hurricanes.

Mr. Jaschen said the absence of an immediate threat should not cause residents to postpone structural repairs, noting that hurricane season historically peaks between August and late October.

“First of all — and no surprise — we want you to reinforce and protect your home,” Jaschen said. “We want you to start now. Inspect your roof, your shutters and your windows. Make repairs before the storm develops, not after a storm is assigned,” he urged.

Mr. Jaschen also noted that insurance payouts often depend on when preparations are made in relation to the appearance of a named storm. “Please, take the initiative now,” he said.

The VITEMA director also reviewed emergency shelter capacity across the territory, noting that limitations exist on all three major islands.

On St. Croix, designated safe zones include the D.C. Canegata Recreational Center, which can hold 171 individuals, and the St. Croix Educational Complex High School, which can accommodate 738 people. The new Arthur A. Richards School in Frederiksted is not included on the list, as it remains under construction and entirely offline for emergency shelter use. Compliance assessments for that facility have been delayed until late August or September.

On St. Thomas, Lockhart K-8 School is the primary shelter, with a pre-storm capacity of 248 people. That number drops by half for post-storm housing.

St. John faces the tightest shelter constraints, relying entirely on the Adrian Senior Center, which can accommodate 27 individuals, and the Cruz Bay Community Hub, which can hold 49 people. Emergency officials are advising St. John residents to prepare for at least ten days of total self-sufficiency because of anticipated delays in resuming ferry and barge operations after a storm.

To assist businesses with storm planning, Mr. Jaschen announced that VITEMA has extended the processing window for essential business curfew passes beyond the traditional June 1 deadline. He said processing will remain active until the first named storm of the season officially threatens the territory within a seven-day window, based on National Hurricane Center tracking.

Cabinet members and agency leaders are scheduled to brief Governor Albert Bryan Jr. this Friday on outstanding operational gaps in preparedness.

Mr. Jaschen closed by urging Virgin Islanders to enroll in the Alert VI emergency mass notification system and finalize their disaster survival kits without delay.

“The time to act is always now,” Jaschen said. “Be prepared, stay informed and be vigilant.”

