

The Virgin Islands Consortium

De Jongh Receives Completed Government Post-Disaster Plan

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Governor John P. de Jongh, Jr. recently met at Government House with leaders of the Virgin Islands Territorial Emergency Management Agency, VITEMA, to receive a full briefing on the completion of the Continuity of Operations Plan (COOP) for the Virgin Islands.

The plan's goal is to ensure the Virgin Islands government can continue its essential services in the aftermath of a disaster, a lesson de Jongh said he learned through the devastation some U.S. cities experienced from Hurricane Sandy.

"This type of plan assures that all government agencies remain capable of continuing the minimum essential functions across a wide range of potential emergencies," the governor said.

De Jongh further explained that the plan is designed "to establish alternate sites of operations in the event of major disaster, establish an order of succession in the event an agency's leadership is incapacitated and to address staffing so that mission-essential operations continue unhindered."

The COOP's completion comes a year after de Jongh hosted an initial meeting that included the leadership of the three branches of the Virgin Islands government, as well as leaders from the British Virgin Islands as guest observers.

In July and August of this year, a team of FEMA planners visited the territory to develop the first draft of the COOP, meeting with VITEMA's leaders and other departmental planners to provide training, seminars and workshops.

A final draft of the VITEMA COOP will be issued on Dec. 1 and will be tested during the Earthquake/Tsunami Relocation COOP Table Top Exercise on Dec. 11-12. A team will observe the COOP exercise to assess its effectiveness, assist in the creation of an After Action Report for VITEMA, and aid other government agencies in the development of similar plans and programs.

Of the plan's completion, de Jongh said, "It marks the first time that the Virgin Islands will have clearly defined strategy to continue governmental operations in the immediate aftermath of a natural or man-made disaster."