

The Virgin Islands Consortium

Ravaged By Hurricane Joaquin, Bahamas Gets Much-Needed Aid From BVI

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TORTOLA -- The BVI has agreed for the deployment of persons to support the response and recovery efforts in the Bahamas, following a request from the Regional Response mechanism and the Caribbean Electric Utility Services Corporation (CARILEC).

Following the passage of Category 4 Hurricane Joaquin a number of Caribbean Islands were affected including the Southern and Central Bahamas Islands, the Turks and Caicos Islands and Haiti.

Premier Dr. Orlando Smith said that his Government has received requests for assistance for personnel from the Department of Disaster Management and the BVI

Electricity Corporation to provide immediate technical support to the Government of the Bahamas and has readily agreed to provide the necessary support

Premier Smith stated, "The Impact from a Category 4 hurricane can be significant and although there has been destruction in many of the affected islands, there has only been one death reported in Haiti.

We must be thankful for that. We must now turn our efforts to supporting our brothers and sisters who have lost their homes, livelihoods and who are now living in very difficult circumstances."

Hurricane Joaquin is also being blamed for the disappearance of a cargo ship El Faro carrying 33 people. Although the ship planned to avoid Hurricane Joaquin its main propulsion failed sending the crew into the destructive storm.

A massive search in the Caribbean Sea has resulted in identifying a 225-square mile debris field, but no sight of the ship or survivors. The Premier said the loss of loved ones can be very difficult for families.

He added, "It is important that we as a Territory remain in a constant state of readiness. We are witnessing the impact of major destructive hurricanes on the Caribbean Islands and the only way to deal with these events is to remain in a constant state of preparedness and be ready to respond."

The Bahamas has similar characteristics to the BVI with the geographical spread making some islands more vulnerable than others.

The impact in the Bahamas has been mainly to the southern and central islands which have resulted in evacuation of residents, hundreds are in shelters and a trail of damage and destruction to infrastructure, homes, roads and health facilities and making emergency coordination extremely difficult.

Premier Smith added, "We have a similar island structure in the BVI and we understand the challenges that a disaster situation can have on our sister islands. As a medical doctor I also understand the need for immediate response in these types of situations."

He added, "We are responding to the requests that have been coming from our Caribbean neighbors, firstly with the provision of support to the Commonwealth of Dominica and now we have sent personnel from the Department of Disaster Management and the BVI Electricity Cooperation to the Bahamas."

A three member team of linesmen from the British Virgin Islands Electricity Corporation (BVI EC) were deployed to the Bahamas on Friday October 9 to assist in restoring electricity in the aftermath of Hurricane Joaquin. On arrival, the team will be dispatched to the Southern Bahamian Islands where approximately 5000 people were directly impacted by the category 4 hurricane.

Access to these remote islands was restricted following the passage of Hurricane Joaquin due to major flooding and damage to airports, sea ports, roads and critical infrastructure. To date, many roads are still flooded and communication is by satellite phones only on the affected islands.

Several teams in the Territory, including the Virgin Islands Fire and Rescue Service, were sent to Dominica in September to aid in relief efforts due to the impact from Tropical Storm Erika.

The storm left 13 dead, 17 missing, 20 injured and 574 persons homeless and millions of dollars in damage.

Feature Image: A car damaged at Pittstown Point landing on Crooked Island by Hurricane Joaquin's winds, seen on Saturday Oct. 10, 2015.

Image Credit: Miami Herald.

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