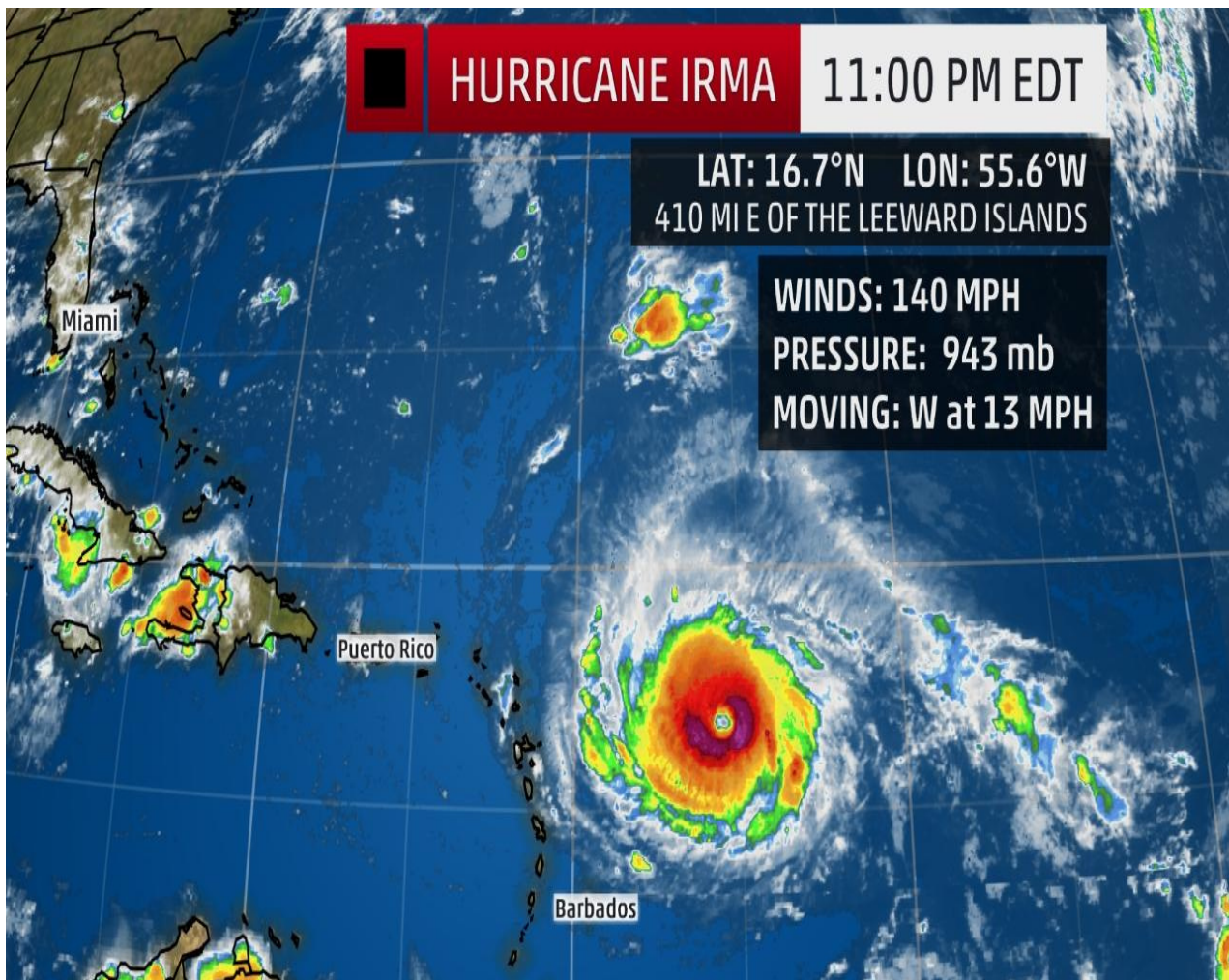


The Virgin Islands Consortium

Hurricane Warning Issued For U.S. Virgin Islands And Puerto Rico; Irma Now 140 Mile-Per-Hour Cat 4 Storm

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Staff **September 05, 2017**



The National Hurricane Center at 11:00 p.m. Monday issued a hurricane warning for the U.S. Virgin Islands, Puerto Rico, Vieques and Culebra, as the threat of Hurricane Irma -- which continues to grow in strength and is now a 140 mile-per-hour category 4 storm -- appears imminent.

Along with the U.S. territories, hurricane warnings are now in effect for Antigua and Barbuda, Montserrat, St. Kitts and Nevis, Anguilla, Saba, St. Eustatius, Saint Martin, and Saint Barthelemy. A tropical storm warning is now in effect for Guadeloupe; a tropical storm watch is now in effect for Dominica.

According to the National Hurricane Center, at 11:00 p.m. tonight, the eye of Hurricane Irma was located by an Air Force Hurricane Hunter aircraft near latitude 16.7 North, longitude 55.6 West. Irma is moving toward the west near 13 mph (20 km/h) and this general motion is expected to continue into Tuesday, followed by a turn toward the west-northwest late Tuesday. On the forecast track, the center of Irma will move near or over portions of the northern Leeward Islands Tuesday night and early Wednesday.

Maximum sustained winds are near 140 mph (220 km/h) with higher gusts. Irma is a category 4 hurricane on the Saffir-Simpson Hurricane Wind Scale. Additional strengthening is forecast during the next 48 hours.

Hurricane-force winds extend outward up to 45 miles (75 km) from the center and tropical-storm-force winds extend outward up to 140 miles (220 km). The minimum central pressure estimated from Hurricane Hunter observations is 943 mb (27.85 inches).

Governor Kenneth Mapp on Monday night [declared a state of emergency](#), and said that residents should not panic, but should instead prepare for the storm. "We have to be prepared. We have to take this event very seriously," he said.

Shelters on St. John Bethany Methodist Church Julius Sprauve School

Shelters on St. Thomas E. Benjamin Oliver School Lockhart Elementary Nisky Moravian Church Knud Hansen Complex Sugar Estate Head Start Special Needs: Community Health Center

Shelters on St. Croix St. Croix Educational Complex Herbert Grigg Home for the Aged Claude O. Markoe School

Sandbag distribution will continue at the locations below on Tuesday from 7:00 a.m. to 12:00 p.m. Individuals requiring sandbags must arrive during this time, as no other opportunities to collect sandbags will be available after:

St. Croix:

- Department of Public Works, Anna's Hope
- Department of Public Works, Frederiksted
- Grove Fire Station
- Cotton Valley Fire Station
- Richmond Fire Station.

St. Thomas:

- Department of Public Works
- Bordeaux Fire Station
- Tutu Fire Station

St. John:

- Department of Public Works

Hospitals, the governor noted, are not shelters, and must be reserved for emergency care. He also advised the public to fill any necessary prescriptions today or early tomorrow. Ambulances will be positioned at fire stations across the territory so they can mobilize quickly if needed.

Mr. Mapp advised residents to clear loose and potentially hazardous items surrounding their homes to limit debris that could become airborne in strong winds.

“It’s a good time to do some spring cleaning,” he said. The governor also recommended residents disconnect the downspout that feeds into their cisterns Tuesday to prevent salt, dirt and debris from contaminating the water supply, noting he would be doing that himself.

The first day of public school has been postponed until further notice. Government employee work closures are yet to be determined. The public is advised to stand by for updates in this regard.

The government said it would continue to communicate with residents during the storm through local media, the Internet and social media. To stay informed of the latest updates affecting the territory, the public is advised to visit [informusvi.com](https://www.informusvi.com) and to sign up for alerts at [vialert.gov](https://www.vialert.gov).

Other resources include: VITEMA – <https://www.facebook.com/vitema/> Government House – <https://www.facebook.com/GovernmentHouseUSVI/> The Department of Tourism – www.usviupdate.com

Mr. Mapp will hold a follow-up news conference tomorrow to deliver more information. A media advisory will be sent out with details.