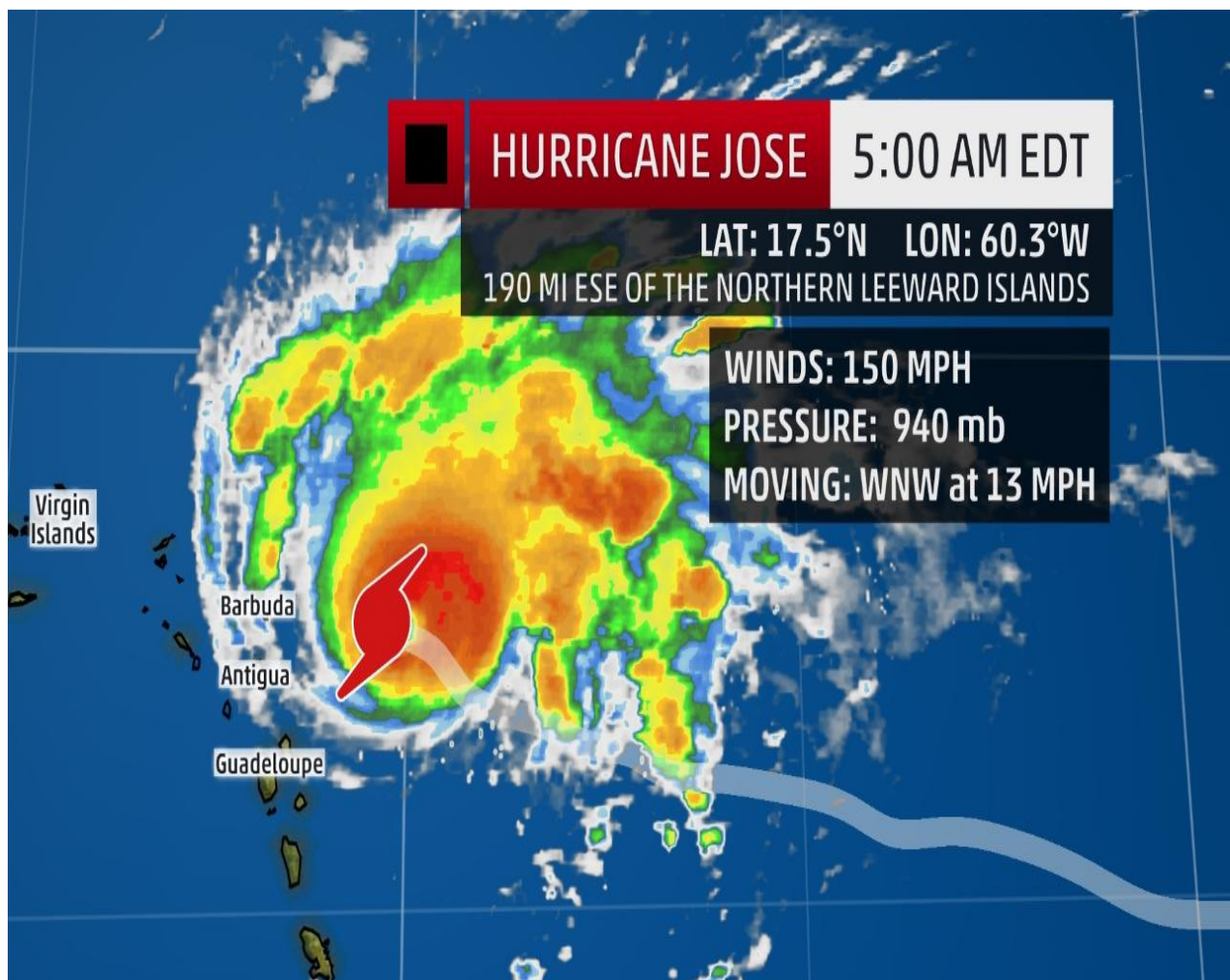


The Virgin Islands Consortium

Giving No Chance To Breathe, Hurricane Jose On Path To Northern Leeward Islands

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After devastating a swath of Caribbean islands, Hurricane Irma now has its sight on Florida. Yet, the northern Leeward Islands will get no chance to breathe, as Hurricane Jose -- now a category 4 storm packing 150 mile-per-hour winds -- continues to strengthen as it tracks west-northwest, according to the National Hurricane Center's (N.H.C.) 5:00 a.m.

A hurricane warning is in effect for Barbuda, Anguilla, St. Martin and St. Barthelemy; a tropical storm warning is in effect for Antigua, Saba and St. Eustatius; and a tropical storm watch is in effect for Montserrat, St. Kitts and Nevis, the British Virgin Islands, and St. Thomas and St. John.

Governor Mapp said during a press briefing tonight that St. Thomas could potentially be impacted by tropical storm conditions from Jose, especially rain. He urged residents with homes compromised by Hurricane Irma to head to shelters. "There's a 25 percent chance that we will experience rain, and some tropical-force winds," the governor said.

According to N.H.C.'s 5:00 a.m. advisory, the center of Hurricane Jose was located near latitude 17.5 North, longitude 60.3 West. Jose is moving toward the west-northwest near 13 mph (20 km/h). A continued west-northwest to northwest motion is expected during the next couple of days. On the forecast track, the core of Jose will pass close to or just east of the northern Leeward Islands today.

Maximum sustained winds are near 150 mph (240 km/h) with higher gusts. Jose is a category 4 hurricane on the Saffir-Simpson Hurricane Wind Scale. Some fluctuation in intensity, up or down, could occur during the next 24 hours. Afterward, gradual weakening is expected to occur.

Hurricane-force winds extend outward up to 35 miles (55 km) from the center and tropical-storm-force winds extend outward up to 140 miles (220 km). The estimated minimum central pressure is 940 mb (27.76 inches).

The government's Emergency Operations Center, gave the following tips to prepare:

- Assemble at least a three-day supply of necessities per person. Items can include food and water, personal hygiene products, toilet paper, blankets, medications, diapers for infants, sani-wipes, games and toys for kids, and personal identification.
- In cases where pets are allowed in shelters, it is the responsibility of the owner to have the following items: Cage and leash for all pets, sufficient food and water on hand and pet medication if necessary.

The following shelter locations are open to house those in need:

- (1) St. Thomas: Knud Hansen Complex and (2) Lockhart Elementary School.
- St. Croix: St. Croix Educational Complex (Opens on Saturday, September 9, 2017 at 4pm)
- St. John: Myrah Keating Smith Clinic

If you intend to seek refuge in a shelter please bring at least a three-day supply of food, water, personal hygiene products, toilet paper, blankets, medications, diapers for infants, sani-wipes, games and toys for children, and personal identification. Additional shelters are being sought out on the island of St. Thomas and St. John. Currently the Knud Hansen Complex is at capacity.

Adequate preparation is critical. Ensure you and your family are informed and prepared. VITEMA urges everyone to continue listening to the weather updates (radio, and online media sources, etc.), to include VI-ALERTS. Plan ahead with family members and assess your homes before the storm arrives. This will ensure you carefully arrive at a shelter quickly and safely no matter the circumstances.

For continuous updates go to informusvi.com, vialert.gov. For further information and to report disaster related incidences or to request rescue and recovery call 340-773-2244.

In the event of an emergency call 911.

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