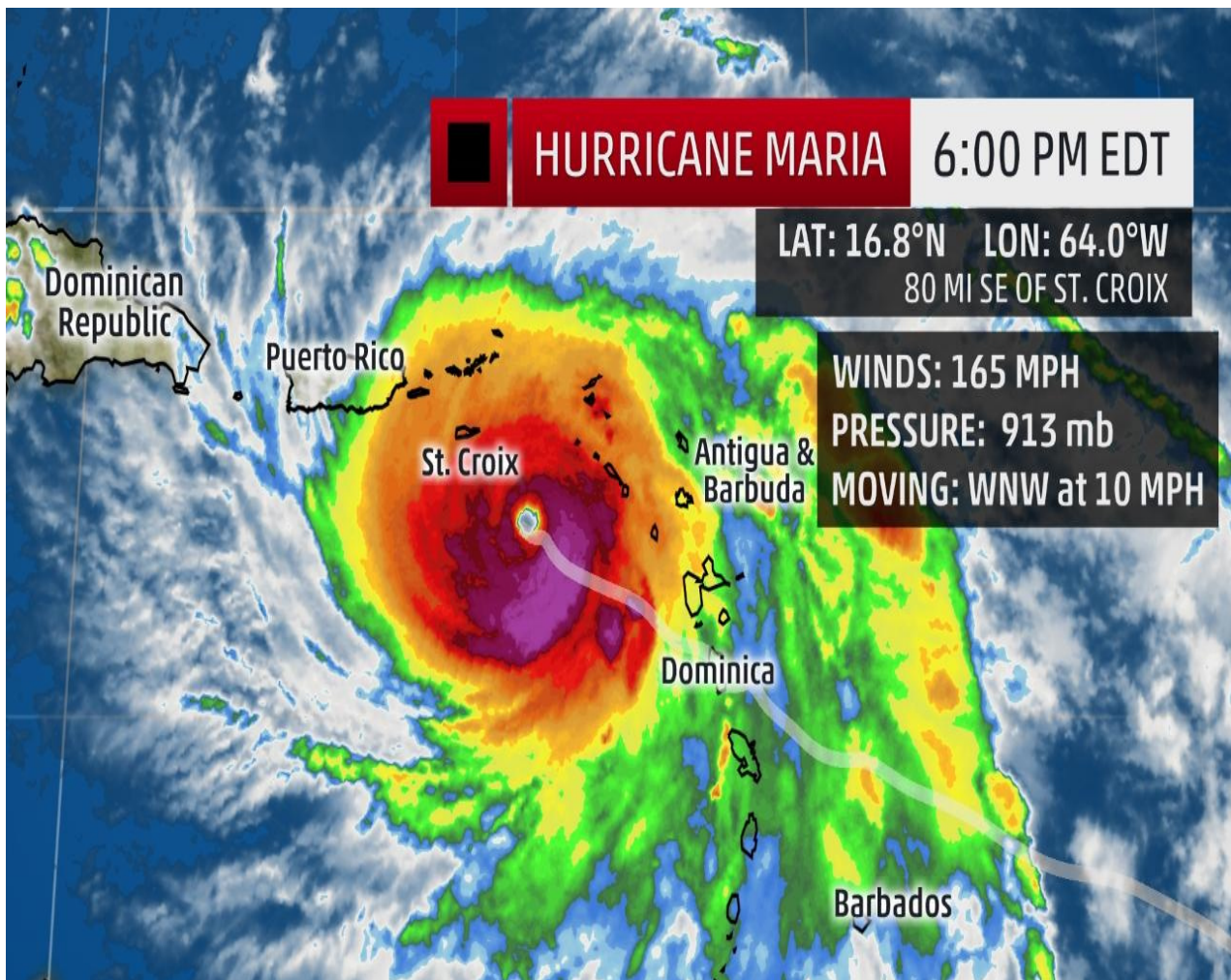


The Virgin Islands Consortium

This Is It: St. Croix Braces For Impact As 'Potentially Catastrophic' Cat 5 Hurricane Maria Arrives

VIC News / **Published On September 19, 2017 10:41 PM /**

Ernice Gilbert **September 19, 2017**



Approximately two weeks ago, the St. Thomas-St. John District of the U.S. Virgin Islands was slammed with punishing wind and rain from Hurricane Irma, one of the most powerful storms ever recorded. St. Croix was by and large spared the storm's wrath, and the island's residents immediately mobilized in support of their affected fellowmen.

Today, the exact opposite is reality, and Hurricane Maria, another record-setting weather system packing 165 mile-per-hour winds, with higher gusts, has its sights set on St. Croix, bringing along torrential rainfall that is projected to last a week after the storm leaves.

In a teleconference held at 5:18 p.m. today, Governor Kenneth Mapp relayed some encouraging news, stating that he was told by the National Weather Service that the storm had shifted a bit to the west, and Maria's eye was expected to pass 10-20 miles to the south of St. Croix. If the projection holds, St. Croix is predicted to experience hurricane-force winds of 120 miles per hour, and not the full brunt of Maria's 165 mile-per-hour wrath. Earlier today, the eye of the storm was projected to make landfall on the southern portion of St. Croix, which would see the island being impacted with Maria's full strength. And it was for this very reason that the governor said the latest forecast should not be cause for relief, adding that Maria "is a live animal, and it could change."

The storm's hurricane-force wind is now expected to start impacting St. Croix between 9:00 p.m. and 10:00 p.m. tonight, and last until 4:00 a.m. Wednesday. The 120 mile-per-hour winds should begin between midnight and 1:00 a.m., and last through 4:00 a.m. Mr. Mapp said tropical storm-force winds on St. Croix are not expected to abate until 2:00 p.m. to 4:00 p.m. Wednesday.

St. Thomas and St. John, along with Water Island, should start experiencing tropical storm-force winds between 6:00 p.m. and 7:00 p.m. The aforementioned islands are not expected to experience hurricane-force winds.

Mr. Mapp said National Guard troops and V.I.P.D. officers would be called in by 6:00 p.m. this evening for their safety, until the storm is over. The time to seek shelter has already passed, and the governor stressed that residents should protect themselves.

"Don't worry about your fear, don't worry about your anxiety; just focus on what you need to do," the governor said. "Be aware of what's going on in your home, and please, as you sit there with each other, talk about what's going on, talk about your experiences, talk about how you feel, because this will help you coordinate and to focus.

"You're going to feel tremendous pressure as the eye wall gets to its closest point to St. Croix and the winds pick up; you're going to feel like your head wants to pop. That's normal because of the low pressure coming with the storm; it's just a normal part of the experience that all of us will be going through throughout the night," the governor said.

According to the National Weather Service, Hurricane Maria will bring between 12-18 inches of rainfall to St. Croix, and 8-12 inches to St. Thomas and St. John. Isolated areas could see as much as 25 inches of rain.

A dangerous storm surge accompanied by large and destructive waves will raise water levels by as much as 7 to 11 feet above normal tide levels in the hurricane warning area near where the center of Maria moves across the Leeward Islands and the British Virgin Islands. According to the governor, citing the National Weather Service, storm surge could reach as high as 30 feet.

Hurricane Maria laid waste to Dominica late Monday night, and the reports coming out of the island are grim. There are multiple deaths, almost all roofs were reportedly ripped off their rafters, and the island lost its communications system, with only amateur radio (ham radio), being able to get through with patchy connections as of early Tuesday, according to reports on the ground in Dominica, via ham radio.

The country's prime minister, Roosevelt Skerit, shared his experience on Facebook, giving his followers a peek into his frightening ordeal that saw the prime minister home's roof blowing off and water pouring in, until he was rescued by police. "My roof is gone. I am at the complete mercy of the hurricane. House is flooding," Mr. Skerit [managed](#) as he witnessed the ravaging of one of his dwellings by a storm that rapidly strengthened in the Atlantic Ocean after meeting warm, favorable conditions.

© Viconsortium 2026