

The Virgin Islands Consortium

Territory Will Have 'More Work For People Here To Do It' Following Hurricanes Irma And Maria, Mapp Tells Senators

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ST. THOMAS -- The U.S. Virgin Islands government is still assessing the damage done to its infrastructure and public facilities, Governor Kenneth Mapp told members of the 32nd Legislature in the St. Thomas-St. John District on Saturday.

The government is insured for a portion of its losses and the federal government has pledged to pay for much of the cost of recovery under the Stafford Act.

Mr. Mapp and Lieutenant Governor Osbert Potter met with Senate President Myron Jackson and Senators Marvin Blyden, Janette Millin Young, Jean Forde, Tregenza Roach, Brian Smith and Janelle Sarauw in the Board of Elections conference room here to discuss the state of the territory's effort to recover from hurricanes Irma and Maria.

"You can't change the reality and the reality is we were hit with two Category 5 hurricanes in 12 days," the governor said. "It is a painful reality, but we have to look for the silver lining as we move forward and rebuild."

Mr. Jackson said the 32nd Legislature was prepared to play a greater role in the territory's recovery. He said senators would like to assist in the distribution of supplies to seniors and others in need, and to have a more formalized role at the Emergency Operations Command (E.O.C.), according to Government House.

Mr. Mapp said that a ship was on its way to the territory with more than one million meals and a great deal of water. Other items such as cots and radios would be also headed to the territory.

Mr. Potter addressed concerns with the process of distributing relief supplies. He reported that despite limited supplies in some areas, Saturday's distribution, which was expanded to several new sites, went well. "Tomorrow is a chance to hit the reset button and do better where we can," Mr. Potter said.

Senators also had questions about debris removal, mosquito control, jobs in the recovery effort, the status of the hospitals, assisting residents of public housing and the tarpaulin program, which [successfully got underway Saturday morning](#).

Governor Mapp said that there would be many employment opportunities going forward. "We want to get as many of our people who are willing to work on the job," he said. "There is going to be more work than people here to do it."

The territory's leader indicated that Federal Emergency Management Agency (F.E.M.A.) personnel, linemen and relief workers from around the country were on the way to the USVI and would be housed on a cruise ship.

Mr. Mapp said the U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development (H.U.D.) was continuing work on a plan to aid those public housing residents displaced by the storm and that an announcement was expected next week in that regard.

Mr. Mapp and Mr. Potter explained to senators that the E.O.C. would soon be moving to the University of the Virgin Islands, where the gym will serve as the center of operations for the local and federal governments' relief efforts.

The recovery process will, without question, bring new challenges each day, the governor told senators. "It's not going to be uneventful," he said. "I try at my press conferences each day to help manage people's expectations."

Feature Image: Governor Kenneth Mapp and Lieutenant Governor Osbert Potter meet with senators in St. Thomas on Saturday, September 23, 2017. (Credit: Government House)

