

The Virgin Islands Consortium

Mapp In New Statement: 'We Cannot Do This Alone. We Need Help'

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Governor Kenneth Mapp on Saturday issued a statement on the devastation Hurricanes Irma and Maria wreaked upon the U.S. Virgin Islands, his administration's efforts -- along with that of the Federal Emergency Management Agency -- in responding to the storms, and his vision for a USVI that is more prepared to face the ever-growing threat of super storms.

He also pleaded for help, stating, "We cannot do this alone. We need help."

Read the full statement below:

Over the past month the United States Virgin Islands has been decimated by two of the most powerful Atlantic hurricanes in recorded history. Being hit by Hurricanes Irma and Maria within a 12-day period was unimaginable, until it happened.

Thousands of our people lost everything to the 170-plus mph winds and many remain in shelters. Our electrical system lies on the ground, destroyed; many poles snapped into pieces like matchsticks. The raging winds burned our green hillsides nearly black – stripping every leaf - and ripped massive trees out by their roots. Heavy rains and storm surge caused mudslides and flooding and mutilated sections of our pristine coastline. Our Territory's only two hospitals were damaged beyond repair and many of our schools have been heavily damaged. Children on the islands of St. Thomas and St. John have not yet had a chance to start school this year and those on St. Croix had one week of classes before Maria's arrival.

Despite the utter devastation brought by two Category 5 hurricanes, we had only a handful of serious injuries and lost five dear souls. Each a tragedy to be sure, but nothing short of a miracle when you survey the wreckage.

President Donald J. Trump, his White House team, the Federal Emergency Management Agency and our other federal partners have given us tremendous support. FEMA, led by Brock Long and our own FCO on the ground, Bill Vogel, are being true partners to the people of the islands. Many NGOs, our local business community and private citizens, including our own NBA legend Tim Duncan and former New York City Mayor Michael Bloomberg, have stepped up to the plate to bring in supplies and aid to the Territory. Our cruise and airline partners offered support by providing relief supplies and mercy missions for residents with medical needs who wanted to join their families on the mainland. There are simply too many people to thank here.

I am proud of the irrepressible spirit of the people of U.S. Virgin Islands, who are resilient and selfless despite extremely challenging conditions. Seventy percent of our first responders lost their homes, but were in the streets working the day after each hurricane struck. Neighbors have labored together to clear roads and share resources – many sheltering former strangers.

Many of our people are living in damaged structures and most of us are without running water, electricity and without the fans, refrigeration and air conditioners so necessary in the Caribbean during what is the hottest time of the year. Ice remains elusive and in very short supply. We still need a great deal of help and I am asking all of our friends in the U.S. Congress for help and for support so we may rebuild America's paradise, known as the U.S. Virgin Islands. If there was ever a time that the four million American citizens living in the Virgin Islands and Puerto Rico need your help, it is now!

We have begun the long march towards recovery. We try hard to manage the expectations of our citizens, who yearn for some sense of normalcy. We need help to rebuild our homes, our schools, our hospitals and our infrastructure – our very lives. We've been down this road before, but the devastation here is unprecedented. So, this time we must rebuild smarter and in a more resilient manner. We will strengthen our building codes; we will work to place more of our electrical infrastructure underground and we will build more durable schools and hospitals. But we cannot do this alone. We need help.

I am confident that, with the continued assistance and prayers of our federal partners and fellow Americans, we will rebuild a better, stronger Virgin Islands. You can begin to help by visiting www.usvirecovery.org and making a contribution to the fund we have established to assist disaster victims and speed recovery. God bless the U.S. Virgin Islands and God bless the United States of America.

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