

The Virgin Islands Consortium

Identities Of Those Who Died As Direct Result Of Hurricanes Irma And Maria Released By D.O.J.

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ST. THOMAS -- The Department of Justice on Monday morning held a press conference to announce the names of five individuals who died as a direct result of Hurricanes Irma and Maria. The announcement, which comes just over three weeks after Irma and two weeks after Maria, were not released sooner Attorney General Claude Walker said, because there were 30 other deaths during the same period -- five of which were homicides -- to which the Office of the Medical Examiner, an arm of the Department of Justice, also responded.

"In light of this I believe the time period given to reach a conclusion was sufficient," Mr. Walker said.

Before announcing the names, Mr. Walker held a moment of silence for the over 50 victims who were killed and more than 500 wounded on Sunday night [during the Las Vegas massacre](#).

As of October 2, the following deaths have been confirmed to be as a direct result of Hurricane Irma: Ishmael Harrigan, 40, of Est. Mariendahl. He was a sergeant in the Virgin Islands National Guard and a sergeant in the Virgin Islands Bureau of Corrections. The second death was Carlena Penn, 38, of Est. Anna's Retreat; the third death was Jason Julius, 46, a lineman with the Virgin Islands Water and Power Authority. Sgt. Harrigan died at his home from blunt force trauma suffered on Sept. 6 at his home in Est. Mariendahl. Ms. Penn also succumbed to blunt force trauma due to a fall at the Tutu Hi-Rise Complex where she lived. The incident occurred on Sept. 6. Mr. Julius died from high voltage electrocution while helping restore power in Sugar Estate, St. Thomas, on Sept. 12.

The Maria-related deaths as of Monday were: Maurice Jackson, 66, of Est. Anna's Retreat, who drowned due to flooding at his home on Sept. 20, Mr. Walker said. The second death was Mr. Ralph Evert III, 57, of Est. Frenchman's Bay, St. Thomas, who died due to asphyxiation and blunt force trauma after being trapped in his home by a mudslide. His body was found Sept. 24, a few days after Hurricane Maria.

Currently all the hurricane-related deaths have occurred in St. Thomas. However, Mr. Walker acknowledged a death in St. John that may be related to one of the storms.

The attorney general said D.O.J. has notified the families of the deceased, revealing that the loved ones of those who died "were deeply saddened," a sentiment Mr. Walker said was shared by D.O.J. He also pointed out that anyone could have been in situations similar to that of the storms' victims, stating, "And so people of faith would say, there, but for the grace of God, go I."

Mr. Walker said D.O.J. would notify the media of other deaths associated with the hurricanes once confirmed.

"We will notify the media, but we collectively share in the grief of the families affected, and while there have been other deaths during the hurricanes," the five announced today died as a direct result of Hurricanes Maria and Irma, based on autopsies performed by the Office of the Medical Examiner," Mr. Walker said.

Feature Image: Virgin Islands Medical Examiner Dr. Jacqueline Pender, Attorney General of the U.S. Virgin Islands Claude Earl Walker and Acting Director of the Department of Justice's Forensic Unit Robert Soto. (Credit: Dept. of Justice)