

The Virgin Islands Consortium

FEMA Disaster Survivor Assistance Teams Reaching Out To Survivors In USVI

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Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA) Disaster Survivor Assistance (DSA) teams are working in hurricane-affected neighborhoods in St. Croix, St. John and St. Thomas to help survivors register for assistance and to identify and address immediate and emerging needs, FEMA said Tuesday.

“Our DSA professionals are canvassing hard-hit communities to let people know that FEMA is here to help, and to make sure they are aware of the assistance we have to offer to individuals and families,” said FEMA Federal Coordinating Officer William Vogel. “In many cases they are going door to door to people’s homes and places of business or they’re holding pop-up registration events to assist groups of people at once.”

DSA teams have met with nearly 17,500 survivors and registered more than 8,200 for disaster assistance as a result of the major disaster declarations stemming from hurricanes Irma and Maria. The mission-essential teams are focusing on community outreach by engaging with public and private entities, police and fire departments, community-based organizations and businesses.

DSA staff not only address immediate concerns, they identify emerging issues and help ensure survivors are getting straight facts about disaster assistance. Team members can be identified easily by their photo identifications and the FEMA logo on their shirts.

“While very real challenges still exist, and communications remain spotty at best, we want people to know that FEMA is committed to having people on the ground to speak directly with survivors and share information,” said Ben Barron, leader of the DSA teams on the islands. “In addition, we often arrive with fliers and other materials that we can leave behind for people to share.”

FEMA Individual Assistance is available to eligible homeowners, renters and business owners across the territory who were impacted by Hurricane Irma and/or Hurricane Maria. Individual Assistance helps eligible applicants with emergency home repairs, uninsured personal property losses and medical, dental and funeral expenses caused by the disaster. It also helps cover other disaster-related expenses and other needs.

Survivors may register online at www.DisasterAssistance.gov or by calling **800-621-3362**. Those who use 711, Video Relay Service and other relay services may call **800-621-3362**. Survivors who are deaf, hard of hearing or who have difficulty speaking and use a TTY should call **800-462-7585** directly.