

The Virgin Islands Consortium

With Over \$43 Million In Loans Approved, SBA Encourages Residents And Businesses To Apply Before Dec. 18 Deadline

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The Small Business Administration (S.B.A.) has approved over \$43 million in loans for the territory's residents and businesses since Hurricanes [Irma](#) and [Maria](#) ravaged the islands. Now, as the deadline to apply approaches, the federal agency is urging residents and businesses to apply.

That's according to Kristin Clarkson, S.B.A.'s public affairs specialist, who relayed pertinent information to The Consortium during an interview on Monday. Revealing the deadline to apply for the loans as December 18, 2017 (except for the business

application of economic injury, which has a deadline of June 2018), Ms. Clarkson said it's imperative that disaster survivors apply for a loan with the S.B.A., whether they needed it or not.

"Apply for the loan even if you think you may not want or need the loan, because if you don't apply for it, any type of assistance stops. If you do apply and don't get approved, you may be referred back to FEMA for assistance," Ms. Clarkson said, referring to the Federal Emergency Management Agency. Applicants must first register with FEMA before applying for disaster-related loans.

Ms. Clarkson said applicants should not wait for their insurance claim to be settled before applying, because once the S.B.A. loan is approved, the insurance claim amount will be deducted from the approved S.B.A. loan.

Persons can apply for up to \$200,000 for property damage on their primary residence. Homeowners and renters can also borrow up to \$40,000 for personal property damages -- car, furniture, clothing, etc. Businesses can borrow up to \$2 million for their building, inventory and equipment, among other losses. "And we also have working capital loans that allow businesses to pay the bills that they would have been able to pay had the storm not happened," Ms. Clarkson said.

Though internet access has been intermittent throughout the territory, Ms. Clarkson said the best way to apply is online through [SBA.gov/disaster](https://www.sba.gov/disaster). You may also visit one of the many Disaster Recovery Centers spread across the USVI:

St. Croix

Old Post Office Building - Christiansted
St. Peter's Episcopal Church - Christiansted
Gibbs Fire Station - Christiansted
Rotary Club West - Frederiksted

St. Johns

Legislature Building - Cruz Bay
Town and Country Building - Coral Bay

St. Thomas

Bordeaux Farmers Market
Tutu Park Mall
Former Scotia Bank

Relative to being approved for a loan, while the S.B.A. takes into consideration credit history and collateral, the most important requirement for these disaster loans is the applicants' ability to pay. "It's not so much perfect credit history. Yes, your credit history and credit score is taken into consideration, but we do understand that things happen. So if somebody had a medical emergency and something happened where their credit score dropped, but they show proof that they are able repay the loan, that's what's most important," Ms. Clarkson said.

And the interest rates are some of the lowest anywhere, with home loans as low as 1.750 percent, and 3.305 percent for businesses.

Ms. Clarkson revealed that 16,703 people and businesses have been referred by FEMA to the S.B.A. for Hurricane Irma-related loans. Out of that number, the S.B.A. has received 3,644 applications, and as of Monday, 315 loans were approved for a total of \$27.2 million. For Maria, 228 loans have been approved for a total of \$16.6 million.

For those who receive funds from other sources for losses related to the S.B.A. loan being applied for -- including your insurance settlement and FEMA grant monies -- those amounts will be deducted from the approved S.B.A. loan. The way it works, according to Ms. Clarkson, is once the S.B.A. loan is approved, the S.B.A. sends out what is called a loss verifier, which helps determine the other sources through which a loan applicant received disaster-related funds, and then deducts the total sum from the approved S.B.A. loan.

Ms. Clarkson encouraged residents and businesses to apply before Dec. 18, pointing to the low interest rates, qualification requirements and other criteria that are specific to the disasters, making now the best time to apply. "We encourage people to get those applications in," she said.