

The Virgin Islands Consortium

WAPA Has Received Over \$76 Million In FEMA Grants To Fund Power Restoration; A Third Of USVI Now Has Power

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After Hurricanes Irma and Maria damaged almost 90 percent of the territory's electrical grid in September, Virgin Islanders have spent weeks in the dark. Today, more than a third of customers have functioning power – and the territory is making headway in reaching its goal of restoring electricity to 90 percent of customers with functioning meters by the end of the year.

Boosting the emergency power restoration effort is more than \$76 million in grants from the Federal Emergency Management Agency's (FEMA) Public Assistance program. As a

result of the major disaster declarations for the U.S. Virgin Islands, FEMA is funding 100 percent of the costs of such emergency work for 180 days from the declaration dates – until March 4, 2018, for Hurricane Irma, and March 15, 2018, for Hurricane Maria.

The funds are helping the Virgin Islands Water and Power Authority (WAPA) cover the cost of bringing about 700 linemen from the mainland, as well as shipping in more than 10,000 poles (including many that can withstand 200 mph winds), hundreds of trucks and thousands of miles of wire.

“FEMA is funding the territory’s power restoration work in such a big way because electricity drives nearly every aspect of the recovery effort for survivors, for businesses and for communities,” said FEMA Federal Coordinating Officer William Vogel. “Our territorial partners are working nonstop to light up the islands again, and we’re pleased to support them in their efforts.”

Behind the scenes of the power restoration effort is a joint territorial/federal task force dedicated to developing strategies and courses of action for restoring power. Comprised of WAPA, the Virgin Islands Territorial Emergency Management Agency, FEMA, the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers (USACE), U.S. Department of Energy and U.S. Environmental Protection Agency, the task force is focused on finding best methods of repairing generating facilities, transmission equipment and distribution systems. The task force is also looking for ways to build resiliency into the islands’ power systems for the long term.

Initially, the priority had been on making sure hospitals, schools and other critical public buildings were powered up and able to provide services to Virgin Islanders. To that end, USACE has installed nearly 160 industrial generators throughout the islands in the weeks since the hurricanes. Now, as communities get back on the power grid, USACE has begun de-installing generators – another sign of progress.