

The Virgin Islands Consortium

Mapp And Cabinet Members Tour St. John

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ST. JOHN -- Governor Kenneth Mapp and members of his cabinet visited several sites on St. John on Tuesday to assess conditions and develop strategies for providing vital government services in the days ahead, Government House said in a release issued Wednesday. Most of the buildings that house government offices on St. John were severely damaged – many beyond repair.

As the territory moves away from emergency response and toward long-term recovery from Hurricanes Irma and Maria, plans are now in the works for permanent infrastructure improvements, demolition and reconstruction of the damaged buildings, as well as for more temporary solutions, such as modular structures, Government House said.

“If these buildings are found to be damaged at more than 50 percent, the federal Government will assist us in replacing them,” Mr. Mapp said. “It is critical that all assessments be completed so we can move forward.”

St. John’s two fire stations, Myrah Keating Smith Community Health Center, Julius E. Sprauve School and the Guy Benjamin Community Center are among the buildings slated for reconstruction.

The 20,000-square-foot Myrah Keating Smith clinic was severely damaged during the storm and the water that entered the building caused mold issues, rendering it unusable.

“It’s a total gut and redo,” said Darryl Smalls, vice president of facilities management for the Schneider Regional Medical Center, which also oversees operations at the clinic. Mr. Mapp said a decision had been reached on a specific type of modular structure that would be placed at the site in the interim.

Mr. Smalls showed the governor and cabinet members where the fixed modular buildings would be placed. Until the modular buildings are set up, medical services are being provided in Cruz Bay at the Morris deCastro Clinic, according to the release.

Modular buildings are also likely to be used at Julius E. Sprauve School, where several classrooms were damaged. The territory’s leader told Sprauve School Principal Marion Lynch-Esannason and Assistant Principal Clifton Boyd, that he would work with Dept. of Education officials to address the school’s needs. The administrators identified restoration of internet as critical in the short term.

“We will talk to BIT (the Bureau of Information Technology) today to see what can be done,” Mr. Mapp said.

During Tuesday’s assessment, the governor met with those managing St. John’s power restoration and debris removal efforts, St. John residents, officers from the Virgin Islands Police Department, firefighters, Department of Human Services staff and other Government employees, according to Government House. He also spoke briefly with U.S. Coast Guard officers managing the salvage of derelict vessels.