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# Red Cross Preparing to Respond as Weather System Approaches, Urges Personal Readiness

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The American Red Cross of the Virgin Islands said Tuesday it was preparing to respond as Potential Tropical Cyclone 9 — as the weather system already affecting portions of the the Leeward Islands is being called — and the nonprofit urged residents to make preparations immediately.

Potential Tropical Cyclone Nine is expected to produce heavy rains and potentially life-threatening flash flooding and mudslides, according to the National Hurricane Center. In the USVI, the Red Cross is coordinating closely with government partners to support urgent needs of people affected by the storm, the nonprofit said.

Here are safety steps that residents can take for personal readiness provided by the Red Cross:

- Know the difference between a watch and warning. A WATCH means a hurricane, tropical storm or flooding is possible. A WARNING means conditions are expected within 36 hours.
- Tune into your local radio, NOAA radio or news channels for the latest updates. Follow guidance from local officials.
- Check your emergency kit and replace any missing items, as well as adding items to protect against COVID-19 like disinfectant supplies (hand sanitizer with 60% alcohol and cleaning wipes) and cloth face coverings for everyone in your household who can wear one safely.
- If you can't shelter in place, have a plan for where you'll go (relatives, friends) and know what sheltering resources may be available through emergency apps or messaging from local emergency management officials.
- Don't forget your pets. Bring them indoors and maintain direct control of them. Prepare a pet emergency kit with leashes or carriers, food, water, bowls, cat litter and box, and photos of you with your pet in case you are separated.
- Get your home ready. Cover windows with storm shutters or plywood. Store outside items, such as lawn furniture and trash cans to prevent them from being moved by high winds.
- Stay indoors; avoid beaches, riverbanks and floodwaters. Stay alert for extended rainfall and subsequent flooding. Don't walk, swim or drive through floodwaters. Remember: Turn around, don't drown.
- Use flashlights in the dark if the power goes out. Avoid using candles.

The Red Cross is encouraging residents to download its emergency app for real-time weather alerts, open shelters and expert advice on emergency situations. The Emergency App includes an "I'm Safe" feature that helps people check on loved ones. Search "American Red Cross" in app stores, or go to [redcross.org/apps](https://redcross.org/apps).

The Red Cross said it has guidance available in multiple languages on getting prepared while still protecting yourself from COVID-19 [here](#). Visit [redcross.org/hurricane](https://redcross.org/hurricane) for full hurricane safety information.