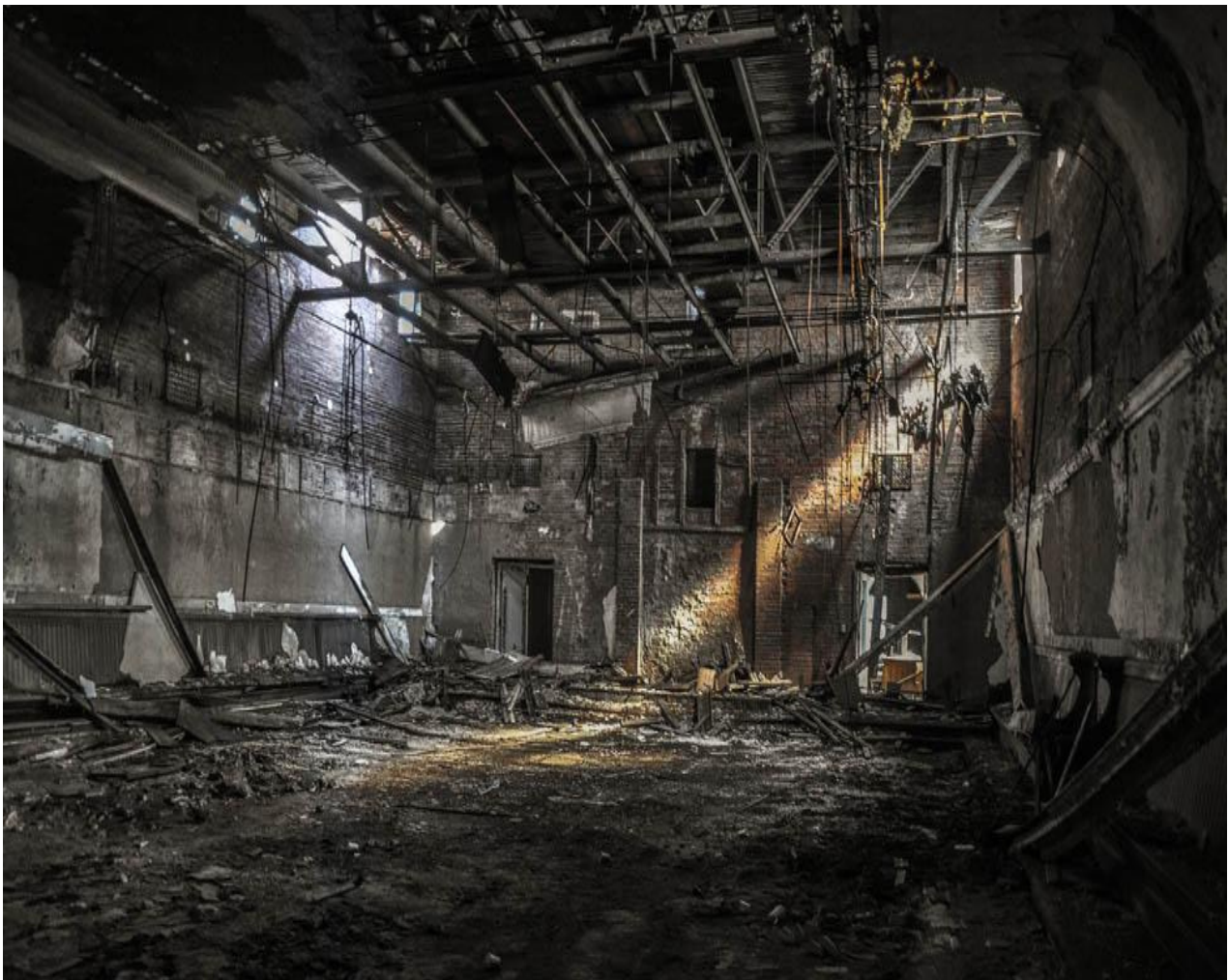


The Virgin Islands Consortium

DPNR To Inspect Facilities Following Hurricanes, Including Abandoned And Visibly Uninhabitable Homes

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In what it says is an effort to ensure the safety of buildings in the territory, the Department of Planning and Natural Resources (D.P.N.R.) -- which through law is responsible for determining whether a building or other structure is dangerous or unsafe, or requiring it to be made safe and secure, vacated and closed or taken down -- will conduct inspections throughout the territory, D.P.N.R. made known Friday.

According to the agency, phase one of the inspection program will include homes that are abandoned and visibly uninhabitable. Additionally, any owner of a building or

structure who considers their property to be in dangerous or unsafe condition, may contact D.P.N.R. to request an inspection.

A timeline for the inspection was not given.

The inspection will determine whether the structure can be made safe or closed or taken down. D.P.N.R. is following Virgin Islands law Title 29 V.I.C § 297 (2017), which states the following:

- (f) Any building or other structure or part thereof deemed by the commissioner to be in a dangerous or unsafe condition from any cause whatsoever, including partial destruction by fire or natural disaster, shall be made safe and secure or shall be vacated and closed or shall be taken down by the owner or his/her agent, as the commissioner may direct on service of a written notice by the commissioner as set forth in such notice and within the period named therein. Such order shall not be arbitrary and shall state the specific danger involved. If considered necessary in order to protect life and property, the commissioner may require that any building be vacated at once and temporarily close the sidewalks and streets adjacent thereto.
- (g) Whoever, having been ordered by the commissioner or, upon the commissioner's instructions, by a police officer, under the authority of this title, to vacate a building, refuses to do so, shall be fined not more than \$200 or imprisoned for not more than one year, or both.
- (h) Paragraphs (f) and (g) of this section shall not be construed as relieving the owner of the property referred to in such paragraphs, or his agent, from liability because of accident or loss occurring after service by the Commissioner of the notice referred to in paragraph (f).
- (i) If the owner of a building or other structure shall fail to comply within the stated time with a written notice issued by the commissioner pursuant to subsection (f) directing that the building or structure shall be taken down, the commissioner may cause the building or other structure to be demolished and removed by the Government of the Virgin Islands. In such event, the commissioner shall by certified mail, return receipt requested, demand that the owner pay within sixty days the reasonable costs of demolition and removal. If the costs assessed by the commissioner are not paid within the sixty-day period, the amount due shall be a lien in favor of the government of the Virgin Islands upon the real property on which the building or other structure was located, and the amount due may be collected by seizure and sale of the property.
- (j) The commissioner shall maintain accurate records of inspections made, of notices issued, and of actions taken by builders and owners pursuant to notices resulting from inspections. A separate record shall be maintained of all demolitions classified by former use and occupancy.

D.P.N.R. said residents should contact the Fire Service for additional requirements.

Residents with questions or concerns are asked to contact D.P.N.R., Division of Building Permits in St. Thomas/St. John at 340-774-3320, or St. Croix at 340-773-1082.