

The Virgin Islands Consortium

Important New Details On The Emergency Home Repairs V.I. Project

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During a press conference held at Government House, St. Croix on Wednesday, Governor Kenneth Mapp released some important details relative to the recently announced Emergency Home Repairs V.I. Project, made possible through a Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA) grant of \$776 million, and aimed at helping homeowners whose homes were affected by either Hurricanes Irma or Maria, or both, but did not qualify for home repair assistance from FEMA.

The program is being spearheaded by the local government through the V.I. Housing Finance Authority (V.I.H.F.A.), according to the governor. "That program is expected to put an average of \$25,000 in over 12,000 homes in the Virgin Islands for immediate

repairs,” Mr. Mapp said.

On Wednesday, the governor said to qualify, you must:

1. Be the owner of the home
2. It must be your primary residence (you can apply even if you're living in the U.S., according to the governor)
3. Be able to substantiate storm damage
4. Have a FEMA registration number (If you don't have a number, apply for one by calling 1-800-621-3362, or online [here](#)).

According to Mr. Mapp, even if you applied for a Small Business Administration loan and was successful or unsuccessful, you can qualify for help under the new program. And even if you've received insurance monies for damages on your home, you can still be approved, the governor said. If you were approved for all personal assistance that have been provided so far, and have received aid, you can still qualify for further assistance under the new program, he said.

Interested persons should call the V.I.H.F.A.'s hotline at 844-813-9191, or visit the signup website [here](#). You can also simply walk into one of V.I.H.F.A.'s offices located at Frenchtown in St. Thomas, or Lagoon Street in Frederiksted, St. Croix. If you've signed up online, there's no need to visit the physical locations, the governor stressed.

The governor said his administration is expecting the local workforce to supply 2,500 - 3,000 employees, while the program will require an estimated 10,000 workers. Because of this, workers will be brought into the territory and will be housed in two small vessels.

The governor said there are 15 items that make homeowners eligible to receive funding for repairs under the program. Some of the conditions include:

1. Work to provide essential power supply (damaged weatherhead, for example)
2. Work necessary to provide propane gas supply
3. Work to provide potable waterline supply (damaged plumbing)
4. Repairs to cistern (including cleaning of cistern for contamination)
5. Work necessary to repair and replace damaged windows or wall-mounted air conditioning units, ceiling fans or doors
6. Weatherproofing to include roof, walls and windows
7. Securing or replacing broken windows, and the repairing and replacement of non-functioning exterior and interior doors
8. Removal of disaster-related debris to safely enter, inspect and to perform eligible emergency work, and safety shelter in place

“Anything related to the disaster that affects your home, you can apply for this program,” Mr. Mapp said. He said [Aecom](#), one of the firms that won the bid for the project, along with V.I.H.F.A., started contacting around 1,000 homeowners on Monday, who sustained roof damage but were deemed ineligible for the blue roof program. “We are going to reach out to you because we see you as the priority simply because you were not being adequately sheltered, and your home could not be adequately covered,” Mr. Mapp said. Once contacted, these homeowners will visit a designated center to fill out documents. An inspector will then be assigned to determine what the level of repairs are — which the

governor said will average about \$25,000 — before providing the funding. About 9 contractors have already been retained as subcontractors under the main contract of the project, the governor made known, adding that more licensed contractors and tradespeople will be hired. “We will be doing that across the media and letting folks know what they need to do and where they need to show up,” Mr. Mapp said.

The governor also reached out to landlords living in, say, a duplex that was damaged during the storms, asking that they register, “and we will figure out if we can bring you into the program, and if we can persuade FEMA that that’s essential to sheltering,” he said. The governor stressed that registration does not mean that the program has been approved for landlords or renters, “but we’re working that through.”

The Emergency Home Repairs V.I. Project is separate from another federal program called the Permanent Repairs Program, which provides funding of up to \$75,000 in direct repairs to a hurricane-damaged home, according to the governor. Mr. Mapp said 428 homeowners were approved in some manner — “whether they take the repairs, or the cash,” he said — while a number of homeowners were found to be ineligible. Many homeowners who were not approved were those with home insurance policies whose settlement claims had not yet been approved. Because of this, they were turned down by FEMA, according to the governor. However, participants in the Permanent Home Repairs Program have until one year to reapply — giving enough time for those with insurance policies to settle their claims.

Feature Image: St. Croix home damaged by Hurricane Maria. (Credit: [Irene Ali Photography](#))