

The Virgin Islands Consortium

FEMA Announces \$238.4 Million Grant To WAPA For Hardening Of Electrical Systems

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Galerie technique à Montesquieu des Albères Prise de vue des 4 câbles

The Federal Emergency Management Agency on Tuesday announced a grant to the Virgin Islands Water and Power Authority of \$238,412,707, which is intended for permanent repairs to electrical system components damaged by Hurricanes Irma and Maria.

[On Thursday](#), WAPA said the total cost of all hazard mitigation projects was estimated at \$572 million. “We have experienced the devastating effects of hurricanes and

windstorms, primarily on our transmission and distribution systems. Our goal is to capitalize on the federal funding available to build a stronger system and implement measures to reduce both our response and recovery," said WAPA Executive Director Lawrence J. Kupfer on Thursday.

Delegate to Congress Stacey Plaskett, who announced the grant, noted the importance of continuous funding from the federal government, as well as the need to rebuild the U.S. Virgin Islands with future storms in mind.

"The rebuilding efforts in the U.S. Virgin Islands will require an extraordinary level of coordination and cooperation between the local and federal government," she said. "We have in this moment both an opportunity and a responsibility to ensure that the greatest good emerges from this calamity to our Virgin Islands. This grant will help build more resistant infrastructures in the Virgin Islands which will be critical to future economic stability. We must rebuild the Virgin Islands the right way - today so that tomorrow hurricanes are less damaging.

"The United States government and the international community has an obligation to work with the affected local governments to restore infrastructure, provide critical humanitarian assistance, and help recover and build back our islands," Ms. Plaskett concluded.

Governor Kenneth Mapp has consistently spoken of the need to harden the territory's power systems, and have lobbied for the funding needed to perform the work. He has said that the territory will have a more resilient energy system through the continued installation and substitution of composite poles, which Mr. Mapp intends to purchase — at a cost of \$4,000 each — with \$50 million from the [recently announced](#) \$243 million U.S. Housing and Urban Development grant.

Along with the composite poles, wind generators will be installed to help lower the cost of power in the territory, Mr. Mapp said. And two generators will be installed on St. John in the Cruz Bay and Coral Bay areas to assist in maintaining power to St. John in the event of power disruption to the Randolph Harley Power Plant, which is located on St. Thomas.

The hardening of the territory's electrical infrastructure will also include the underground distribution of feeders in critical locations territory-wide, and development of a micro-grid for St. John. Once all projects are completed, coupled with other mitigation projects completed in the aftermath of prior year storms, more than 50 percent of WAPA's customers will receive electrical service through underground facilities, according to Mr. Kupfer.