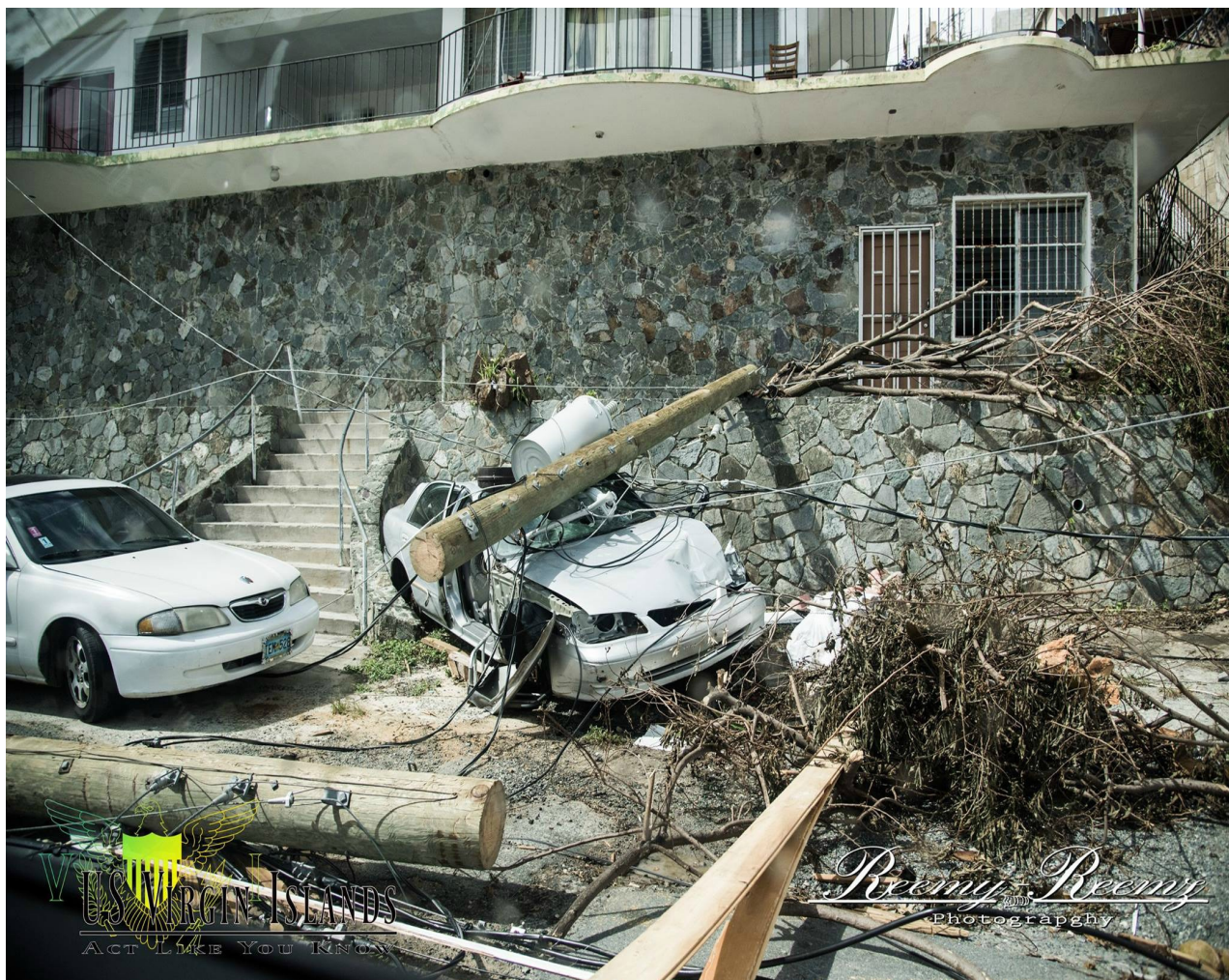


The Virgin Islands Consortium

The 2018 Hurricane Season Has Officially Begun. Here's How To Get Ready.

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The 2018 Atlantic hurricane season has officially begun, and the territory's residents are being advised to start getting ready immediately.

According to a May 24 news release from the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration, there's only a 25 percent chance that this hurricane season will be a normal one. In fact, NOAA forecasters have predicted a 75 percent chance that it will either be near-normal or above-normal.

An average hurricane season produces 12 named storms, of which six become hurricanes, including three major hurricanes. A named storm has winds of 39 mph or

higher while a hurricane has winds of 74 mph or higher. A major hurricane is considered a category three, four, or five with winds 111 mph or higher.

This season, NOAA is predicting a 70 percent chance of 10 to 16 named storms, of which five to nine could become hurricanes, including one to four major hurricanes.

How to Be Prepared

Although hurricanes may be inevitable, there are ways to prepare for them. The Virgin Islands Territorial Emergency Management Agency has outlined a number of ways Virgin Islanders can be ready for this season.

- **Communicate:** Speaking with family members about what to do if a hurricane strikes is essential. Emergency plans for the elderly and those with both access and functional needs should be included in the discussions. Discussing hurricane plans ahead of time helps reduce fear, particularly for younger children. All household members should be aware of the Emergency Communication Plan.
- **Assemble a Disaster Supply Kit:** The supply kit should include non-perishable food items and water for each person for at least one week. It should also include a radio, flashlights, batteries, cash, first-aid supplies, medications, hand sanitizer, personal hygiene items, baby supplies and copies of any important documents (in case of an evacuation). One way to safeguard important documents is to take pictures of them and email them to a secured email address to ensure access.
- **Prepare the Home:** Damaged trees and limbs should be removed to keep the property and its owners safe. Loose rain gutters and downspouts should also be secured and clogged areas or debris cleared to prevent water damage to property. Generators should be purchased or borrowed for use during power outages.
- **Know Where to Go:** In the event of a mandatory evacuation, it's important to know the local hurricane evacuation routes and to have a plan for where to stay. Those who aren't in areas of evacuation and who decide to stay in their homes should plan to have adequate supplies in case they lose power and water for several days and aren't able to leave because of flooding or blocked roads.
- **Pet Emergency Kits:** In an emergency, pets will be even more dependent on their owners for their safety and well-being. Family disaster plans should include pets too.
- **Register for Emergency Alerts And Notifications:** Residents can get emergency alerts via text message, email or via landline. Registering for Alert VI is available through the VITEMA page [here](#).

Last year September, the territory experienced two Category 5 hurricanes – Irma and Maria. The two ravaged the islands leaving some dead and the homes and businesses of many in ruins. It took residents between three and six months to have water and power restored to their homes.

Storm Glossary