

The Virgin Islands Consortium

Progress Made In Disposal Operations For Hurricane Debris, FEMA Says

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Hurricanes Irma and Maria left behind 580,000 cubic yards of debris in the U.S. Virgin Islands, enough to fill 177 Olympic size swimming pools, according to the Federal Emergency Management Agency. FEMA said in a release issued Tuesday that all eligible debris has been collected and significant progress is being made toward the goal of shipping it away from the territory.

“Debris collection, processing and disposal are signs of progress after a hurricane, not to mention two major hurricanes in a two week period,” said FEMA Federal Coordinating Officer William L. Vogel. “FEMA has worked with the Virgin Islands government to assure management of this debris is in compliance with all necessary federal and territorial laws

and regulations. We've come a long way, and we're looking forward to the completion of hurricane debris disposal during the next few months."

More than 194,000 cubic yards of vegetative and construction debris from St. Thomas and St. John is temporarily staged at the Cancryn site on St. Thomas, according to the release. It was collected, sorted and reduced to a relatively uniform size. Barging of debris from the site is anticipated to begin in August.

On St. Croix, more than 385,000 cubic yards of debris has been collected and is temporarily staged at Body Slob, FEMA said. It is expected that sorting, reduction and permitting will be completed in time to begin barging away this fall.

Disaster officials are assuring the public that hurricane debris at the two staging areas is being responsibly managed and monitored to reduce risks to the environment and to public health. To prevent spontaneous combustion, vegetative debris must be regularly turned and cooled. Otherwise, it poses a serious risk of starting a fire that could spread. No debris is being burned or composted.

Residents should also be aware that debris removal across the territory may involve slow-moving trucks carrying uncovered loads, according to the federal agency. Motorists and pedestrians should allow plenty of room for crews to operate.

Recovery officials are asking Virgin Islanders for their patience as the process for debris disposal is completed. Questions about debris disposal may be emailed to FEMA-STT-Debris-Site@fema.dhs.gov.