

# The Virgin Islands Consortium

## FEMA Provides \$1.6 Million In Funding To USVI For Tsunami Early Warning System

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The Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA) today obligated \$1.6 million to the U.S. Virgin Islands for the tsunami early warning system, FEMA has made known. During Hurricanes Irma and Maria, territory's tsunami early warning system was heavily damaged, leaving the critical alert system inoperable.

According to FEMA, Section 428 of the Robert T. Stafford Relief and Emergency Assistance Act authorizes alternative procedures for the Public Assistance (PA) program. The tsunami early warning system is the first 428 project to be obligated in the USVI. This fixed cost grant gives the Virgin Islands Territorial Emergency Management Agency (VITEMA) the ability to apply any unused funds to future projects.

“We are excited about the Tsunami Early Warning System, this is the first of many projects designed to make the Virgin Islands more resilient for future events,” said Joe Girot, infrastructure director. “This project is an investment in the safety of Virgins Islanders, enhancing local officials’ capability to provide citizens with life-saving information.”

Beginning June 2019, the system will undergo a full refurbishment to replace and harden many of the key components damaged by the storms, according to the release. To protect against future severe weather events, wooden support poles will be replaced with steel poles rated two classes higher in strength, heavy-duty solar panels and brackets will be mounted, and robust tensioned cables will add structural stability.

Additionally, the system is being modernized for compatibility with the Integrated Public Alert and Warning System (IPAWS), our nation’s alert and warning infrastructure. This integration will boost the systems capabilities to notify and alert the public of many other potential catastrophic events, including hurricanes, earthquakes and other weather-related traumas, FEMA said.

IPAWS infrastructure allows for multiple methods to alert the public in the event of an emergency including the Emergency Alert System (EAS) through television and radio, Wireless Emergency Alerts (WEA) through cell phones and tablets, the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration (NOAA) Weather Radio and other public alerting message boards and signage.

To sign up for emergency, weather related, public safety and service disruption alerts in the USVI, sign up for Alert VI by visiting [vitema.vi.gov](http://vitema.vi.gov).