

The Virgin Islands Consortium

VITEMA Hosts Multi-Agency Table Top Exercise Ahead Of Hurricane Season Peak

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The Virgin Islands Territorial Emergency Management Agency said it continued to lead the charge in ensuring the Virgin Islands is prepared for, and able to respond to the impact of hurricanes in the territory.

On July 29 and 30, the agency began facilitating a week-long territory wide multi-agency hurricane preparedness walkthrough and tabletop exercise on St. Croix, VITEMA said. The tabletop exercise continued on St. Thomas Thursday and ended Friday.

Supported by the Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA), VITEMA Director Daryl D. Jaschen invited all agencies and partners with a shared aim to participate in an

extensive review and update of the territory's existing hurricane response plans, according to the agency. Specifically, participants discussed shelter operations, point of distribution (POD) operations, port reopening, route clearance and external communications.

Participants included the Office of the Governor, VITEMA, Department of Human Services, the American Red Cross, Department of Health, Virgin Islands Fire Services, Virgin Islands National Guard, FEMA, Department of Public Works, the Office of Collective Bargaining, Virgin Islands Waste Management Authority, Department of Property and Procurement, Bureau of Information Technology, Office of Management and Budget, Virgin Islands HAM Operators, Department of Planning and Natural Resources, Schneider Regional Medical Center, VIYA, WTJX, Bureau of Corrections, Witt O'Brien, St. John Rescue, Love City Strong, Department of Veteran Affairs, West Indies Company and the Department of Tourism.

"We are going to operate this exercise as if we were completely autonomous which will help us understand the ability of the local government to prepare and respond without federal assistance," Mr. Jaschen said. "Our goal is to equip the Virgin Islands with tools and strategies to have a robust response effort we can implement ourselves should the need arise."

FEMA representatives included Bill Vogel, who served as FEMA's Federal Coordinating Officer assigned to the Virgin Islands during Hurricanes Irma and Maria in 2017, VITEMA said. Additionally, FEMA Region II representatives, in partnership with VITEMA personnel were stationed at every table to jointly facilitate discussions.

"This week's exercises ultimately increase the territory's ability to self-sustain while simultaneously increasing our response capability in the most cost-efficient method possible," Mr. Jaschen said. "Exercises like these help agencies understand their roles, responsibilities, and needs in advance of a disaster or event."