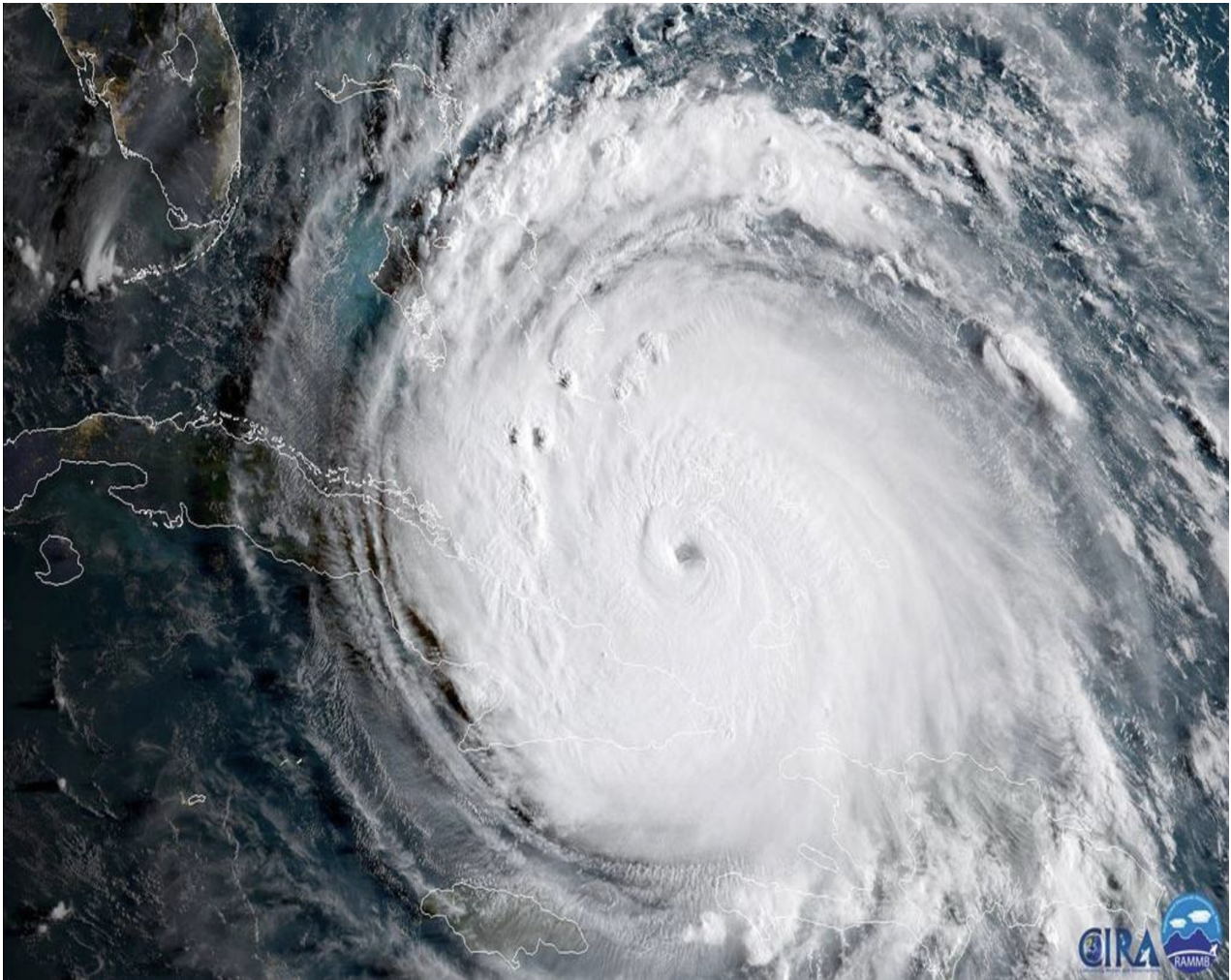


The Virgin Islands Consortium

2019 Hurricane Season Expected To See Increased Activity Beginning Late August

VIC News / **Published On August 16, 2019 08:52 AM /**

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Only two named storms have emerged from the Atlantic hurricane season this year, making it the slowest year since 1999, according to Philip Klotzbach, a meteorologist at Colorado State University specializing in Atlantic basin seasonal hurricane forecasts (via Bloomberg). There was a subtropical storm named Andrea, however it arrived in May -- before the official June 1 start of the season.

But meteorologists are expecting an increase in the number of storms developing in the Atlantic, as wind shear, dry air and dust, among other inhibiting factors relax their grip later this month.

"Indications are that inhibiting factors for tropical development, such as dry air, dust and strong wind shear over the Atlantic basin will start to relax during the week of Aug. 18-25," said AccuWeather Hurricane Expert Dan Kottlowski.

The peak of hurricane season is from mid-August through late October, although the season runs from June 1 through November 30. Dennis Feltgen, spokesman for the National Hurricane Center in Miami, told Bloomberg news that the upcoming six weeks "is regularly the most dangerous and active time for storms to develop in the Atlantic."

Mr. Kottlowski expects "a big change in the pattern over the Atlantic, going from a very lackluster quiet weather pattern to a much more active one."

"We are thinking this season will be back-loaded," he said.

The National Weather Service last week forecast 10 to 17 named storms in the Atlantic. Last year, there were 15, including Hurricanes Florence and Michael that killed a combined 96 people and caused more than \$49 billion in damage on the mainland, according to Bloomberg.

This means if the forecasts are of any value, the 2019 hurricane season will see a drastic change from the very slow season experienced so far this year.

The Virgin Islands Territorial Emergency Management Agency [has been urging](#) residents to get prepared. [So, too](#), has FEMA.

The USVI is still recovering from Hurricanes Irma and Maria, dual powerful storms that hit back-to-back in September, respectively. The storms destroyed homes, schools, hospitals, and other community essentials. The damages were estimated to be in the billions. In fact, as of July 2018, federal agencies had provided more than \$1.7 billion to hurricane survivors, businesses, and the territory, from FEMA grants, disaster loans by the U.S. Small Business Administration, and claims payments by the National Flood Insurance Program, according to a FEMA mitigation assessment report published in September 2018.

Even so, the USVI's recovery is far from over and, in many ways, has yet to begin. More than \$700 million meant to help the USVI rebuild its infrastructure, housing communities and to begin the process of hardening the territory's electrical grid, is being held up by the U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development for what HUD said was the territory's [lack of capacity](#) to manage the funds, which makes it, according to HUD, a high risk grantee.

A "high risk grantee" is, essentially, a jurisdiction receiving federal grants that is incapable, for any number of reasons, of managing the money without waste, fraud or abuse. The territory lacks the "capacity" – the staff and technology – to administer the massive amount of money H.U.D. intends to deliver, HUD officials said at the beginning of August.

Until the territory can demonstrate the "capacity" to administer more than a billion dollars in disaster recovery and mitigation grants, H.U.D. will keep a tight grip on new Community Development Block Grant money targeting major infrastructure projects.

“The USVI has assured us they will have the capacity needed to manage these funds. And that is good ... we are very supportive of the Virgin Islands,” a senior H.U.D. official told the Consortium last week. “They are just not there yet.”

Correction: August 16, 2019

A previous version of this story, because of a text error, stated that Hurricane Maria affected St. Croix in October. The storm actually hit the island September 19. The story has been updated to reflect the correct information.

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