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FEMA, VITEMA, V.I. National Guard and Other Gov't Agencies Hold Hurricane Readiness Meeting

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The Federal Emergency Management Agency, the V.I. Territorial Emergency Management Agency and the V.I. National Guard along with a number of gov't agencies met recently in-person at the National Guard's Armory in Estate Bethlehem on St. Croix and VITEMA's Emergency Operations Center in St. Thomas, as well as virtually, for what was called a "Response Capstone Event" which included five days of workshops focused on improving the joint response to potential tropical storms impacting the territory this year.

"Even as thousands of Virgin Islanders continue to take their best shot against COVID-19 by getting the vaccine, the Government of the Virgin Islands is fully engaged in preparations for hurricane season," said Governor Albert Bryan. He said the GVI and its agencies "joined with VITEMA, VI National Guard and FEMA for a series of workshops and discussions to improve

coordination before the first tropical storm of the season arrives on our shores.”

“From transporting commodities around the territory to distributing food to people in need and from supporting vaccinations to directing traffic post storm, the soldiers of the Virgin Islands National Guard are ready, willing and able to assist the territory whenever it needs us,” said Major General Kodjo S. Knox-Limbacker, the Adjutant General of the Virgin Islands National Guard.

“For many years, FEMA has committed time, energy and resources to help VITEMA and Virgin Islanders before, during and after a disaster,” said Mark A. Walters, FEMA Caribbean Area Office Coordinator. “From our efforts to recover from Irma/Maria to our ongoing support of the COVID-19 vaccination mission, this Capstone event is just the latest example of FEMA’s commitment to support the USVI.”

The five-day series of workshops and discussions served as one of the major milestones for the territory’s 2021 hurricane preparedness efforts, FEMA said. It is well known that preparedness is an ongoing process and last week’s discussions provided opportunities to integrate lessons learned from the Irma/Maria response efforts, address any gaps with territorial or National Guard resources and then identify any federal resources necessary to respond to destructive storms in the territory.

Topics covered during the week of discussions included food/water distribution, patient movement, route clearance, debris removal, temporary power and power restoration, emergency responder communications as well as public information and warning.

“As much as it is important for VITEMA, the GVI and FEMA to prepare to respond to a possible storm or hurricane, it is just as important that Virgin Islanders prepare themselves and their loved ones,” said VITEMA Director Daryl Jaschen. “We at VITEMA are doing our part to prepare and we encourage you to build a kit, make a plan and stay informed.”

FEMA said Virgin Islanders should prepare to be self-sufficient in the immediate aftermath of a hurricane and take steps to protect their property. Those with disabilities and others with access and functional needs may [have additional considerations](#).

Build a kit. Families should be prepared to shelter in a secure and safe location for up to 10 days after a disaster. Remember roads may be impassable, gas stations and grocery stores could be closed, power may be out, and communications could be interrupted.

- Store a gallon of water for each person per day for 10 days, for drinking and sanitation.
- Gather a 10-day supply of non-perishable food and medications.
- Have enough antibiotic ointment, hygienic products, diapers and wipes available.
- Store supplies to meet the needs of individual family members, including infants and young children, seniors, persons with disabilities, and pets or service animals.
- The Virgin Islands Department of Health has recommended people include additional items in their kits to help prevent the spread of coronavirus or other viruses and the flu, items can include:
 - Cloth face coverings (for everyone ages 2 and above), soap, hand sanitizer and disinfecting wipes to disinfect surfaces.
 - Protect important documents such as vital records, insurance policies, medical information and property and financial records, by storing copies in a safe deposit box or another location separate from your home. These items may be necessary for survivors who could be eligible to apply for disaster assistance.

- Keep your home and vehicle insured against wind and flood damage. Also, remember to update your property insurance to cover current construction costs and be aware that a property insurance policy does not offer coverage for flood damage. For more information about getting flood insurance, visit [floodsmart.gov](https://www.floodsmart.gov).

Make a Family Communications Plan. Identify alternate ways of staying in touch with loved ones.

- Choose an out-of-town friend or relative as a point of contact.
- Ensure children have emergency contacts memorized or saved in a secure place.
- Determine a safe, familiar place the family can go for protection or to reunite.
- Make sure the location is in a central and accessible location for all family members, including family members with disabilities.
- If you have pets or service animals, make sure the location is animal-friendly.
- For more information on making a family communication plan go to Family Communication Plan.