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FEMA Appoints Virgin Islander Kristen Hodge Director for USVI Joint Recovery Office

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Kristen Hodge, FEMA Director for U.S. Virgin Islands' Joint Recovery Office. By. FEMA

The Federal Emergency Management Agency has announced the appointment of Kristen Hodge to serve as the director for U.S. Virgin Islands' Joint Recovery Office. Ms. Hodge officially began June 20 and will focus on the territory's priorities to repair and rebuild its infrastructure with a focus on equity for a recovery that benefits the whole community, FEMA said.

She has served as the Infrastructure Branch director at the Joint Recovery Office on St. Croix since 2020 and her experience with FEMA's Public Assistance Program will support the development of projects to rebuild housing communities, medical facilities, the power grid, schools, roads and public buildings with an emphasis on mitigation measures to strengthen a

legacy of resilience in the territory, according to the release.

FEMA said since Hurricane Irma and Hurricane Maria made landfall in September 2017, the federal agency has obligated \$3 billion through Public Assistance for emergency protective measures and permanent work that includes \$601 million for Hazard Mitigation Proposals to help end the cycle of disaster damage, reconstruction, and repeated damage in the U.S. Virgin Islands. Ms. Hodge will continue to partner with the Office of the Governor, Office of Disaster Recovery, the Virgin Islands Territorial Emergency Management Agency, and FEMA's federal partners to navigate a path toward innovative solutions to strengthen capacity for a sustainable resilient recovery.

"I look forward to collaborating with FEMA's partners in the Territory to continue marking milestones toward building smarter and stronger with an equitable approach for a culture of resilience to benefit Virgin Islanders for numerous generations," said Ms. Hodge. "FEMA wants to ensure our Public Assistance and Hazard Mitigation programs reach the whole community and strengthen lifelines for critical facilities such as power plants and hospitals to resume operations as soon as possible after future hurricanes."

She added, "FEMA's mission is more than obligating money for projects and our staff on St. Croix, St. Thomas and St. John will rely on our core values of compassion, fairness, integrity and respect to deliver recovery programs."

Ms. Hodge is a native of the U.S. Virgin Islands who began her career in 1995 with FEMA as a local hire with Public Assistance during the aftermath of Hurricane Marilyn. She continued working with FEMA as a Disaster Assistance employee/reservist for the next 18 years in Public Assistance, deploying to more than 35 disasters, including 9-11 in New York City, and supported recovery efforts for numerous storms such as Katrina in Louisiana, Sandy in New Jersey, and Georges in Puerto Rico, as well as Irma and Maria in the U.S. Virgin Islands and Puerto Rico, according to the release.

In 2013, Ms. Hodge accepted a Cadre of On-Call Response/Recovery Employee (CORE) position in the U.S. Virgin Islands and later served as the Public Assistance Branch Chief for the New Jersey Sandy Closeout Office from 2016 to 2020. She returned to her home of St. Croix in 2020 to serve as the Infrastructure Branch Director in the U.S. Virgin Islands Recovery Office, according to FEMA.

This past March, Ms. Hodge was deployed by FEMA to the Community Vaccination Center in Newark, N.J., to serve as the deputy site supervisor of operations. More than 6,000 Covid-19 vaccine doses were administered per day at the Newark vaccination center, and 196,000 doses had been administered at the site at the time Ms. Hodge returned to St. Croix.

She has expressed gratitude for the opportunity to support the territory's plans to pave a path toward its road to recovery from the 2017 hurricanes. "It is great to be back home to be closer to family and friends and because of the sense of community we have in the USVI. And, I want to do my part to try and help the USVI build back better and stronger to recover from the effects of Irma and Maria by, which will make the lives of all Virgin Islanders better for generations to come," she said.

