

# The Virgin Islands Consortium

## FCC Boosts Network Resilience in Puerto Rico and U.S. Virgin Islands Amid Climate Threats

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The Federal Communications Commission announced Wednesday that it has adopted an order to strengthen mobile and fixed voice and broadband services in Puerto Rico and the U.S. Virgin Islands.

The move ensures universal service support will be directed towards hardening and enhancing networks through the "Bringing Puerto Rico Together Fund" and the "Connect USVI Fund".

FCC Chairwoman Jessica Rosenworcel highlighted the significant progress made in restoring networks damaged by Hurricanes Maria and Irma in 2017, but acknowledged

that work remains to be done following the devastation caused by Hurricane Fiona in 2022. The new initiative aims to support the ongoing restoration, hardening, and expansion of critical communication infrastructure to keep communities connected and safeguarded against future extreme weather events, the FCC said.

Current mobile support recipients will be eligible to receive a portion of their existing support for up to 24 months, which must be used to strengthen 4G LTE or 5G-NR networks. Additionally, while new high-cost supported networks are being deployed, the commission will extend the phase-down of fixed support in areas where incumbents did not win competitive Stage 2 fixed funding until December 31, 2025. Providers may only use the support for redundancy and resiliency measures to ensure critical telecommunications networks remain operational during disasters and are required to submit a spending plan outlining how the funding will be utilized, according to the commission.

Furthermore, the FCC has denied an Application for Review from the Puerto Rico Telephone Company, which challenged the awarding of support for select areas in Stage 2 of the Bringing Puerto Rico Together Fund.