

FISCAL YEAR 2026 PROPOSED BUDGET



**PRESENTED BY
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DIRECTOR**

**VIRGIN ISLANDS TERRITORIAL
EMERGENCY MANAGEMENT AGENCY**

Submitted to

SENATOR NOVELLE E. FRANCIS, JR. CHAIRMAN

Senate Committee on Finance

Frits E. Lawaetz Legislative Conference Room, St. Croix

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OPENING COMMENTS

Senator Novelle E. Francis, Jr., Chairman of the Committee on Finance and all other senators present, legislative staff and those in the viewing and listening audience, good afternoon.

I am Daryl D. Jaschen, Director of the Virgin Islands Territorial Emergency Management Agency (VITEMA). Present with me today are Mr. Ovid J. Williams, Assistant Director; Mr. Winston Simon, Deputy Director of Administration and Finance; Ms Nadia Fearon, Deputy Director of Human Resources and Labor Relations, Mr Bruce Kelly, Deputy Director of Operations, and Mrs. Florecita Brunn, Deputy Director Grants Management. Thank you for this opportunity to present VITEMA's proposed Fiscal Year 2026 Budget.

VITEMA's mission is to save lives and to protect property through preparedness, exercises, prevention, and mitigation. The Agency is comprised of six main divisions: Administration and Finance, Grants Management, Planning and Preparedness, Operations, Logistics, and Public Information.

VITEMA has oversight of the 9-1-1 emergency communications center and the VI Office of Homeland Security Fusion Center. The Fusion Center is 100% federally funded. Our daily operations include two (2) 9-1-1 Emergency Communication Centers (ECC), one (1) in each district, three (3) Emergency Operation Centers (EOCs), one on St. Croix in downtown Christiansted, one on St. Thomas just East of the Cyril E. King airport runway, and one on St. John just across from the Myra Keating Smith Community Health Center, and a homeland security Fusion Center located on St. Thomas.

In Fiscal Year 2026, the Virgin Islands Territorial Emergency Management Agency (VITEMA) is expected to receive \$5,940,457.00 from the General Fund to carry out its operations.

FY 2026 PROPOSED BUDGET

PERSONNEL SERVICES	\$3,279,113
FRINGE	\$1,610,108
SUPPLIES	\$83,056
OTHER SERVICES	\$575,691
UTILITIES	\$392,489
TOTAL	5, 940,457

Personnel Services will cover about sixty-one (61) positions at a cost of **\$3,279,113.00**. This amount represents 55.20 percent of the budgeted amount. This translates to fifty (50) filled positions and eleven (11) vacant positions. **Fringe Benefits** total **\$1,610,108.00**, which is 27.10 percent of the total. To cover the several types of **supplies** needed for the agency, **\$83,056.00** is slated for this purpose, which is 1.40 percent of the budget. **Other Services and Charges** is projected to cost **\$575,691.00**, including \$250,000.00 in Miscellaneous items for Disaster Recovery Contingency and Generator Maintenance Agreement. This represents 9.69 percent of the total and covers Professional Services, Travel, Rent, Repairs & Maintenance, etc. Utility Services (Electricity and Water) is budgeted at **\$392,489.00**. This amount is 6.61 percent of the total. Funding for Volunteer Rescue organizations on St Thomas, St Croix, St John and Water Island is budgeted with the OMB and is release based on successful submission to VITEMA of annual requirement reflecting the organizations good standing. Over the past three years, St Croix Rescue has not received any funding.

FINANCE AND ADMINISTRATION DIVISION

Administration and Finance is the division responsible for managing the financial resources of the agency. As such, the division supports all other divisions through the General Fund appropriation. Administration and Finance enters requisition and payments into the Government's financial system (ERP) on behalf of the divisions. Additionally, requisitions and payments are approved along with adjustments vouchers. Finally, Federal cash drawdowns through the Payment

Management System (PMS) are facilitated by Administration and Finance for both Public Assistance and Hazard Mitigation which are both under the Office of Disaster Recovery.

Finance and Administration Accomplishments

- In FY 2024, a State of Emergency (SOE) was declared due to St. Croix water quality compromise relative to the potable water system. Administration and Finance was tasked with making payments to approximately five (5) vendors who participated in the water voucher redemption program. After 12 months of coordinated effort, VITEMA completed reconciliation of all vouchers with vendors. The task encompassed compiling hundreds of invoices for the respective vendors and entering those invoices in the ERP to process those payments. Payments were also processed for vendors who provided ancillary services as part of this effort.
- VITEMA continues to process our payments timely and is up to date, with no received invoices past 90-days.

Emergency Services Fund

The Emergency Services Fund is supported by a \$2 (two dollar) surcharge on communication lines, which is authorized by the New & Emerging Technologies 911 Improvement Act of 2008 and by Act. No. 7981 enacted January 5, 2017, which amended Title 33 VI Code, Chapter 3, Section 58 Subsection (c). Additionally, by subsection (f) of the same Act VITEMA receives 40 percent of the monies (0.80 cents of the \$2.00) collected from the emergency services surcharge while the Department of Health and VI Fire and Emergency Medical Services receives 30 percent each (0.60 cents of the \$2.00). For VITEMA, this amounts to approximately \$1 million dollars annually, and by FCC regulation, VITEMA can only use those funds for maintaining and improving the 9-1-1 system, to include cyber security measures, and must account for 100% use of the funds annually.

85 **FEDERAL GRANTS DIVISION**

<u>Category</u>	<u>FY 2026</u>	<u>FY 2025</u>	<u>Variance</u>
Personnel Services	\$930,344	\$1,000,654	(\$70,310)
Fringe Benefits	\$452,887	\$472,708	(\$19,821)
Supplies	\$92,307	\$206,820	(\$114,513)
Other Services	\$2,772,596	\$2,312,393	\$460,203
Capital Outlay	\$0.00	\$818,925	(\$818,925)
Indirect Cost	\$74,382	\$136,782	(\$62,400)
Total	\$4,322,516	\$4,948,282	(\$625,766)

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87 The federal grants support all divisions within VITEMA, as well as other government agencies
88 that support the Department of Homeland Security's mission of protecting our borders. For FY
89 **2026**, VITEMA will manage federal grants totaling **\$4,322,516**, representing a **12.65%** decrease
90 from the **FY 2025** budget request. The amount for personnel services is **\$930,344**, which reflects
91 a reduction of **\$70,310** due to the reclassification of Operation Stonegarden overtime projection
92 for VI Police Department personnel to other services and other personnel reduction costs. The
93 fringe benefits total **\$452,887**, reflecting a decrease of **\$19,821**, primarily due to the
94 reclassification of fringe costs for Operation Stonegarden's VIPD overtime to other services and
95 reductions in other personnel cost.

96 Personnel and fringe cost support **16.3** positions at VITEMA, of which **7.9** are filled and **8.4** are
97 vacant. The current vacancies in the **FY 2026** federal grants budget represent **\$417,032** in salary
98 and **\$207,716** in fringe benefits. Grant funds available for supplies total **\$92,307**; grant funds
99 available for other services total **\$2,772,596**; and indirect costs total **\$74,382**. The variance
100 between the **FY 2025** and **FY 2026** budget requests reflects a 10% decrease for the Emergency
101 Management Performance Grant and the Homeland Security Grant that occurred in the last quarter
102 of **FY 2024**. As of this testimony, the Department of Homeland Security has not released the FY
103 **2025** Notice of Funding Opportunity (NOFO) to states and Territories.

As reported in national news and congressional committee hearings, changes to the Federal Grant Programs are forthcoming, particularly with FEMA grants. The most significant impact to VITEMA is anticipated to be to our **16.3** individuals on staff funded through federal grants. This represents **\$1,383,231** annually and may vanish in **FY2026 or FY2027**, with little or no notice, as FEMA redefines grant funding eligibility and expects states and Territories to absorb these costs. From a payroll perspective, this represents approximately **\$53,201** every pay period.

Grants Accomplishments:

- VITEMA's Nonprofit Security Grant is dedicated to enhancing physical and cyber security, as well as other security measures, for nonprofit and faith-based organizations at high risk of terrorist or extremist attacks. In **FY 2024**, VITEMA awarded a total of **\$1,052,207** to nine (9) nonprofit and faith-based organizations. We presently have three (3) grants open and distributed a total of **\$2,042,372** for the fiscal years **2022, 2023, and 2024**. The Department of Homeland Security awarded a second round of funding in **FY 2024**; however, to date, this award has not been received by the awarded sub-recipients from DHS. As of this testimony, states and Territories have not received the **FY 2025** Notice of Funding Opportunity for applicants to apply.

Grant Challenges:

- Availability of Building Resilient Infrastructure and Communities (Bric) federal grant dollars to complete existing projects.
- Continued staffing of VITEMA personnel funded by Federal Grants, if funding eligibility rules change to reduce or eliminate ability to fund personnel.

OPERATIONS DIVISION

Operations Accomplishments:

- In April 2025 VITEMA's 911 Emergency Communications Centers unveiled the Text to 9-1-1, one of its Next Generation 9-1-1 features. This enables individuals to communicate with 9-1-1 centers in the USVI via text. This capability is extremely critical in times when an individual cannot place a voice call to the 9-1-1 center because of safety concerns,

connectivity issues, or a member of the deaf and hard of hearing community. The cost to implement text to 9-1-1 were borne by the telecommunications providers (Liberty, One, T-Mobile) and by VITEMA through its Emergency Service Fee funds.

Operations Challenges:

- As we are working diligently on-board and train 9-1-1 ECC Operators, VITEMA's overtime cost continues to increase for Emergency Communication Center Operators. In **FY 2024**, overtime cost for VITEMA's 9-1-1 operators was **\$291,861.04**. For **FY 2025**, as of May 2025, our current overtime cost is **\$202,574.46**. At this rate, we are projected to surpass the budgeted allotment for this line item. Reduction in overtime costs are directly related to successfully filling and retaining dispatch operators. For FY 2026, the recent ratification of the Collective Bargaining agreement with salary increases will go a long way in reducing our high overtime costs.
- Completion of furniture replacement for 9-1-1 ECC on St Thomas. Over \$100,000 has been obligated to new furniture for our dispatchers on St. Thomas and is anticipated to be completed in FY 2026.
- Renewal with a Five (5) Year maintenance contract totaling \$1,739,873.17 dollars for the 9-1-1 ECC Computer Aided Dispatch / Record Management System (CAD/ RMS). The current system, originally placed in service seven years ago through Spillman / Motorola, was funded by the Public Finance Authority at a cost of \$3,755,847 dollars and included maintenance support from May 14, 2021, through December 31, 2025. This system supports the 9-1-1 system for VI Police, VI Fire and Emergency Medical Services, the Bureau of Corrections, and VITEMA. Effective December 31, 2025, the contract expires with Motorola. In FY2026 the maintenance fee presented in the new draft contract is \$578,908.61 which includes hardware upgrades and then goes to \$290,241.14 annually for the remaining four years. Currently there is no GVI funding source for this maintenance contract.

PLANNING AND PREPAREDNESS DIVISION

Planning and Preparedness Accomplishments:

- During Fiscal Year 2025, VITEMA proudly achieved full Emergency Management Accreditation Program (EMAP) accreditation, receiving official notification in October 2024 followed by a formal recognition ceremony in January 2025, making VITEMA the first fully EMAP-accredited emergency management agency in the U.S. territories. It cost approximately \$45,000 in applications fees and assessor engagements over a four-year period. FEMA provided at no cost, technical assistance with staff to assist in program development, planning, and self-assessment. There is an annual fee of \$5,000 to EMAP for program support and access to Continuous Administrative Compliance Process (CACP) software. VITEMA achieved accreditation is no additional staffing.
- The Planning & Preparedness Division achieved a notable 97% rating in our KPI for training VITEMA personnel on core competencies within one year of their start date.
- The division significantly exceeded our education event KPI target by conducting 132 public, private, and non-governmental organization outreach activities against our annual goal of 122, representing a 108% achievement rate.
- The Planning and Preparedness Section has successfully planned and supported all 10 tabletop (TTX) and functional exercises territory-wide with partner agencies, fully meeting our annual KPI target for this critical metric.

Planning and Preparedness Challenges:

- A significant challenge facing the Planning & Preparedness Division is the uncertain future of tsunami and earthquake program funding, with potential reductions in traditional federal grant streams that have historically supported our community education and preparedness initiatives. This funding instability threatens our ability to maintain the momentum we've built in tsunami awareness and earthquake preparedness programs, particularly the innovative outreach campaigns that have proven so effective. The current FY 2025 grant has not been released from the federal government.

- The division also has limitations in achieving our 100% training completion target due to the restricted availability of advanced ICS 300 and 400 courses, which are VITEMA agency requirements but currently only offered once per year in the Territory. These training programs are 100% federally funded.

LOGISTICS DIVISION

Logistics Accomplishments:

- VITEMA has successfully maintains its ten (10) 100kw emergency power generators. Four are located on St Croix and have been used this past year to support emergency power requirements for the Department of Human Services, Department of Health, the Bureau of Motor Vehicles, and the Bureau of Information Technology. Currently all four generators are available for emergency response purposes, with priority to government congregate shelters. Additionally, VITEMA prepaid for \$8,000 to fill the emergency generator at St Croix Complex school. Another four generators are on St Thomas and have been used this past year for the Department for Human Services and VI Lottery for emergency power generation. Currently all four generators are available for emergency response purposes.
- VITEMA successfully maintains its six (6) light set / generator units with 2 on St Croix, 2 on St Thomas and 2 on St John. The units have been used continuously throughout the years to provide safety lighting for nighttime events with government agencies at no cost.

Logistics Challenges:

- For almost seven years, VITEMA Hazard Mitigation Wind Retrofit project at St Croix Hermon Hill has been in the design phase. Currently it is at 30% design and waiting for FEMA review and approval before proceeding to 60% design. As of June 2025, \$1,482,373 has been spent on design development. In May 2025 VITEMA successfully completed the Federal Consistency Determination with DPRN. VITEMA needs to proceed with progress on this project and obligate funds as soon as possible as it will be subject to cancellation by FEMA.
- St. Thomas EOC Repair - Repairs under the FEMA Public Assistance grant of \$1.4 million has commenced. An additional \$999,201 from insurance proceeds brings the total to \$2.4

million of which \$140,000 is cost share sources from HUD CDBG-DR funds. A Notice to Proceed for phase 1 (roof work) has been issued, and the contractor has been mobilized and has completed the roof repairs. VITEMA is currently in Phase 2, designs are completed and pending for final approval from Public Assistance to move forward to the bid phase.

- In December 2024, VITEMA ended the use of its two (2) mobile EOCs after 22 years of service. For the past two years VITEMA has applied for federal funding through Delegate to Congress Stacy Plaskett Federal Community Project Funding (CPF) program at the Department of Homeland Security Committee on Appropriations. This year VITEMA requested \$1.6 million dollars for two (2) mobile EOCs and supporting communications packages. There is 25% (\$525,000 dollars) local match included if awarded.
- Tsunami Warning Siren Repair – Repairs under two FEMA Public Assistance grants (one for STT District and one for STX District) were completed in August 2022 for \$1.6 million dollars (90% federal, 10% territorial) and the grants have been closed. The GVI funded \$90,000 in FY2024 for additional repairs to the 17 sirens on St Croix. Currently, and additional \$90,000 in Federal funding from the EMPG grant is identified to repair and maintain the 27 tsunami sirens on St Thomas, St John, and Water Island. Prior to awarding that contract, additional work, unrelated to the Irma/Maria damages, has been contracted for \$37,000 and the vendor will be mobilizing to complete the work by the end of July 2025.
- Vehicles: The agency is currently in the process of purchasing four (4) new vehicles. These vehicles will be purchased using the Emergency Management Performance Grant (EMPG) and will support the of programmatic deliverables.

HUMAN RESOURCES & LABOR RELATIONS DIVISION

Since the appointment of our new Deputy Director of Human Resources and Labor Relations in late September 2024, the agency was able to resume addressing several longstanding matters. These include the resolution of the Public Employee Relations Board (PERB) Hearings, the conclusion of the contract negotiations, and the start of key internal Organizational Reviews. Additionally, the agency has resumed critical functions such as resubmitting expired Personnel

REquisition Forms(PRFs) for approval as well as initiating the posting and interviewing process for several vital positions.

VITEMA has 77.2 funded positions of which 51.53 is classified and 25.67 are exempt. Currently, there are 60.9 positions are funded by the General Fund; 45.23 positions are filled and 15.67 is vacant. From a federal perspective, the agency has 16.3 positions; 6.3 positions are filled and 10 positions are vacant. Please see the chart below for additional information.

<u>General Fund</u>			<u>Federal Fund</u>		
Filled:			Filled:		
Classified:	35.15		Classified:	4.5	
Exempt:	14.67		Exempt:	4.0	
Total:	49.82		Total:	8.5	
Vacant:			Vacant:		
Classified:	10.08		Classified:	1.8	
Exempted:	1.00		Exempted:	6.0	
Total:	11.08		Total:	7.8	
Filled:	49.82		Filled:	8.5	
Exempt:	11.08		Exempt:	7.8	
Total GF Positions:	60.90		Total Fed Positions:	16.3	
	GF	60.9			
	FF	16.3			
	TOTAL	77.2			

Human Resources and Labor Relations Accomplishments

- New Hires (6):
 - 3 Emergency Communication Center Operators
 - 1 Assistant Director
 - 1 Administrative Officer II
 - 1 Messenger/ Receptionist
- Collective Bargaining Agreement Contract Negotiations:

- The Collective Bargaining Agreement between VITEMA/911 and the United Steelworkers Union (USW) expired on 30 September 2022. On March 13, 2025, the Office of Collective Bargaining (OCB), representing VITEMA, and USW began negotiations on a new contract. After several months of negotiations, on June 10, 2025, VITEMA was officially inform that the Collective Bargaining Agreement between the GVI/VITEMA (911 Emergency Call Center Operators) and the United Steelworkers, AFL-CIO-CLC, representing Local Unions 8248 and 8249, had been ratified. This marks tremendous progress towards pay raises to 9-1-1 dispatches which had not been afforded since 2018.

CLOSING COMMENTS

At this time, I would especially like to recognize VITEMA’s Employees of the Year for 2025 – Ms. Patricia Potter from the Fusion Center in the St. Thomas/St. John District and Ms. Desni Canton from the Operations Division in the St. Croix District. These two outstanding individuals work under extremely stressful conditions yet continue to provide excellent service to the community.

Finally, to the hardworking staff at VITEMA – thank you for your commitment and dedication to the Agency, its mission, and the People of the Virgin Islands. Your jobs are not easy, but you show up every day to ensure that the mandates of the Agency are met. Again, thank you.

Committee Chairman, Senator Novelle E. Francis, Jr. and other Committee members, this budget is adequate to address the immediate priorities of the Administration for the upcoming fiscal year. If a need arises for additional resources, we will have that discussion with Governor Bryan and the OMB Director. At this time I would like to present a short video showing VITEMA and some of our fellow agency partners in-action over the past 12-months. **[LEGISLATURE MEDIA PLAYS VIDEO]**.

My team and I thank you for the opportunity to speak on VITEMA’s proposed FY 2026 budget. We are ready to address your questions.