

FISCAL YEAR 2027 PROPOSED BUDGET



PRESENTED BY

DARYL D. JASCHEN

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

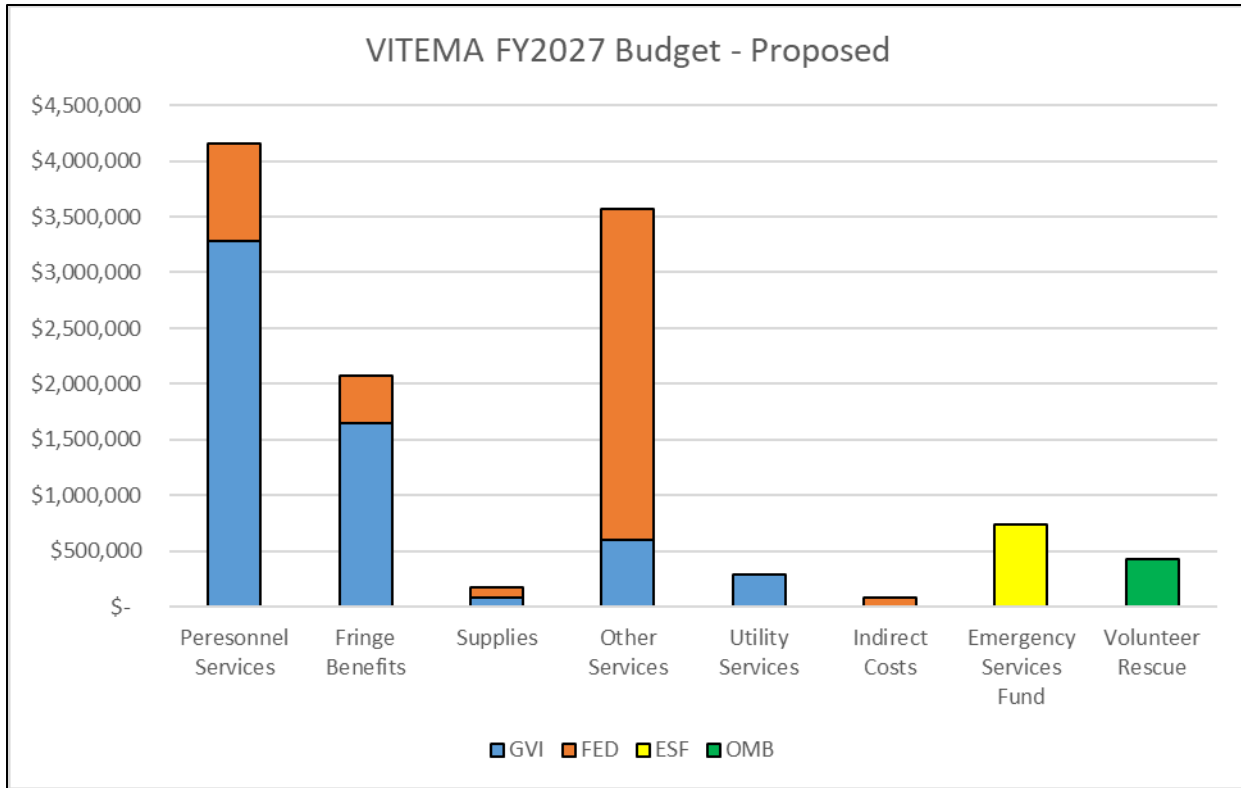
June 23, 2026

2 **OPENING COMMENTS**

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

Presentation Quick-Look			
Proposed Budget			
2027		\$11,087,674	
Appropriated			
Funds		\$5,911,126	
General Fund		\$5,911,126	
Non-Approp.			
Funds		\$5,176,548	
Federal Funds		\$4,439,786	
Emerg. Servc. Fund		\$736,762	
Employees:	73.658		
General Fund:	58.377		
Classified:	42.709	Exempt:	15.668
Filled:	28.099	Filled:	13.890
Vacant:	14.610	Vacant:	1.778
Federal Funds:	15.281		
Classified:	6.281	Exempt:	9.000
Filled:	3.891	Filled:	7.222
Vacant:	2.390	Vacant:	1.778



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7 I am Daryl D. Jaschen, Director of the Virgin Islands Territorial Emergency Management Agency
 8 (VITEMA). Present with me today are Mr. Ovid J. Williams, Assistant Director; Ms. Joselita M.
 9 Daniel, Deputy Director of Administration and Finance; Ms. Nadia Fearon, Deputy Director of
 10 Human Resources and Labor Relations; Mr. Bruce Kelly, Deputy Director of Operations; Mr.
 11 Asim Frett, Deputy Director of Logistics; Ms. Regina Browne, Deputy Director of Planning and
 12 Preparedness; and Ms. J’Lisa Martinez, Public Information Officer. Please note that Assistant
 13 Director Williams is also performing the duties of Grants Manager due to loss of staff at the end
 14 of 2025. Thank you for this opportunity to present VITEMA’s proposed Fiscal Year 2027 Budget.
 15 All numerical data aligns with the GVI Office of Management and Budget.

16 VITEMA’s mission is to save lives and to protect property through preparedness, exercises,
 17 prevention, and mitigation. The Agency is comprised of six main divisions: Administration and
 18 Finance, Human Resources and Labor Relations, Public Information, Grants Management,
 19 Planning and Preparedness, Operations, and Logistics. Two additional divisions, Hazard
 20 Mitigation and Public Assistance, which are officially part of VITEMA but have duties carried out
 21 with staff assigned to the Office of Disaster Recover since 2019, under Executive Order, and are
 22 100% federally funded and not part of this budget testimony.

23 In addition to these divisions, VITEMA has oversight of the 9-1-1 Emergency Communications
 24 Center (ECC) and the VI Office of Homeland Security Fusion Center. The ECC is 100% GVI
 25 funded while the Fusion Center is 100% federally funded.

26 VITEMA’s daily operations include operating two (2) 9-1-1 Emergency Communication Centers
 27 (ECC), one (1) in each district, three (3) Emergency Operation Centers (EOCs), one on St. Croix
 28 in downtown Christiansted, one on St. Thomas just East of the Cyril E. King airport runway, and
 29 one on St. John just across from the Myra Keating Smith Community Health Center, and one (1)
 30 homeland security Fusion Center located on St. Thomas.

31 Of significant accomplishment is the US Virgin Islands receiving full accreditation from the
 32 Emergency Management Accreditation Program (EMAP) in October 2024. This marks the first
 33 time that any US territory has achieved this milestone. EMAP is an independent, non-profit
 34 organization that accredits agencies who comply with their Emergency Management Standards
 35 which provide for management and coordination of prevention, mitigation, preparedness,
 36 response, and recovery activities for all hazards. The accreditation process is a rigorous program
 37 that includes a set of 66 standards by which VITEMA was evaluated. Once accredited,
 38 requirements continue and VITEMA must demonstrate compliance with the standards, through
 39 annual submissions to EMAP.

40 In Fiscal Year 2027, the Virgin Islands Territorial Emergency Management Agency (VITEMA) is
 41 expected to receive \$5,911,126.00 from the General Fund to carry out its operations.

42

<u>FY 2027 PROPOSED BUDGET</u>	
PERSONNEL SERVICES	\$3,282,464
FRINGE	\$1,647,143
SUPPLIES	\$83,056
OTHER SERVICES	\$605,206
ULILITIES	\$293,257
TOTAL	5,911,126

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44

45 Personnel Services will cover 58.377 positions at a cost of \$3,282,464. This amount represents
46 55.53 percent of the budgeted amount. As of February 2026, staffing supported by GVI funding
47 consisted of 41.979 filled positions and 16.388 vacant positions, primarily with the 9-1-1
48 Emergency Communications Center. Fringe Benefits total \$1,647,143, which is 27.87 percent of
49 the total. To cover the several types of supplies needed for the agency, \$83,056 is budgeted, which
50 is 1.41 percent of the overall budget. Other Services and Charges is budgeted at \$605,206.00, 10.24
51 percent of the budget, which includes \$250,000.00 in Miscellaneous items for Disaster Recovery
52 Contingency of \$175,000 and Generator Maintenance Agreement of \$75,000 for Repairs &
53 Maintenance. In FY2027, rent for the VITEMA office in downtown Christiansted remains the
54 same at \$ 14,243 per month, with the contract expiring on September 30, 2027, with a one-year
55 renewal option at a monthly rate of \$14,670. Our other budgeted rent is for the St. Croix 9-1-1
56 ECC space and remains the same for FY2027 at \$1,925, with the contract expiring on November
57 30, 2027. Utility Services (Electricity and Water) are budgeted at \$293,257.00 and is paid through
58 the Department of Finance single payer. This amount represents 4.96 percent of the total.

59 Funding for Volunteer Rescue organizations on St. Thomas, St. Croix, St. John and Water Island
60 is budgeted with the OMB and is release based on successful submission to VITEMA of annual
61 requirement reflecting the organizations good standing. Amounts budgeted in FY2027 total
62 \$430,000: \$175,000 for St. Thomas Rescue, \$175,000 for St. Croix Rescue, \$65,000 for St. John
63 Rescue, \$15,000 for Water Island Rescue. Over the past four (4) years, St. Croix Rescue has not
64 received any funding.

65 **FINANCE AND ADMINISTRATION DIVISION**

66 Administration and Finance division is responsible for managing the financial resources of the
67 agency. As such, the division supports all other divisions through the General Fund appropriation.
68 Administration and Finance inputs requisition and payments into the Government's financial
69 system (ERP) on behalf of the divisions. As of June 1, 2026, VITEMA utilizes GVI Buy, the
70 official system of record for all GVI acquisitions, contract management, and vendor relations. As
71 part of the process, requisitions and payments are approved along with adjustments vouchers.
72 VITEMA's Administration and Finance division normally supports federal cash drawdown
73 process for Hurricanes Irma and Maria Recovery projects through the Federal Payment
74 Management System (PMS) portal for both of VITEMA's Public Assistance and Hazard

75 Mitigation divisions, which are managed by the Office of Disaster Recovery. Deputy Director
76 Daniel is in the process of gaining authorization to the PMS portal.

77 **Emergency Services Surcharge / Fund**

78 The Territory's Emergency Services Surcharge / Fund is supported by a \$2 (two dollar) surcharge
79 on communication lines, which is authorized Federally by the New & Emerging Technologies 911
80 Improvement Act of 2008 and Territorially by Act No. 7981/Bill No. 31-0508, signed January 5,
81 2017, amending VI Code, Title 33, Chapter 3, Section 58, subsection (f) by which 40 percent of
82 the monies are disbursed (0.80 cents of the \$2.00) to VITEMA, 30 percent (0.60 cents of the \$2.00)
83 to the Department of Health - Emergency Medical Services Unit for supplies, training, and
84 personnel, and 30% (0.60 cents of the \$2.00) to the Virgin Islands Fire Services. For VITEMA,
85 the projection funds for FY2027 is \$736,762.

86 By Federal Communications Commission (FCC) regulation, VITEMA can only use those funds
87 for maintaining and improving the 9-1-1 system, to include cyber security measures, and must
88 account for 100% use of the funds annually. The annual report, known at the **Annual 911 Fee**
89 **Report**, is a collection of information related to the collection and use of 911 and E911 fees by
90 states and other jurisdictions. These reports from the 50 states, District of Columbia and US
91 Territories are aggregated by the FCC and presented to Congress. The report is also made available
92 to the public at the FCC's web page www.fcc.gov/general/911-fee-reports. The most recent report
93 is titled 17th Annual 911 Fee Report State Filings and was presented to Congress by FCC Chairman
94 Carr on February 13, 2026.

95 VITEMA's status overall on accounts payable, based on Act No. 9035, and receipt of monthly
96 agency allotment of covering all budget categories excluding utilities and miscellaneous items, is
97 that we continue to process our payments timely and submit to Finance for final vendor payment.

98 **FEDERAL GRANTS DIVISION**

<u>Category</u>	<u>FY2027</u>	<u>FY 2026</u>	<u>Variance</u>
Personnel Services	\$872,712	\$930,344	(\$59,485)
Fringe Benefits	\$425,724	\$452,887	(\$15,606)
Supplies	\$90,525	\$92,307	\$21,014

Other Services	\$2,968,469	\$2,772,596	(\$746,601)
Capital Outlay	\$0.00	\$0.00	\$63,500
Indirect Cost	\$82,356	\$74,382	\$7,974
Total	\$4,439,786	\$4,322,516	(\$732,204)

99

Grant Title	Grant Award No.	Project No.	FY	Funding Period	Total Award
Non-Profit Grant Program (NSGP)	EMN-2023-EP-00002	F2395	23	9/01/2023 - 8/31/2026	\$ 930,478.00
Non-Profit Grant Program (NSGP)	EMW-2024-UA-05176	F2353	24	9/01/2024 - 8/31/2027	\$ 1,107,586.00
Non-Profit Grant Program (NSGP)	EMW-2024-UA-05240	F2356	24	9/01/2024 - 8/31/2027	\$ 849,474.00
Non-Profit Grant Program (NSGP)	EMW-2024-UA-05034	F2359	25	9/01/2025 - 8/31/2028	\$ 1,050,000.00
Emergency Management Performance Grant (EMPG)	EMN-2023-EP-00002	F2398	23	10/01/2022 - 09/30/2026	\$ 942,605.00
Emergency Management Performance Grant (EMPG)	EMN-2024-EP-05003	F2351	24	10/01/2023 - 09/30/2026	\$ 848,109.00
Emergency Management Performance Grant (EMPG)	EMN-2025-EP-05002		25	10/02/2025 - 09/30/2028	\$ 847,363.00
Homeland Security Grant Program (HSGP)	EMW-2023-SS-00071	F2348	23	09/01/2023 - 08/31/2026	\$ 1,193,000.00
Homeland Security Grant Program (HSGP)	EMW-2024-SS-05167	F2354	24	09/01/2024 - 08/31/2027	\$ 1,051,545.00
Homeland Security Grant Program (HSGP)	EMW-2025-SS-05055		25	09/01/2024 - 08/31/2027	\$ 1,087,200.00
National Earthquake Hazards Reduction Program (NEHRP)	EMN-2024-GR-05018	F2338	24	09/01/2024 - 02/28/2026	\$ 51,090.00
National Earthquake Hazards Reduction Program (NEHRP)	EMN-2025-GR-05004	F2358	25	09/01/2025 - 08/31/2026	\$ 51,091.00
State and Local Cybersecurity Grant Program	EMW-2022-CY-00059	F2330	22	12/01/2022 - 11/30/2026	\$ 503,510.00
State and Local Cybersecurity Grant Program	EMW-2023-CY-00023	F2399	23	12/01/2023 - 11/30/2027	\$ 52,348.00
State and Local Cybersecurity Grant Program	EMW-2024-CY-05278	F2355	24	12/01/2024 - 11/30/2028	\$ 134,485.00
State and Local Cybersecurity Grant Program	EMW-2025-CY-05106	F359	25	12/01/2025 - 11/30/2030	\$ 82,160.00
National Tsunami Hazard Mitigation Program	NA25NWSX467G0018-T1-01	F2360	25	09/01/2025 - 08/31/2026	\$ 325,293.00
Technical Assistance Program (TAP)	D24AP00144-00	F2386	22	04/25/2024 - 09/30/2028	\$ 285,000.00

100

101 VITEMA Managed Federal Grants (June 2026)

102 The federal grants supports all the divisions within VITEMA as well as other territorial
103 government agencies. For FY2027, VITEMA will manage federal grants totaling \$4,439,786
104 which reflects a 7.71% increase from FY2026 proposed budget submittal.

105 Personnel Services will cover 15.281 positions at a cost of \$872,712. This amount represents 19.56
106 percent of the budgeted amount. As of February 2026, staffing supported by Federal funding
107 consisted of 11.113 filled positions and 4.168 vacant positions. Fringe Benefits total \$425,724,
108 which is 9.588 percent of the total. To cover the several types of supplies needed for the agency,
109 \$90,525 is budgeted, which is 2.04 percent of the overall budget. Other Services and Charges is
110 budgeted at \$2,968,469, which represents 66.86 percent of the budget. Finally, Indirect Cost is
111 budgeted at \$82,356, which represents 1.85 percent of the total federal grants budget.

112 Challenges

113 VITEMA's grant management operations have faced significant disruptions stemming from two
114 primary challenges: Department of Homeland Security budget funding gaps for the Federal
115 Emergency Management Agency (FEMA) and Cybersecurity and Infrastructure Security Agency
116 (CISA) and corresponding personnel attrition. FEMA has reduced its force by over 2,500
117 employees between January 2025 and May 2026, but has been recently approved by DHS
118 Administrator to hire an immediate 300 positions, with a goal of 700 over the next few months. 176
119 CISA employees were laid off during the shutdown and almost 1,000 employees have been lost
120 due to various reductions in force. These two agencies experienced a 76 day shutdown, February
121 14 through April 30, which directly impacted VITEMA's operational capacity. These shutdowns
122 created cascading effects on VITEMA's processes, including limited to complete federal draws
123 and transitions in federal project officer assignments. Collectively, these disruptions slowed the
124 agency's ability to execute and advance federally funded programs in a timely manner. Due to law
125 suits by states against the Federal government, both the 2025 Homeland Security Grant Program
126 (HSGP) and the 2025 Emergency Management Performance Grant (EMPG) were in a "Hold"
127 status until recently. For VITEMA, we now have access to the 2025 HSGP funding, but access to
128 2025 EMPG funding is contingent upon receipt of the OMB's contracted agent 2024 Single Audit
129 report.

130 Compounding these federal-level challenges, VITEMA simultaneously experienced significant
131 personnel attrition within its grants management and administrative leadership. In November 2025,
132 the Deputy Director of Grants Management retired, followed in December 2025 by the resignation
133 of the Federal Grants Program Coordinator and the retirement of the Deputy Director of
134 Administration and Finance. The loss of three key leadership positions within a short timeframe
135 placed considerable strain on institutional knowledge, operational continuity, and financial
136 leadership, further impeding the agency's capacity to navigate the already challenging federal
137 funding environment.

138 **A Way Forward**

139 During this Period, VITEMA Assistant Director Ovid Williams has simultaneously assumed these major
140 responsibilities. He has reestablished communication with all federal partners, prioritize catching
141 up on federal draws while maintaining conversation with local partners. VITEMA has successfully
142 hired a Deputy Director of Administration and Finance, Ms. Joselita M. Daniel, who provides

143 Assistant Director Williams with the support needed to strengthen the financial leadership of
144 VITEMA. We continue to interview candidates for three (3) open positions: the Deputy Director
145 of Grants Management (Salary \$90,000) and two Federal Grant Program Monitors (Salary
146 \$46,191).

147 **HUMAN RESOURCES AND LABOR RELATIONS DIVISION**

148 For Fiscal Year 2026, our Deputy Director of Human Resources and Labor Relations focused on
149 reestablishing key human resources functions that had been delayed or inactive, including the
150 review and resubmission of expired Personnel Requisition Forms (PRFs), the recruitment and
151 selection process for critical vacancies, and the onboarding of new employees across multiple
152 divisions. Emphasis was placed on addressing staffing shortages within the Emergency
153 Communications Center (ECC-911), one of the agency's most critical operational areas.

154

155 Throughout Fiscal Year 2026, Human Resources and Labor Relations provided comprehensive
156 support in employee relations, workplace investigations, disciplinary actions, grievance
157 administration, policy compliance, performance management, and workforce planning. The
158 Division also played a central role in implementing the newly ratified United Steelworkers (USW)
159 collective bargaining agreement, processing related personnel actions, and supporting agency
160 leadership through budget planning and organizational development efforts.

161

162 Additional accomplishments included supporting the Department of Finance in implementing the
163 Government of the Virgin Islands Time and Attendance System and collaborating with the
164 Division of Personnel to review, update, and implement a revised testing process for the
165 Emergency Communications Center Operator (ECCO) position. Since January 2026, the agency
166 has conducted two recruitment campaigns for this critical position, using the new testing standards,
167 thereby strengthening the selection process and helping identify qualified candidates for one of
168 VITEMA's most essential operational functions.

169

170 Plans for the balance of the current fiscal year into the new year include, expanding employee
171 communications and engagement initiatives, strengthening leadership and supervisory

172 development programs, and advancing employee retention strategies focused on recognition,
 173 professional development, and workplace culture. We feel these efforts will help the agency to
 174 better recruit, retain, and support the workforce necessary to fulfill VITEMA's mission of
 175 protecting the residents and visitors of the U.S. Virgin Islands.

176 • **New Hires (6)**

177 1 Deputy Director of Admin & Finance

178 5 ECCO (4 STT & 1STX)

179 **(4 Additional ECCOs Pending by August 2026)**

180 • **Departures**

181 1 Transferred back to previous position

182 4 Resignations

183 2 Retirements

184

185 **OPERATIONS DIVISION**

186 **Accomplishments:**

187 **9-1-1 Emergency Communications Centers**

188 • Text to 9-1-1: In April 2025 VITEMA's 9-1-1 Emergency Communications Centers unveiled
 189 the Text to 9-1-1, one of its Next Generation 9-1-1 features. This enables individuals to
 190 communicate with 9-1-1 centers in the USVI via text. This capability is extremely critical in
 191 times when an individual cannot place a voice call to the 9-1-1 center because of safety
 192 concerns, connectivity issues, or a member of the deaf and hard of hearing or speech impaired
 193 community. VITEMA has continued to educate residents on when and how to use Text to 9-
 194 1-1. In March 2026, VITEMA successfully conducted public training sessions specifically for
 195 the Deaf and Hard of Hearing communities on St. Thomas and St. Croix. The costs to
 196 implement text to 9-1-1 were borne by the telecommunications providers (Liberty, One
 197 Communications, T-Mobile) and by VITEMA through its Emergency Service Fee funds.

- 198 • Language Line Continued Use: VITEMA successfully implemented and continues to utilize
199 the Language Line translator system within the 9-1-1 Emergency Communications Centers.
200 This system provides operators access, in an average of six (6) seconds, to more than 16,000
201 trained interpreters in over 240 languages. The primary languages utilized are Spanish, Haitian
202 Creole/Patois, and French. Current costs are approximately \$0.60 per minute for Spanish and
203 \$0.66 per minute for French Creole. From May 1, 2025, to May 1, 2026, Language Line
204 supported 395 calls totaling 2,469 minutes, at a total cost of \$1,616.
- 205 • New furniture in the St. Thomas 9-1-1 ECC: Eight (8) operator workstations and chairs were
206 replaced within the St. Thomas 9-1-1 center after 17 years of service, in February 2026 at a
207 cost of \$209,618 funded with \$37,942 in GVI funding and \$172,576 in EMPG funding, which
208 comes to \$26,202 per dispatcher workstation. The St. Croix 9-1-1 ECC eight (8) operator
209 stations and chairs are scheduled to be replaced upon completion of the new VITEMA building
210 on St. Croix. This new building will co-locate the now separate St. Croix 9-1-1 ECC.
- 211 • VITEMA's 9-1-1 Dispatchers and Operators continue to demonstrate the highest level of
212 professionalism, dedication, and commitment to duty. This was reflected in VITEMA's 2026
213 Employee of the Year selections, with both honorees selected from the 9-1-1 Emergency
214 Communications Centers in their respective districts: Ms. Dari-Lee Jacobs for St. Croix and
215 Ms. Noreen Taylor for St. Thomas.

216 **Emergency Operations Center Support**

- 217 • VITEMA's Emergency Operations Centers serve as central coordination locations for
218 emergency management activities, response operations, resource requests, trainings, exercises,
219 and meetings. VITEMA's EOCs on St. Thomas, St. Croix, and St. John are also made available
220 to partner agencies at no cost. Over the last 12 months (1 May 25 to 1 May 26), VITEMA
221 conducted or hosted 190 events (real world or exercise activations, meetings for partner
222 agencies, training events): 61 at the St. Thomas EOC, 78 at the St. Croix EOC, and 51 at the
223 St. John EOC.

224 **Challenges:**

- 225 • As we are working diligently to on-board and train new 9-1-1 ECC Operators and retain
 226 our present experienced talent, VITEMA's overtime cost continue to increase for
 227 Emergency Communication Center Operators. In FY 2025, overtime cost for VITEMA's
 228 9-1-1 operators was \$372,048. For FY 2026, as of May 2026, our current overtime cost is
 229 \$254,957.82, which is a rate of \$25,495 per month. Based on current trends, overtime
 230 projection for FY2026 is (\$101,982 + \$254,957) \$356,939, with a FY2026 budget of
 231 \$274,700, we forecast a \$82,239 over budget amount, which will be covered by funding
 232 from unfilled budgeted staff positions. Reductions in overtime costs are directly related to
 233 successfully filling and retaining dispatch operators. Our FY2027 budget for 911 overtime
 234 is \$219,700, which is \$18,308 per month. For FY 2026, the recent ratification of the
 235 Collective Bargaining agreement, with salary increases, will go a long way in reducing our
 236 high overtime costs.
- 237 • Computer Aided Dispatch / Record Management System (CAD/ RMS): In FY2026, using
 238 the Emergency Services Surcharge / Fund, VITEMA will be upgrading the system
 239 hardware and maintenance contract after seven (7) years at a cost of \$890,000. The
 240 hardware and professional installation services cost is \$495,784 with an additional \$98,784
 241 for annual maintenance covering years 2 through year 5 following installation.
- 242 • Mobile Emergency Operations Centers (MEOC) – In December 2024, VITEMA
 243 decommissioned its two (2) MEOCs after 21 years of service. In 2026, the projected cost
 244 to replace the two mobile EOCs is \$1,300,000 total. On June 8, 2026, VITEMA submitted
 245 an Office of Insular Affairs Technical Assistance Program (TAP) Grant Notice of Funding
 246 Opportunity (NOFO) Number OIA-TAP-2026 application, for two (2) new mobile
 247 Emergency Operations Center vehicles.

248 PLANNING AND PREPAREDNESS DIVISION

249 **Accomplishments:**

- 250 • VITEMA's EMAP accreditation is currently in Year 2 of the four-year Continuous
 251 Administrative Compliance Process (CACCP) cycle, with 18 standards under active review.
 252 This work sustains VITEMA's position as the first and only fully EMAP-accredited
 253 emergency management agency in the U.S. territories. There is an ongoing annual fee of

254 \$5,000 for program support and software access. VITEMA achieved and maintains this
255 accreditation with no additional staffing.

256 • VITEMA hosted its fourth annual Partners in Preparedness event at the 2026 Agricultural
257 Fair, the division's largest community outreach activity with partnership from O'Neale's
258 Transport, Crowley, Cost U less and Home Depot.

259 • VITEMA presented at the 2026 National Hurricane Conference in Orlando, Florida,
260 partnering with Jamaica and Anguilla on regional sessions that highlighted shared
261 hurricane preparedness challenges and solutions across the Caribbean. The Federal EMPG
262 provide funding for two (2) individuals with conference registration, travel and lodging.
263 Approximately 31 representatives from the Government of the US Virgin Islands attended
264 in person, funded through their own agencies.

265 • VITEMA successfully completed Capstone 2026, a full-scale functional exercise held June
266 1- June 5, simulating a Category 3 hurricane across all three islands. The exercise tested
267 all Emergency Support Functions, produced a complete Incident Action Plan, and included
268 EMAC (State-to-State) resource documentation and Senior Leadership Briefings. It
269 directly supports our federal exercise requirements and EMAP compliance.

270 • VITEMA coordinated territory-wide participation in Caribe Wave 2026 on March 19,
271 2026, achieving 21,526 participants across all four islands. VITEMA participates in the
272 regional tsunami warning coordination body for the Caribbean and presented at the
273 National Tsunami Hazard Mitigation Program (NTHMP) Annual Meeting in Seattle,
274 Washington in May 2026, further establishing the USVI as a recognized leader in tsunami
275 preparedness at the regional and national level.

276 • VITEMA completed Year 2 of the Territorial Tsunami Walk program across all four
277 islands, giving residents hands-on experience navigating evacuation routes to safe
278 assembly points. The program was featured on the cover of the October 2025 edition of
279 *TsuInfo Alert*, the national tsunami monthly preparedness publication. Additional articles
280 written by Deputy Director Regnia Browne on VITEMA's tsunami preparedness program
281 are featured in the February 2026, and April 2026 editions. Year 3 of the Territorial
282 Tsunami Walk program launches at the start of the 2027 fiscal year. VITEMA is also on
283 track to designate the first TsunamiReady Supporter in the Territory within the next 60

284 days, further positioning the USVI as a model for community-level tsunami preparedness
285 in the Caribbean.

286 • The division completed Phase 1 of the Tsunami Awareness and Preparedness Community
287 Assessment, achieving a 27% increase in participation territory-wide with multilingual
288 support in English, Spanish, and Haitian Creole. Phase 2 launches this fiscal year and Phase
289 3 is in planning. This survey approach has been adopted onto NTHMP Mitigation and
290 Education Subcommittee national work plan, meaning the USVI's preparedness
291 methodology is being built into the national framework and opening access to technical
292 collaboration and program resources that directly benefit the territory. Funding through
293 NTHMP provided \$30,000 for Phase 1 and an additional \$30,000 for Phase 2.

294 • The division secured FY26 NOAA/NWS Tsunami Activities grant funding supporting
295 active programming across the territory, including the Tsunami Walk program, Tsunami
296 Focal Point training for 911 dispatchers, and community outreach and education. Under a
297 separate Hazard Mitigation Grant Program (HMGP) award, VITEMA completed Phase 1
298 procurement for territorial tsunami warning signage, with engineering design and benefit-
299 cost analysis underway toward Phase 2 installation of approximately 500 signs across all
300 three islands. The Center for Education about Risks both Coastal and Aquatic (CERCA),
301 funded through CARICOOS, is on track to open on St. Croix within the next 45 days.
302 Funding is provided through HMGP with \$74,240 available for Phase 1. The St. Thomas
303 CERCA previously opened in December 2025 and is located at the Children's Museum in
304 Buccaneer Mall / Havensight.

305 • The Community Emergency Response Team (CERT) program was successfully
306 relaunched in 2025 following a multi-year suspension, with classes running through June
307 and into July 2026. The relaunch expands VITEMA's community preparedness
308 infrastructure and supports volunteer capacity across the territory. Homeland Security
309 Grant Program (HSGP) provides \$83,197 for this program.

310 • The Planning and Preparedness Division met or exceeded all KPI targets for Fiscal Year
311 2026. The division achieved a 97% rating for training VITEMA personnel on core
312 competencies within one year of their start date, tracked through the GVI Territorial
313 Training Matrix and the VITEMA Training Matrix. Outreach activities exceeded the

314 annual goal of 122, with 132 activities completed, a 108% achievement rate. This includes
315 the 2025 Great ShakeOut on October 16, 2025, which drew 32,056 registered participants
316 territory-wide, a 34% increase over 2024. All planned exercises were successfully planned
317 and supported territory-wide. The National Earthquake Hazards Reduction Program
318 (NEHRP) grant provided \$10,000 for this exercise and outreach events.

319 **SMART Objectives (FY2026 / FY2027):**

- 320 • By October 31, 2026, complete Year 2 of the EMAP CACP compliance cycle by
321 submitting all 18 assigned standards to PowerDMS with supporting documentation,
322 sustaining VITEMA's position as the first EMAP-accredited territorial emergency
323 management agency in the United States. Funding of \$900 is provided annually by GVI
324 general funds.
- 325 • By September 30, 2026, launch Phase 2 of the Social Science-Driven Tsunami Community
326 Assessment targeting a 15% increase in survey participation over Phase 1 baseline, with
327 findings submitted to the NTHMP Mitigation and Education Subcommittee. By June 30,
328 2027, complete Phase 3 and deliver a survey guidebook for use by other NTHMP member
329 states and territories, fulfilling VITEMA's commitment to the national work plan. NTHMP
330 provides \$30,000 for this phase.
- 331 • By September 30, 2027, advance VITEMA's authority has jurisdiction status, enabling the
332 agency to independently deliver ICS 300 and ICS 400 courses in the Territory, reducing
333 dependence on federal scheduling and building a sustainable training pipeline that supports
334 both personnel readiness and long-term EMAP compliance.

335 **Challenges:**

- 336 • The recent removal of CERT as a priority under the Department of Homeland Security
337 grant program creates direct risk for the program's long-term sustainability. VITEMA
338 successfully relaunched CERT after a multi-year suspension and classes are actively
339 running. Without federal backing, continued delivery will require territorial funding
340 support to keep the program alive and growing. Starting in FY2029, if no federal funding

341 becomes available, VITEMA would request \$10,000 per year from GVI funding to sustain
342 the program for both districts.

- 343 • Tsunami preparedness funding has seen continued reductions at the federal level, creating
344 pressure on the division's ability to sustain and grow programming. A key priority going
345 forward is developing projects that can be formally endorsed by the NTHMP Mitigation
346 Subcommittees, which strengthens the territory's position in the national funding
347 conversation and reduces the risk of further cuts. VITEMA's current grant application
348 reflects this strategy, aligning proposed work directly with national subcommittee priorities
349 to make the strongest possible case for full funding restoration. Through continued success
350 in these local projects, federal funding should remain available.
- 351 • Training delivery was reduced this fiscal year due to multiple federal furloughs, which
352 disrupted scheduled ICS 300 and ICS 400 course offerings. These courses are VITEMA
353 agency requirements and are 100% federally funded but are currently offered only once
354 per year in the Territory. VITEMA has been working aggressively to reschedule impacted
355 training. Looking ahead, VITEMA's pursuit of authority having jurisdiction status would
356 allow the agency to deliver these courses independently, significantly strengthening the
357 territory's training pipeline.

358 LOGISTICS

359 **Accomplishments:**

- 360 • VITEMA maintains its ten (10) 100kw mobile power generators for temporary use by GVI
361 agencies. Of the 10 temporary generators, 7 are either dispatched, in the process of being
362 dispatched, or are in reserve status with pre-identified facilities. Currently three (3)
363 generators are dispatched on St. Croix to support the JFL Hospital dialysis center,
364 Department of Human Services contingency planning for D.C. Canegata congregate shelter
365 operations, and Department of Health contingency planning for CTEC medical special
366 needs shelter. On St. Thomas, two (2) generators support Department of Human Services
367 contingency planning for Ivanna Eudora Kean Gym and Ivanna Eudora Kean Cafeteria
368 congregate shelter operations. An additional 100 kw generator is scheduled to be
369 dispatched to the Department of Health Eldra Shulterbrandt Mental Health Facility. On St.

370 John, one (1) 100kw generator is scheduled to be dispatched to VI Police Department
371 Jurgen Command in Cruz Bay. In addition to dispatching temporary generators, VITEMA
372 funds the initial fueling of facilities identified by the Department of Human Services to
373 serve as congregate shelters either before or following a State of Emergency. Two facilities
374 with new generators, Julius E. Sprauve School on St. John and BC Boschulte School on
375 St. Thomas, are allotted \$33,000 total to support their initial diesel fuel supply.

- 376 • VITEMA maintains its six (6) light set / 5 kw generator units with 2 on St Croix, 2 on St
377 Thomas and 2 on St John. The units have been used continuously throughout the year to
378 provide safety lighting for nighttime events and emergency support with government
379 agencies at no cost.
- 380 • VITEMA's vehicle fleet added six (6) new vehicles in FY2026, bringing a total of 14
381 vehicles to its fleet. Seven (7) of the total fleet vehicles are assigned to the Office of
382 Disaster Recovery – Public Assistance.
- 383 • For hurricane season 2025 VITEMA spent \$37,000 to purchase sand and sandbags to
384 support Operation Blue Skies – sandbag distribution – to individuals, government agencies,
385 and a few key essential business partners. Distribution occurred 13-15 August at
386 Department of Public Works facilities on St. Croix and St. Thomas, and at VI Fire Stations
387 located on St. Croix, St. Thomas, and St. John. On September 6, 2025, a Department of
388 Public Works truck and staff transported 200 sandbags to Water Island for local home
389 owners. By the end of the 2025 hurricane season, the Territory had exhausted its supply of
390 sand and sandbags. For FY2026 and FY2027 there are \$0 / zero dollars budgeted for
391 purchase of sand and sandbags.
- 392 • With funding from the Federal EMPG Grant, VITEMA has spent \$7,000 to purchase a
393 total of 17 Starlink antenna kits for Emergency Communications use at both its Emergency
394 Operation Centers and mobile field operations. All EOCs have successfully deployed the
395 Starlink antennas during exercises supporting Hurricane, Tsunami, and Earthquake disaster
396 scenarios. A Starlink antenna is a satellite dish designed to connect users to SpaceX's
397 Starlink low Earth orbit (LEO) satellite network, providing high-speed internet even in
398 remote or mobile locations.
- 399 • Pursuant to Act No. 9035 / Bill No. 36-0174 Emergency Shelter Fund, VITEMA is allotted
400 \$100,000 for Hurricane Season 2026 to improved facilities identified by the Department

401 of Human Services as congregate shelters of by the Department of Health as medical
 402 special needs shelter. Currently, weekly VITEMA facilitates weekly shelter assessment
 403 SITREP meeting with 11 agencies, to include DHS, DOH, VIFEMS, BSCM, VIDE, VIPD,
 404 VINGN, and the American Red Cross to identify funding requirements and prioritized
 405 spending for shelters on St. Croix, St. Thomas, and St. John.

406 **Challenges:**

- 407 • For almost nine years, VITEMA Hazard Mitigation Wind Retrofit / Safe Room project at
 408 St Croix Hermon Hill has been in the design phase. VITEMA successfully completed the
 409 required Federal Consistency Determination (FCD) hearing on project CZM-0020-24
 410 VITEMA EOC, Estate Hermon Hill, St. Croix, demolition and reconstruction project, on
 411 May 20, 2025. Accompanying the passing vote by the Board were fifteen special conditions
 412 listed, which VITEMA is responsible for compliance. On July 1, 2025, FEMA provided an
 413 Amendment #4 approval letter which provided the following: The project total funded
 414 amount remains at \$22,509,692. However, A&E projected costs increased to \$3,696,347,
 415 construction costs decreased to \$18,276,516, and contingency costs increased to
 416 \$1,098,643, divided into \$184,817 for A&E contingencies and \$913,825 for construction
 417 contingencies. Currently the A&E firm has completed a 60% design package and Peer
 418 Review, per FEMA requirements. As of April 30, 2026, \$2,600,126 has been spent on
 419 A&E Task Order for the VITEMA Hazard Mitigation Wind Retrofit / Safe Room project.
- 420 • St. Thomas EOC Repair - Repairs under the FEMA Public Assistance grant of \$1.4 million
 421 has commenced. An additional \$999,201 from insurance proceeds brings the total to \$2.4
 422 million of which \$140,000 is two (2) percent cost share sourced from HUD CDBG-DR
 423 funds. Phase 1 (roof work) is complete. VITEMA is currently in Phase 2 and has reviewed
 424 the contractor bids with support from the Department of Property and Procurement. The
 425 selection of the contractor is pending final verification of remaining funds and access to
 426 insurance proceeds and HUD CDGB-DR funds.
- 427 • Tsunami Warning Siren Maintenance – Currently a large percent of the Tsunami Warning
 428 Sirens are failing primarily due to batteries, which were originally installed in 2022. The
 429 VITEMA EMPG grant funded \$90,316 in FY2026 for maintenance of all 44 sirens; 19 on

430 St. Thomas, 1 on Water Island, 7 on St. John, and 17 on St. Croix. The contract has been
431 awarded and the vendor, American Signal Corporation (ASC) began work on June 8,
432 starting on St. Thomas. Once St. Thomas is complete, ASC will go to St. John and then
433 finish up on St. Croix. The current project timeline is to complete and test all sirens on St.
434 Thomas, St. John, and Water Islands, no later than June 26, and finish up by July 10, on
435 St. Croix.

436 CLOSING COMMENTS

437 Finally, to the hardworking staff at VITEMA, 9-1-1 Emergency Communications Center, and the
438 Fusion Center – thank you for your commitment and dedication to the Agency, its mission, and
439 the People of the U.S. Virgin Islands. Emergency Management is tough work. Your jobs are not
440 easy, but you show up every day to ensure that the mandates of the Agency are met. When disaster
441 strikes, you respond. You are integral to the continued success of our Agency, with your leadership
442 and knowledge of the Incident Command System. Again, thank you.

443 On a somber note, I want to publicly acknowledge the untimely and sudden passing of one of our
444 VITEMA / ODR Hazard Mitigation staff members on August 7, 2025, Ms. Amika Hennman, at
445 the young age of 44. She was the niece of Ms. Debra Henneman-Smith who served VITEMA as
446 the Deputy Director of Finance and Administration for many years, including through Hurricanes
447 Irma and Maria and retired in September 2020 after 20 plus years of service. Amika was a
448 tremendous contributor to the agency and is profoundly missed.

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

455 My team and I thank you for the opportunity to speak on VITEMA’s proposed FY 2027 budget.
456 We are ready to address your questions.