

**THIRTY-SIXTH LEGISLATURE OF THE U.S.**

**VIRGIN ISLANDS**

**COMMITTEE ON DISASTER RECOVERY,  
INFRASTRUCTURE & PLANNING**

**Chairman: The Honorable Marise C. James, Esq.**

**Virgin Islands Police Department**

**St. Croix, USVI**

**June 30<sup>th</sup>, 2025**

**A summary of the Virgin Islands Police Department's disaster preparedness  
and hurricane season readiness efforts.**

Madam Chairman, distinguished members of the Senate, thank you for the opportunity to testify today in this matter. I am Lieutenant Isaac Porter, Special Assistant to the Chief St. Croix District and Territorial liaison officer to VITEMA for emergency services for the Police of the Virgin Islands Police Department. On behalf of Police Commissioner Mario M. Brooks, I submit this testimony as a summary of the Virgin Islands Police Department's disaster preparedness and hurricane season readiness efforts, including emergency response planning, continuity of operations, interagency coordination, recovery support activities, and the Department's Emergency Support Function responsibilities under the Territorial Emergency Operations Plan.

The Virgin Islands Police Department (VIPD) respectfully submits this

summary of its preparedness activities and operational readiness efforts for the 2026 Atlantic Hurricane Season. As the Territory's primary law enforcement agency and the lead agency for Emergency Support Function (ESF) #13, Public Safety and Security under the Territorial Emergency Operations Plan (TEOP), the Department maintains a critical role in protecting lives, preserving public order, safeguarding critical infrastructure, and supporting emergency response and recovery operations throughout the Territory.

The Department's preparedness efforts encompass emergency response planning, continuity of operations, personnel and equipment readiness, interagency coordination, disaster recovery support, and participation in territorial emergency management activities. These efforts have been implemented across the Districts of St. Thomas, St. John, and St. Croix in collaboration with territorial, federal, and private-sector partners.

### **Emergency Management Governance and Coordination**

The Virgin Islands Police Department remains an active member of the Territorial Emergency Management and Homeland Security Council, commonly referred to as the Emergency Management Council, as established pursuant to Title 23 of the Virgin Islands Code. Through its participation on the Council, the Department works closely with the Virgin Islands Territorial Emergency Management Agency (VITEMA), executive branch agencies, federal partners, non-governmental organizations, and private-sector stakeholders to ensure a coordinated, all-hazards approach to preparedness, response, recovery, and mitigation.

The Department continues to support the Governor's emergency preparedness priorities through active participation in planning meetings, training activities, emergency management exercises, operational readiness assessments, and Emergency Operations Center (EOC) coordination activities. VIPD leadership and operational personnel remain fully integrated into the Territory's emergency management structure to ensure a unified and coordinated response during disasters and major emergencies.

### **Emergency Support Function Responsibilities**

Under the Territorial Emergency Operations Plan, the Virgin Islands Police Department serves as the lead agency for Emergency Support Function #13, Public Safety and Security. In this role, the Department is responsible for coordinating and supporting law enforcement and public safety operations before, during, and after disasters and emergencies.

Core responsibilities include:

Law enforcement and public safety operations;

Traffic control and evacuation support;

Protection of critical infrastructure and government facilities;

Curfew enforcement and anti-looting operations;

Security patrols and crime prevention activities;

Search and rescue support;

Criminal investigations and intelligence coordination;

Mutual aid coordination and integration of external law enforcement

resources;

Security support for shelters and mass care facilities; and

Public safety support for disaster response and recovery operations.

The Department works closely with supporting agencies including the Virgin Islands National Guard, Virgin Islands Fire and Emergency Medical Services, Department of Health, Department of Public Works, Bureau of Corrections, Virgin Islands Port Authority, Bureau of Motor Vehicles, Department of Justice, federal law enforcement partners, and other emergency support function agencies to ensure a unified territorial response capability.

### **2026 Hurricane Season Readiness Activities**

In preparation for the 2026 hurricane season, the Department completed a comprehensive review of emergency preparedness plans, operational procedures, personnel readiness requirements, communications systems, facilities, and response resources.

#### **Personnel Readiness**

The Department conducted a territory-wide review of staffing and deployment requirements, including:

Verification of emergency contact information for all employees;

Validation of emergency staffing rosters and deployment assignments;

Identification of mission-essential personnel;

Review of employee accountability procedures;

Refresher training on incident command principles and emergency operations;

and review of emergency housing and support arrangements for critical personnel and their families.

### **Fleet and Equipment Readiness**

The Department completed inspections and readiness assessments of patrol vehicles, marine assets, specialized response equipment, generators, communications systems, and emergency response resources. Additional preparedness measures included:

Inventory and replenishment of emergency supplies;

Verification of fuel reserves and fuel distribution procedures;

Inspection of traffic management equipment;

Validation of alternative communications capabilities;

Testing of redundant communications systems; and

Operational assessments of marine and our unmanned aerial support resources.

### **Facility Readiness**

Police facilities throughout the Territory underwent hurricane readiness inspections to ensure operational sustainability before, during, and after storm events.

While we are not satisfied with our current infrastructure status preparedness activities included:

Assessment of police stations/substations, and support facilities;

Verification of emergency power generation capabilities;

Protection of mission-critical records and information systems;

Inspection of communications infrastructure; and

Review of facility relocation and alternate operating procedures.

### **Continuity of Operations Planning (COOP)**

The Virgin Islands Police Department has completed a comprehensive review and update of its Continuity of Operations Plans (COOP) for all districts, divisions, and operational bureaus.

These plans are designed to ensure the uninterrupted delivery of essential law enforcement services during emergencies, disasters, and catastrophic incidents. The updated COOP framework identifies:

Essential functions and mission-critical services;

Orders of succession and delegated authorities;

Alternate operating facilities and work locations;

Emergency communications procedures;

Information technology continuity requirements;

Personnel accountability and recall procedures; and

Resource management and logistical support requirements.

The Police Chiefs, their district commanders and bureau directors have reviewed and validated continuity procedures to ensure the Department can maintain operational effectiveness under degraded or disrupted conditions.

### **2026 Hurricane Capstone Exercise**

The Virgin Islands Police Department participated in the Territory's 2026 Hurricane Capstone Exercise, a multi-agency preparedness exercise conducted to evaluate operational readiness and interagency coordination capabilities prior to the

start of hurricane season.

The exercise tested the Territory's ability to coordinate emergency response activities during a simulated hurricane event and included participation from territorial agencies, federal partners, emergency support function representatives, and emergency management personnel.

Exercise objectives included:

Emergency Operations Center activation;

Incident Command System implementation;

Emergency communications interoperability;

Resource management and allocation;

Evacuation and transportation coordination;

Critical infrastructure protection;

Shelter security and support operations;

Search and rescue coordination; and

Disaster recovery planning.

The exercise demonstrated significant improvements in interagency coordination, information sharing, situational awareness, and operational decision-making. Key strengths identified included effective coordination between VIPD district command staff and VITEMA, successful integration of Emergency Support Function partners, improved communications capabilities, and effective implementation of incident command principles.

Areas identified for continued enhancement include expanding redundant communications capabilities, increasing cross-training opportunities for emergency operations personnel, strengthening resource tracking systems during extended incidents, and further refining evacuation and transportation coordination plans. Corrective actions and lessons learned are currently being incorporated into operational plans, training programs, and standard operating procedures.

### **District Preparedness Updates**

#### **St. Thomas**

The St. Thomas District has completed readiness inspections of police facilities, communications infrastructure, fleet assets, and operational equipment. The district has reviewed emergency deployment procedures, shelter security plans, and disaster response protocols.

Key preparedness priorities include:

Airport and seaport security support operations “as needed,”

Evacuation route management;

Protection of critical infrastructure;

Coordination with tourism stakeholders and hospitality partners; and

Emergency communications interoperability.

#### **St. John**

The St. John District has focused preparedness efforts on addressing the unique geographic and transportation challenges associated with island operations.

Readiness activities include:

Review of marine transportation and evacuation plans;

Coordination with National Park Service officials and local emergency response partners;

Shelter support planning;

Continuity of communications procedures;

Resource staging and logistics planning; and

Validation of contingency procedures for periods of limited transportation access.

### **St. Croix**

The St. Croix District has completed comprehensive assessments of facilities, communications systems, operational resources, and emergency response capabilities.

Preparedness priorities include:

Critical infrastructure protection;

Shelter security planning;

Traffic management and evacuation support;

Emergency communications testing;

Coordination with healthcare facilities and emergency management partners; and post-disaster recovery support planning.

The district remains prepared to support large-scale emergency operations and extended recovery missions should a significant storm impact the Territory.

## **Disaster Recovery and Community Support Operations**

Following a disaster event, the Virgin Islands Police Department plays a critical role in supporting recovery operations and restoring normalcy throughout affected communities.

Recovery support responsibilities include:

Public safety and security patrols;

Damage assessment support;

Security for emergency distribution sites;

Protection of critical government infrastructure;

Curfew and Traffic Control Point enforcement;

Transportation escorts for emergency resources and personnel;

Support for community re-entry operations; and

Coordination with territorial and federal recovery agencies.

Additionally, the Department supports Emergency Support Function #6 activities by assisting with congregate shelter operations, providing security support for shelters, coordinating transportation escorts for patients and displaced residents, and assisting vulnerable populations during recovery operations.

## **Conclusion**

The Virgin Islands Police Department has undertaken extensive planning, training, coordination, and preparedness activities to ensure operational readiness for the 2026 Atlantic Hurricane Season. Through active participation in the Emergency Management Council, implementation of updated Continuity of Operations Plans,

participation in the 2026 Hurricane Capstone Exercise, and close coordination with territorial and federal partners, the Department remains fully prepared to fulfill its responsibilities under the Territorial Emergency Operations Plan.

The Department remains committed to protecting the residents and visitors of the Virgin Islands, maintaining public safety and order, supporting emergency response and recovery operations, and ensuring continuity of essential law enforcement services throughout the hurricane season and during any emergency that may impact the Territory.

Thank you for your time and consideration. We will remain on standby to welcome any questions from the committee.