

Hurricane Season 2026 Readiness



PRESENTED BY

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EMERGENCY MANAGEMENT AGENCY**

Submitted to

SENATOR MARISE C. JAMES, Esq. CHAIR

Senate Committee on Disaster Recovery, Infrastructure & Planning

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2 OPENING COMMENTS

3 Good afternoon Senator Marise C. James, Esq., Chair of the Committee on Disaster Recovery,
4 Infrastructure & Planning, and all other senators present, members of the 36th legislative staff and
5 those in the viewing and listening audience. I am Daryl D. Jaschen, Director of the Virgin Islands
6 Territorial Emergency Management Agency (VITEMA). Today I will provide an update on the
7 Government of the US Virgin Islands Hurricane Season 2026 readiness posture. In my prepared
8 testimony today, topics covered will include the status VITEMA's Emergency Operations Center
9 readiness, support to the Department of Human Services in Health and Welfare checks following
10 a major Hurricane for individuals on their Senior Registry, and the coordination activities
11 completed with Territory Emergency Support Function (ESF) lead agencies.

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13 EMERGENCY OPERATIONS CENTERS

14 VITEMA maintains three (3) Emergency Operations Centers (EOCs) with full-time VITEMA
15 Supervisors, which are available during non-activation times, from 8:00 am – 5:00 pm, Monday –
16 Friday. The EOC on St. Croix is in a rented three-story building in downtown Christiansted. EOC,
17 able to accommodate 35 individuals, has a working 150kw generator and fuel supply for 5-days,
18 and emergency backup communications, to include VHF radio and HF radio. There are 15-satellite
19 phones located in the EOC to be issued out to pre-designated GVI agency leaders, and there are
20 two (2) backup internet connections available via Starlink antennas (Standard v3 and mini). An
21 emergency fuel contract exists and the account is paid-up. An alternate St. Croix EOC is identified
22 as part of VITEMA's Continuity of Operations Plan (COOP) located at the Bureau of Information
23 Technology facility, approximately 3 miles away. VITEMA has conducted one separate exercise
24 activation from the alternate EOC.

25 The EOC on St. Thomas, able to accommodate 35 individuals, is located across the East end of
26 the CEKA runway and is owned by the Government of the USVI. The EOC has a working 430kw
27 generator and fuel supply for 5-days, and emergency backup communications, identical to that on
28 St. Croix. An emergency fuel contract exists and the account is paid-up. Due to Phase II of our
29 Hurricane Irma Public Assistance recovery project, the St. Thomas EOC will be unavailable for
30 approximately 365-days, once repairs begin. Currently, VITEMA is in the construction contract
31 bid process, but anticipates beginning repairs in August 2026. An alternate St. Thomas EOC is
32 identified as part of its COOP is located at the Omar Brown Fire Station, approximately 2.5 miles

33 away. VITEMA has conducted two separate exercise activations from the alternate EOC, to
34 include the most recent Hurricane Readiness Capstone Exercise.

35 The EOC on St. John, able to accommodate 16 individuals and is just off Centerline Road, located
36 across from the Myra Keating Smith Clinic, and is owned by the Department of Public Works. It
37 has a working 20kw generator and fuel supply for 3-days, and emergency backup communications,
38 identical to of the EOCs on St. Croix and St. Thomas. An emergency fuel contract exists and the
39 account is paid-up. The alternate St. John EOC is identified as part its COOP is located at the St.
40 John Volunteer Rescue facility, approximately ½ mile away. VITEMA has conducted two separate
41 exercise activations from the alternate EOC, to include the most recent Hurricane Readiness
42 Capstone Exercise.

43 Other Agency Continuity of Operations Plans

44 An integral part of the US Virgin Islands EMAP accreditation program is the development, agency
45 approval, and testing of agency Emergency Support Function (ESF) Continuity of Operations
46 Plans. All ESFs developed their initial COOPs in 2022 and are approved by their senior leader.
47 Currently four (4) are in the process of being reviewed and updated (DPP, BIT, DPW, VITEMA)
48 and 10 are scheduled to be issued in July 2026 to agency leaders for review and signature
49 (VIFEMS, DHS, DPP, DOH, VIFEMS, DOA, VIEO, VIPD, DLCA, JIC).

50

51 SENIOR REGISTRY

52 The Department of Human Services develops and maintains the Senior Registry, as required by
53 Act No. 8058 effective June 25, 2018, from Bill No. 32-0064 sponsored by Senator DeGraff with
54 is a listing of Seniors over the age of 60 who live alone or any individual, regardless of age, living
55 alone with a disability. As of May 2026, there are a total of 964 individuals who have voluntarily
56 sign-up to be on the Senior Registry. St. Thomas has 554 individuals, St. Croix has 310 individuals,
57 St. John has 100 individuals, and Water Island has none. Applications for the Senior Registry are
58 located at the Department of Human Services, Bureau of Motor Vehicles, and Election System
59 Offices. Copies of the Senior Registry are provided prior to Hurricane Season to VITEMA, 9-1-1
60 Emergency Communications, and VI Fire and Emergency Medical Services. Following a major
61 disaster, the Commissioner of Human Services, VITEMA Director, and VIFEMS Director
62 determine the need for post-disaster Health and Welfare Checks of individuals in impacted area.

63

64 **TERRITORY EMERGENCY OPERATIONS PLAN**

65 As required by EMAP, US Virgin Islands maintains an Emergency Operations Plan. Our current
66 TEOP, approved in December 2024, has five (5) main purposes. First, it identifies the role of
67 territorial government and coordinating non-governmental organization (NGO) and private sector
68 partners before, during, and after a disaster, large-scale emergency, or event affecting the U.S.
69 Virgin Islands. Second, it establishes the concepts and policies under which all elements of the
70 territorial government and coordinating NGOs and private sector partners will operate during
71 emergencies. Third, it outlines responsibilities of Territorial government officials, agencies, and
72 private organizations that the annexes specify in more detail. Fourth, it provides a framework
73 within which more detailed emergency plans or procedures can be developed and maintained. And
74 fifth, provides a framework for a prompt, effective and seamless assistance to U.S. Virgin Islands
75 and individual Districts with federal assistance is requested.

76 The structure of the TEOP describes a territory-wide, integrated approach to incident management
77 and includes overarching planning assumptions, roles and responsibilities, concept of operations,
78 specific hazard plans, and plan maintenance guidance. The included Emergency Support Function
79 (ESF) specific annexes and appendices provide an all-hazard overview from coordination agencies
80 with input from stakeholders. The hazard-specific annexes and appendices provide a detailed
81 concept of operations tailored specifically to the most-likely incidents to cause catastrophic impact
82 to the Territory.

83 The TEOP identifies private sector responsibilities to establish a Business Emergency Operations
84 Center (BEOC) that consists as an integration point for private and public coordination for
85 sustained response and recovery operations. The BEOC is comprised of volunteers from the
86 private sector with duties specific to designated Community Lifelines model. The BEOC has been
87 established, and supports the EOC as needed, through planning, engagement and integration of
88 private sector partners. A BEOC liaison from DLCA integrates with the EOC upon activation and
89 is the point of contact to the BEOC for all requests and support needed.

90 **EMERGENCY MANAGEMENT COUNCIL**

91 As identified in the TEOP and required by Title 23, Chapter 10, Subchapter I, section 1007,
92 VITEMA establishes and maintains an active Emergency Management Council. Required
93 membership in the council includes

- 94 ○ Director of VITEMA, who serves as Chairman

- 95 ○ Any commissioners of the departments within the executive branch of the
96 Government
- 97 ○ Attorney General of the Virgin Islands
- 98 ○ Any directors of the agencies and bureaus within the executive branch of the
99 Government
- 100 ○ The Adjutant General of VING
- 101 ○ The executive directors of the following semiautonomous agencies,
102 instrumentalities, or public corporations of the Government:
- 103 (A) Virgin Islands Water and Power Authority
- 104 (B) Virgin Islands Port Authority
- 105 (C) West Indian Company, Ltd
- 106 (D) Virgin Islands Economic Development Authority
- 107 (E) Virgin Islands Waste Management Authority
- 108 (F) Virgin Islands Housing Finance Authority
- 109 (G) Virgin Islands Public Services Commission
- 110 (H) Government Employees Retirement System
- 111 (I) Virgin Islands Public Finance Authority
- 112 (J) University of the Virgin Islands
- 113 (K) Virgin Islands Government Hospitals and Health Facilities Corporation
- 114 (L) Schneider Regional Medical Center
- 115 (M) Juan F. Luis Hospital
- 116 ○ Corporation or other business entity that operates in the Virgin Islands as a public
117 utility regulated by the Public Services Commission, per title 30, VIC.
- 118 ○ Private sector entities, including, but not limited to, the chambers of commerce,
119 hotel associations, and other entities, which may be invited to serve on the EMC by
120 the Governor in consultation with the Director

121 The Emergency Management Council under the Bryan – Roach administration meets monthly,
122 usually the third Thursday of each month with Territory senior leadership represented by the
123 Governor, Lieutenant Governor, or Chief of Staff. Invitations go out to 75 different government,
124 public and private sector leaders, to include FEMA, US Coast Guard, and the National Weather
125 Service, with a consistent 60 percent attendance. The purpose of the Council is to

- 126 (1) Plan for and coordinate the federal and territorial emergency management programs
- 127 with FEMA and any other federal or territorial agencies, or other appropriate public or
- 128 private entities.
- 129 (2) Assist the Territorial Coordinating Officer in responding to the Federal Coordinating
- 130 Officer, or other appropriate federal agents or officers, in the event the President approves
- 131 a request from the Governor for an emergency declaration or major disaster declaration.
- 132 (3) Provide goals and objectives to the Director for implementing the TEOP
- 133 (4) Work with the Director and all other government agencies, to establish standards for
- 134 the operations and activities of the Government related to homeland security efforts

135 The Council also services as the EMAP Advisory Committee and receives quarterly updates on
 136 the program compliance. One of the additional requirements for members of the Council is to
 137 annually designate their agency Emergency Services Coordinators (ESCs) to the VITEMA
 138 Director. The persons designated as ESCs represent the agency during EOC activations and
 139 training events.

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VIRGIN ISLANDS NATIONAL GUARD



142 Integral to the success of the US Virgin Islands' immediate response from a major hurricane is
 143 activation of our local Virgin Islands National Guard (VING) which has Army units located on
 144 the Islands of St. Thomas and St. Croix and Airforce units which are located on the Island of St.
 145

146 Croix. The Joint Force Headquarters is located on the Island of St. Croix. Currently, there are no
147 National Guard units positioned on the island of St. John or Water Island. The VING is prepared
148 to support our local lead agencies under a Territorial State of Emergency or Federal Major Disaster
149 Declaration in a Territorial Active Duty (TAD) status covering the following mission assignments.

- 150 1) Immediate Response Teams in support of VIFEMS in urban search and rescue.
- 151 2) Route Clearance in support of DPW
- 152 3) Debris Removal in support of VIWMA
- 153 4) Public Shelters in support of DHS
- 154 5) Points of Distribution in support of DHS
- 155 6) Traffic Control Points in support of VIPD
- 156 7) Critical Infrastructure Recovery in support of BIT, DPW and DOH
- 157 8) Patient Movement in support of DOH and US HHS
- 158 9) Dual Status Commander in support of Governor and POTUS

159 CAPSTONE EXERCISE

160 VITEMA, FEMA, and Lead Emergency Support Function agencies conducted 2026 Hurricane
161 Readiness Capstone Exercise from 1-5 June based on a Hurricane Steve, Category 3 scenario
162 impacting the Island of St. John with major damage, medium damage to the Island of St. Thomas,
163 and minor damage to the island of St. Croix. The exercise focused on seven areas under Response
164 and Recovery: EOC Activation and Operational Readiness, Inter-Island Coordination and
165 Communications Systems, St. John Operations, Shelters (Congregate and Medical Special Needs),
166 Temporary Power and Generator Readiness, Recovery (Individual Assistance and Public
167 Assistance), and Crisis and Public Information. Activation of VITEMA Emergency Operations
168 Centers included FEMA participation with development of initial response goals, tactics and
169 planning meetings, and a Joint Incident Action Plan.

170 VITEMA and FEMA jointly conducted an After-Action Review (AAR). The AAR report,
171 completed on June 23, is currently in draft and under review by the VITEMA Director. The report
172 identifies seven strengths / sustains and five areas for improvement, with each area having
173 recommendations for improvement. The overall summary of the Capstone event captured in the
174 AAR Report is as follows, “The 2026 Capstone Readiness Initiative demonstrated meaningful
175 progress in joint IAP development, federal partner integration, and EOC activation procedures.

176 The achievement of a published joint incident action plan for the first time represents a significant
177 milestone in inter-island coordination. However, consistent themes across this review (WebEOC
178 underutilization, St. John operational gaps, shelter staff vulnerabilities, POD role confusion, and
179 communication quality) reflect systematic challenges that require structured corrective action
180 before hurricane season. Several of these findings parallel gaps identified in past events, proving
181 that priority recommendations from other reports have not yet been fully implemented. Aligning
182 corrective actions through the Continuous Improvement Working Group (CIWG) and the
183 Continuous Improvement Plan will strengthen accountability and focus remediation efforts where
184 they are most needed.”

185 **CLOSING COMMENTS**

186 The US Virgin Islands Agencies and Federal Partners are ready for the 2026 Hurricane Season.
187 We have exercised our plans and integration with our Federal Partners, local National Guard, and
188 have identified areas where the Territory is quickly overwhelmed during a Hurricane immediate
189 response. Leveraging these known gaps and ability for the Governor to formally request assistance
190 under the Stafford Act, we have pre-identified mission requests for either State-to-State support
191 through Emergency Management Assistance Compact (EMAC) or request to our Federal partners
192 through the FEMA Resource Request Form process. Thank you, Committee Chair, Senator Marise
193 C. James, Esq. for the opportunity to present our US Virgin Islands Hurricane Season 2026
194 readiness posture. My colleagues and I are prepared to answer any questions from the committee.