

FEMA Approves Permanent Housing Construction for U.S. Virgin Islands

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ST. CROIX, Virgin Islands – Since hurricanes Irma and Maria struck the U.S. Virgin Islands in September, more than \$11.2 million in federal and territorial recovery grants has been disbursed to eligible homeowners and renters for temporary housing assistance and other needs.

With more than half of the estimated number of housing inspections now complete across the territory, the Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA), in partnership with the Virgin Islands Territorial Emergency Management Agency (VITEMA) and the governor's office, has approved permanent housing construction (PHC) for eligible survivors who have sustained at least \$17,000 in FEMA verified loss (FVL), but whose home was not destroyed by the hurricanes.

Survivors who participate in PHC will be provided assistance in the form of direct repairs to their pre-disaster primary residence in lieu of financial assistance from FEMA. FEMA will contact these survivors via phone calls, texts and emails with details.

Before an applicant is approved for PHC, FEMA will ensure that repairs are necessary to make the home, safe, sanitary and functional. The estimated labor and repairs to the home must not exceed \$75,000. Repair costs must be reasonable and will be determined on a case-by-case basis.

FEMA also is making repair grants available to those homeowners with moderate damages, as these survivors may choose to quickly make repairs and move forward with their recovery.

"Recovery is never an easy process, but for a territory that spans several islands the challenges are multiplied," said FEMA's Federal Coordinating Officer William Vogel. "We will work with homeowners and help them weigh their options as they make some decisions about their path forward."



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FEMA encourages Virgin Islanders who have registered with FEMA and have had a housing inspection to call FEMA at **800-621-3362** or stop by any Disaster Recovery Center to learn more about their housing assistance options.

Survivors have until the **December 18 deadline** to register with FEMA for assistance. Survivors may register at DisasterAssistance.gov or by calling **800-621-3362**. Individuals who have a speech disability or hearing loss and use TTY should call 800-462-7585 directly. Those who use 711 or Video Relay Service (VRS) may call 800-621-3362.

These toll-free telephone numbers operate from 7 a.m. to 11 p.m. (local time) seven days a week. Operators are standing by to assist survivors in multiple languages.

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*Disaster recovery assistance is available without regard to race, color, religion, nationality, sex, age, disability, English proficiency or economic status. If you or someone you know has been discriminated against, call FEMA toll-free at **800-621-3362** (voice, **711/VRS** - Video Relay Service) (TTY: **800-462-7585**). Multilingual operators are available (press 2 for Spanish).*

FEMA's mission is to support our citizens and first responders to ensure that as a nation we work together to build, sustain, and improve our capability to prepare for, protect against, respond to, recover from, and mitigate all hazards.

For official information on the recovery effort following the hurricanes, please visit www.informusvi.com or www.usviupdate.com. Follow us on social media at twitter.com/femaregion2 and www.facebook.com/FEMAUSVirginIslands.

*To donate or volunteer, contact the voluntary or charitable organization of your choice through the National Voluntary Organizations Active in Disaster (NVOAD) at www.nvoad.org. For those who wish to help, **cash** donations offer voluntary agencies the most flexibility in obtaining the most-needed resources and pumps money into the local economy to help businesses recover. The Community Foundation of the Virgin Islands also has the "Fund for the Virgin Islands" at www.USVIrecovery.org.*



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