



Building Better: New Building Code & Power Upgrade, US Virgin Islands

Full Mitigation Best Practice Story

State-wide, US Virgin Islands



US Virgin Islands - After Hurricane Hugo, a Category 4 storm, swept through the islands in 1989 leaving near total devastation in its wake, FEMA and the Government of the Virgin Islands worked together to identify measures to mitigate damage from storms. Mitigation programs included upgrading building codes and building practices, hardening the power grid, and instituting public education programs about the value of mitigation measures.



With FEMA support, a new building code was written and implemented. The new code requires anchoring systems, hurricane clips, shutters, and other hurricane resistant measures. Other mitigation projects enacted in the wake of Hurricane Hugo was the strengthening of infrastructure facilities and a massive public education outreach to inspectors, contractors and owners about proper construction practices and other mitigation strategies.

Following Hurricane Marilyn in 1995, the Governor’s office initiated the Home Protection Roofing Program: a comprehensive program to repair damaged roofs. The program provided nearly 350 homeowners with roofs designed to withstand a Category 2 storm. Additional funding was made available to expand this program after Hurricane Bertha struck the islands in 1996.

The high winds accompanying Hugo and Marilyn caused a total disruption of the power system. Using Public Assistance and Hazard Grant Mitigation Program funding, the Government of the Virgin Islands began a series of major projects designed to keep the power system intact and functional in the wake of a storm, among them was the decentralization of the power generation system and the diversification of fuel sources.

When Hurricane Georges struck in 1998, damage to private homes on the island was less than two percent and all of the power substations and other projects constructed since Hurricane Hugo survived undamaged. These successes can be directly attributed to the mitigation efforts undertaken and completed after Hurricanes Hugo and Marilyn.

Activity/Project Location

Geographical Area: **State-wide**

FEMA Region: **Region II**

State: **US Virgin Islands**

Key Activity/Project Information

Sector: **Public**
Hazard Type: **Hurricane/Tropical Storm**
Activity/Project Type: **Building Codes; Education/Outreach/Public Awareness; Utility Protective Measures**
Activity/Project Start Date: **03/1989**
Activity/Project End Date: **Ongoing**
Funding Source: **Hazard Mitigation Grant Program (HMGP)**
Funding Recipient: **Local Government**

Activity/Project Economic Analysis

Cost: **Amount Not Available**

Activity/Project Disaster Information

Mitigation Resulted From Federal Disaster? **Unknown**
Value Tested By Disaster? **Yes**
Tested By Federal Disaster #: **No Federal Disaster specified**
Year First Tested: **1998**
Repetitive Loss Property? **Unknown**

Reference URLs

Reference URL 1: <http://www.floodsmart.gov>
Reference URL 2: <http://www.fema.gov/business/nfip/>

Main Points

- With FEMA support, a new building code was written and implemented.
- Following Hurricane Marilyn in 1995, the Governor's office initiated the Home Protection Roofing Program: a comprehensive program to repair damaged roofs.
- Using Public Assistance and Hazard Grant Mitigation Program funding, the Government of the Virgin Islands began a series of major projects designed to keep the power system intact and functional in the wake of a storm, among them was the decentralization of the power generation system and the diversification of fuel sources.