

# Collaboration Energizes Vision to Strengthen Critical Service Sectors in the U.S. Virgin Islands

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**ST. CROIX, U.S. Virgin Islands** -- The landfall of two Category 5 hurricanes within 14 days of one another inflicted damage to thousands of Virgin Islanders' homes and put extreme stress on the territory's critical service sectors in September 2017. Corrugated aluminum from roofs and vegetative debris piled up, thousands of homes could not receive electricity and major medical facilities were damaged across the territory.

Federal and territorial partnerships continue to push hurricane recovery projects forward to make the territory's critical service sectors more resilient against the winds and rains of future storms. Approximately \$1.25 billion is obligated through FEMA's Public Assistance Program to support permanent repairs to facilities damaged in the 2017 storms.

Critical service sectors are the most fundamental services in the community that, when stabilized, enable all other aspects of society to function. The stabilization of the power grid and ability of hospitals to stay open after disasters supports lifesaving and life-sustaining operations.

"We look forward to seeing a more resilient power grid, rebuilt public housing communities with mitigation measures to harden roofs, doors and windows and roads repaired to keep stormwater and erosion at bay in the territory. Our partnership with the territory will produce a safer and more resilient infrastructure for all Virgin Islanders and ensure the territory's critical service sectors are stabilized quicker after future storms," said U.S. Virgin Islands Recovery Director Kristen Hodge.

Approved funding through FEMA's Public Assistance Program toward emergency and permanent work for critical service sectors in the U.S. Virgin Islands include:



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Page 1 of 8

## 1. \$313.5 million for safety and security

Safety and security projects include \$563,889 obligated for restoration of the tsunami early warning system on St. Croix and \$895,588 for repairs to the tsunami early warning system on St. Thomas, Water Island and St. John. The territory will repair or replace 17 sirens on St. Croix composed of approximately 20-foot steel pole, solar panels, siren heads plus ancillary equipment.

The territory will repair or replace a combined 27 sirens on St. Thomas, St. John and Water Island, which includes 18 sites on St. Thomas, seven sites on St. John and two sites on Water Island.

Mitigation measures for \$71,638 on St. Croix and \$113,768 on St. Thomas, St. John and Water Island for the tsunami early warning sirens projects include the addition of steel poles to withstand high winds and impact from flying debris.

## 2. \$851.3 million for housing

Public housing communities damaged during the 2017 storms will eventually undergo repairs with a focus on mitigation measures to make housing safer and more resilient for Virgin Islands families. FEMA has obligated \$200.3 million for the Virgin Islands Housing Authority to implement permanent repairs to communities across the territory. The \$200.3 million includes \$4.2 million in mitigation measures.

### ■ Projects on St. Thomas include:

An obligation of \$10.7 million for repairs to Michael Kirwan Terrace. Mitigation measures of \$679,907 will be applied to 20 buildings at Kirwan Terrace and include the installation of stainless-steel door hardware and installation of a water diverter berm and catch basin to control the rainwater flow away from dwellings.

A combined \$4.5 million for repairs to 12 apartment buildings at Tutu Hi-Rise and an obligation of \$6.37 million for repairs to the Housing Authority's central office, annex, workshop and Tutu community center. The community center project includes mitigation measures of \$394,944 to install wind-resistant roof gutters, air conditioning security guards, roll-down shutters over doors and windows, and installation of 24-gauge roof and wall panels.



- St. Croix housing community repairs include:

An obligation of \$5.5 million for repairs to 16 structures at the David Hamilton Jackson Housing Community. Mitigation measures of \$268,882 will include strengthening exterior wooden doors with stainless-steel hardware; replacing damaged aluminum gutters with steel gutters to re-direct water properly and securing exterior lighting to prevent damage by wind-blown debris.

Permanent repairs obligated for \$12.9 million to the John F. Kennedy Housing Community and \$7.7 million for repairs to the Marley Additions and Marley Homes. Repairs to the Marley Homes include mitigation measures of \$99,477 to upgrade damaged gutters, vinyl flooring and bathroom drywall along with the addition of door weatherstripping for doors that were damaged during Hurricane Maria.

### 3. \$140.3 million for health and medical

Projects to stabilize the territory's health care infrastructure until permanent repairs could be made include the build-out of Gov. Juan F. Luis Hospital and Medical Center's temporary facility in Christiansted with an obligation of \$110.5 million from FEMA. The temporary facility will allow Luis Hospital to maintain medical services as it works on the replacement of its main facility, which was damaged from Maria.

### 4. \$1.35 billion for energy and fuel

FEMA is partnering with the V.I. Water and Power Authority (WAPA) to harden the power grid to better withstand storms and increase reliability for electricity year-round. Plans and work are accelerating across the territory to repair electrical substations, bury electrical lines and put up composite power poles.

FEMA has awarded approximately \$899.1 million through its Public Assistance Program to support permanent repairs to electrical distribution systems and substations on St. Thomas, St. John, St. Croix and Water Island. Assistance includes \$572.8 million in for mitigation measures to strengthen the grid's resilience to end the cycle of disaster damage and reconstruction.

WAPA plans to install 8,496 composite poles built to withstand hurricane-force winds in the territory. As of Sept. late August, 4,429 poles were installed, and the



project was 52% complete.

The installation of burying electrical lines on St. John from Cruz Bay to Myrah Keating Smith Community Health Center is underway on St. John.

This past spring, a groundbreaking was held on St. Croix for three electrical underground projects for Golden Grove, Midland and at the Wilfred “Bomba” Allick Port and Transshipment Center. Work began for the container port underground project Sept. 20.

#### 5. \$10.4 million for communications

Projects include repairs to fiber-optic landing sites for the Virgin Islands Next Generation Network (viNGN) on St. Croix and reattachment of aerial fiber to wooden utility poles on St. Thomas. The projects are obligated for a combined \$2.9 million.

The \$1.8 million fiber-optic landing sites repair project on St. Croix will lead to repairs for submarine cable terrestrial routes with the reattachment of fiber to WAPA wooden utility poles between fiber-optic landing sites and the nearest Fiber Access Point at two locations.

Mitigation measures for the fiber-optic landing sites will provide shoreline armoring for the beachfront manhole that connects the Fiber Access Points to the submarine optic cable linking the Virgin Islands to one of the Atlantic/Caribbean submarine cables. Measures would also include underground cables from the manhole landing to the 12 Fiber Access Points on St. Croix. This mitigation would help ensure internet service, which also provides service for the rest of the territory, continues to operate during future storms.

The St. Thomas \$1 million communications project captures permanent repairs for the aerial fiber route and the aerial lateral fiber that branch off to customer endpoints. Repairs included reattaching aerial fiber to WAPA wooden utility poles.

#### 6. \$151.1 million for hazardous materials

FEMA is working with the territory as well to strengthen the resilience of sites that maintain hazardous materials, pollutants and waste. Projects include the approval of \$6.3 million for the V.I. Waste Management Authority to manage sewer line





repairs for the Garden Street, Savan and Moravian guts on St. Thomas.

The projects will include the removal of underground sewer pipes, removal and replacement of manholes, removal and replacement of cast-iron manhole frames and covers, and removal and replacement of underground sewer pipes.

#### 7. \$119 million for transportation

FEMA continues to work with the territory to improve roads damaged during the 2017 hurricanes. Obligated projects include:

Two projects for the Department of Public Works to manage repairs to Williams Delight on St. Croix for a combined \$3.58 million. Mitigation measures obligated for a combined \$1.2 million will focus on strengthening pavement in areas prone to flooding and erosion, improving stormwater drainage and increasing the size of existing culverts.

An obligation of \$5.1 million to repair roads and a commuter dock and ramp on Water Island. The watershed project includes mitigation measures of \$2.4 million to strengthen pavement most prone to saturated subgrades or erosion, improve stormwater drainage to reduce the damage of saturated subgrades and erosion, and add curbs and gutters or paved roadways.

FEMA's continued partnerships with the Office of the Governor, Virgin Islands Territorial Emergency Management Agency and Virgin Islands Office of Disaster Recovery will ensure the territory builds smarter and stronger and its critical facilities such as power plants and hospitals better withstand future storms.





Haugland Virgin Islands line workers finish installation of a composite power pole in July 2021 in Upper Contant on St. Thomas. The Virgin Islands Water and Power Authority is leading operations to install 2,333 composite poles on the island. FEMA/Eric Adams



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Page 6 of 8





RG Engineering begins demolition of five buildings in February 2021 damaged during hurricanes Irma and Maria at the Tutu Hi-Rise housing community on St. Thomas. FEMA, through its Public Assistance Program, is supporting the demolition of the buildings and eventual permanent repairs to Hi-Rise. FEMA



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FEMA's Public Assistance Program is supporting the V.I. Waste Management Authority's plans for sewer line repairs for the Garden Street gut in Charlotte Amalie on St. Thomas. Hurricanes Irma and Maria left Garden Street littered with debris in September 2017. FEMA/Eric Adams



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Page 8 of 8