

Federal and Territorial Partnership Continues Focus on Repairs to Energy and Communications Infrastructure in U.S. Virgin Islands

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ST. CROIX, U.S. Virgin Islands – FEMA continues to coordinate resources with the U.S. Virgin Islands to strengthen the territory's power grid and make its communications infrastructure more resilient. This month, approximately \$21 million has been approved through the Public Assistance Program for permanent repairs to St. John's power grid, St. Croix's internet infrastructure and the emergency operations center on St. Thomas.

The territory's plans to install emergency generators off Cruz Bay and Coral Bay on St. John will be supported through \$16.8 million from FEMA. Funding for these additional hazard mitigation measures will help make St. John's electrical distribution systems and infrastructure more resilient and continues FEMA's commitment to support plans to rebuild the island's grid.

The \$16.8 million for the installation of the generators increases FEMA's investment toward permanent repairs to St. John's power grid to \$198.4 million. Approximately 90% of the island's overhead power distribution was damaged during hurricanes Irma and Maria in September 2017. Mitigation measures include the installation of composite power poles and buying of electrical lines to make St. John's grid more resilient against future storms.

Collaboration between FEMA and the territory is focusing on making internet service more resilient for Virgin Islanders as well. FEMA is providing \$3.1 million for permanent repairs to St. Croix's fiber-optics cable infrastructure backbone and fiber access points. Destruction from the 2017 hurricanes led to the loss of 95% of aerial fiber access across the U.S. Virgin Islands.



The partnership between FEMA and the U.S. Virgin Islands will assist the territory to prepare for and respond to emergencies and disasters. Coordination between FEMA and the territory has led to an award of \$1.2 million for the Virgin Islands Territorial Emergency Management Agency to conduct permanent repairs to its emergency operations center on St. Thomas.

The rains and winds from Irma and Maria damaged the operation center's 911 call center, media/communication conference rooms, computer and data server rooms, and a high security data center that services Department of Homeland Security law enforcement and national security.

The operations center project includes mitigation measures of \$193,460 for numerous work which includes:

- rainwater control of the building's front entrance,
- reinforce the gutter system to prevent uplift of roofing metal,
- provide for stronger air conditioning support braces,
- provide rain diverting berm along the building sides,
- strengthen foundation to prevent further wall cracking,
- and provide improved waterproofing along roofing caps.

FEMA will continue to work with its territorial partners to develop further recovery projects to repair critical services such as energy and communications in the U.S. Virgin Islands.

