

Preparedness Month Highlights Six-Year Anniversary of Hurricane Irma in the U.S. Virgin Islands, Alongside Current Threat of Hurricane Lee

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ST. CROIX, U.S. Virgin Islands – As the U.S. Virgin Islands (USVI) remembers the six-year anniversary of the devastation caused by Hurricane Irma, the Territory faces a new challenge with the approaching Hurricane Lee. The timing of these events underscores the importance of preparedness and serves as a reminder of the resilience and determination displayed by the USVI community in the face of natural disasters said Mark A. Walters, Coordinator of FEMA's V.I. Caribbean Area Office.

On September 6, 2017, Hurricane Irma made landfall in the USVI, leaving a trail of destruction, and causing significant damage to infrastructure, homes, and businesses. Its impact was felt across the Territory. The recovery process has been ongoing, with the USVI making progress in rebuilding and strengthening its infrastructure, enhancing emergency response capabilities, and implementing measures to better withstand future storms.

To honor the six-year anniversary of Hurricane Irma and raise awareness about the importance of preparedness, FEMA and the USVI join the nation in observing National Preparedness Month throughout September. This annual campaign encourages individuals, families, businesses, and communities to take proactive steps to ensure their readiness in the event of emergencies or natural disasters. The theme for this year's Preparedness Month is "Take Control in 1, 2, 3," which encourages everyone, especially older adults, to become more prepared in three simple steps.

1. **Assess your needs.** Everyone has unique needs. There are several factors that can affect the steps you need to take to prepare yourself and those you care for. Whether you care for pets, have children, have a medical condition



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or a disability, it is important to know what your family will need to stay safe.

2. **Make a plan.** Once you've assessed your needs, you can plan for what you'd do, where you'd go and what to bring if a disaster strikes. Your emergency supply kit should include items that meet your [individual needs](#).
3. **Engage your support network.** Get to know your neighbors because they, along with your family and friends, can be a support network before, during and after a disaster by providing emotional and practical support.

You can learn more about National Preparedness Month and hurricane preparedness at [Ready.gov](https://www.ready.gov).

According to VITEMA Director Daryl Jaschen, "This September the U.S. Virgin Islands joins FEMA in recognizing this six-year anniversary of Category 5 Hurricane Irma and the upcoming six-year anniversary of Category 5 Hurricane Maria, which both proved just how resilient our community is in the Territory. Both hurricanes tested our strength and resilience, but it also revealed the unwavering spirit that defines us as Virgin Islanders." "Both Governor Albert Bryan, Jr. and Lieutenant Governor Tregenza Roach embrace September as National Preparedness Month and signed a proclamation urging Virgin Islanders to take concrete action toward furthering individuals' preparation for emergencies and disasters, with special focus on our vulnerable older adults, especially those living alone," said Jaschen.

While reflecting on the progress made since Hurricane Irma, FEMA and the Virgin Islands Territorial Emergency Management Agency (VITEMA) remain vigilant as Hurricane Lee approaches the Lesser Antilles. The National Weather Service has issued advisories and FEMA and VITEMA urge residents and visitors to monitor the storm's progress and take necessary precautions. The government of the USVI, in collaboration with federal agencies and local organizations, is prepared to activate emergency response plans, ensuring resources and personnel are ready to address any potential impacts.

To support preparedness efforts, FEMA and VITEMA and other local agencies have organized a series of events and initiatives. These include workshops, emergency drills, public service announcements and training. Residents are encouraged to participate actively, familiarize themselves with evacuation routes,



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assemble emergency supplies, and develop communication plans with their families.

FEMA and VITEMA remind residents of the key elements of emergency preparedness, including:

- Create an emergency supply kit with essential items such as non-perishable food, water, prescription medications, flashlights, batteries, and a first-aid kit.
- Develop a family emergency plan that includes communication methods, evacuation routes, and a designated meeting point.
- Stay informed by monitoring local weather forecasts, emergency alerts, and official announcements.
- Secure important documents and make digital copies of vital records.
- Protect your property by securing loose objects, trimming trees, and reinforcing doors and windows.
- Sign up for Alert VI at [VITEMA - Public - Sign In \(everbridge.net\)](https://www.everbridge.net/VITEMA-Public-Sign-In) .

As the USVI marks the anniversary of Hurricane Irma and prepares for the potential impact of Hurricane Lee, it is critical for everyone to remain vigilant not only for Lee, but for any weather or man-made events that may disrupt our lives and community.

