

Prepare Now for the Peak of Atlantic Hurricane Season

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ST. CROIX, U.S. Virgin Islands – As peak activity in the Atlantic hurricane season approaches, FEMA and the Virgin Islands Territorial Emergency Management Agency urge Virgin Islanders to review and update preparedness plans. Take immediate steps to prepare yourself and loved ones. Replenish your emergency preparedness kit, practice your emergency communications plan and stay alert.

The peak of Atlantic hurricane season is Sept. 10, with most activity occurring between mid-August and mid-October, according to the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration. Do not wait to prepare yourself for a hurricane when a storm forms in the Atlantic and stores fill with shoppers looking to purchase emergency supplies.

“Being well prepared, staying vigilant and practicing your emergency plans will reduce your anxiety if a storm approaches the U.S. Virgin Islands,” said FEMA Virgin Islands Caribbean Area Office Coordinator Mark A. Walters. “We urge Virgin Islanders to get a head start on preparedness and share information on readiness for disasters with their families and neighbors.”

You should prepare to be self-sufficient in the immediate aftermath of a tropical storm or hurricane and take steps to prepare your home or business. Those with disabilities and others with access and functional needs might have additional considerations.

According to VITEMA Director Daryl Jaschen, “When it comes to tropical cyclones / hurricanes, conditions change rapidly and with those changes, the amount of time we think we still have for final preparation is often reduced. Over the past several years, tropical cyclones continue to demonstrate rapid intensification over a period of 24-48 hours.”



“Every tropical cyclone during this peak period has the potential of being a life-threatening event to our community. Get yourself, your family, and your pets to a safe area EARLY, to ride out the passing of the storm,” said Jaschen. “If a hurricane is forecast to pass through or near the island where you are staying, anticipate and prepare for no power or communications to our homes for a prolonged period. Help will be on the way, but overcoming time and distance will be our major challenge. Until then, support your neighbors and work together. Continue to be VI Strong.”

There are steps you can take right now to ensure you and your household are better prepared for peak activity this hurricane season:

Build a survival kit. Families should be prepared to shelter in a secure and safe location for several days after a disaster when roads might be impassable, gas stations and grocery stores closed, power off and communications uncertain.

- Store water for drinking and sanitation, food, medications, a first-aid kit and hygiene products.
- Store supplies to meet the needs of individual family members, including infants and young children, seniors, people with disabilities, and pets or service animals.
- Protect documents such as vital records, insurance policies, medical information, property and financial records, by storing copies in a safe deposit box or another location separate from your house. These may be necessary for survivors who could be eligible to apply for disaster assistance.

Make a Family Communications Plan. Choose an out-of-town friend or relative as a point of contact. Make sure children have emergency contacts memorized or saved in a secure place. Determine a safe, familiar place the family can go for protection or to reunite. Ensure the location is in a central and accessible location for all family members, including family members with disabilities. If you have pets or service animals, make sure the location is animal-friendly. For more information on making a family communication plan go to [Make a Plan](#) .

Stay Informed. Listen to local official bulletins for the most up-to-date information before, during and after a disaster. It’s a good idea to have a battery or solar-powered radio to receive disaster notices and updates. Sign up for Alert VI to



receive real-time notifications for emergencies in the U.S. Virgin Islands at [VITEMA - Public - Sign In \(everbridge.net\)](#) . Weather updates and instructions might also be found on the [National Weather Service's San Juan Puerto Rico](#) Facebook page.

Find more information on how to prepare at www.ready.gov/hurricanes and [Hurricanes \(vi.gov\)](http://vi.gov) .

Additional Considerations for People with Disabilities or Access and Functional Needs

People with disabilities or access and functional needs should follow the above general instructions and consider the following additional actions:

- Create a support network. Keep a contact list in a watertight container in your emergency kit.
- Inform your support network of your emergency plan, your needs and how to communicate during an emergency.
- If you use durable medical equipment in your home that requires electricity, talk to your health care provider about how you can prepare for a power outage.
- If you are deaf, hard of hearing, deaf-blind, or have a speech disability, make sure your emergency information includes the best way to effectively communicate with you.
- Find more information about preparedness for people with disabilities at www.ready.gov/disability .
- Sign up for the Elder, Dependent Adult and Disable Person Disaster Registry at [To: \(gov.vi\)](http://To:(gov.vi)) from the Virgin Islands Department of Human Services. Registration forms can be picked up at the Virgin Islands Bureau of Motor Vehicles, the Virgin Islands Elections Systems or Human Services offices.

Harden and Protect Your Property

Virgin Islanders should also take steps to protect their homes:

- Prepare to store anything from your property that could be picked up by hurricane winds and turned into a harmful object.
- Trim trees to remove dead limbs and secure rain gutters and downspouts.
- Make sure porches, decks or sheds are sound and firmly attached.



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- Fasten down roofs with hurricane straps or clips and install strong bolts at the top and bottom of exterior doors. Buy or make storm shutters for windows.

Keep your home and vehicle insured against wind and flood damage. Also, remember to update your property insurance to cover current construction costs and be aware that a property insurance policy does not typically offer coverage for flood damage. For more information about getting flood insurance, visit www.floodsmart.gov.

Learn more about strengthening your home from hazards storms pose from the Federal Alliance for Safe Homes (FLASH) at [Resilience – #HurricaneStrong](#).

