

The 2018 Hurricane Season is Here, Now is the Time to Prepare

Release Date: July 20, 2018

U.S. Virgin Islands – As recovery from hurricanes Irma and Maria continues, territorial and federal officials emphasize the critical importance of preparing for the 2018 hurricane season. Virgin Islanders need to take immediate steps to prepare themselves and their loved ones. Build a kit, make a plan and stay informed.

“It’s certainly understandable that people may feel fearful and anxious about the threat of more hurricanes this year,” said FEMA Federal Coordinating Officer William L. Vogel. “Of course, we can’t stop hurricanes, but we can help reduce anxiety by being well prepared. We urge people now to plan ahead and educate themselves on the critical topic of preparedness.”

Residents should prepare to be self-sufficient in the immediate aftermath of a hurricane and take steps to protect their property. Those with disabilities and others with access and functional needs may have additional considerations.

Now is the time for families to prepare by building a kit, making a plan and staying informed.

Build a survival kit. Families should be prepared to shelter in a secure and safe location for up to 10 days after a disaster when roads may be impassable, gas stations and grocery stores closed, power off and communications uncertain.



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- 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, persons with disabilities, and pets or service animals.
- Protect important 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. Ensure 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. Make sure 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 [Family Communication 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](#) at <https://member.everbridge.net/index/892807736729008#/login> to receive emergency information. Weather updates and instructions may also be found on the [VITEMA](#) and [FEMA](#) Facebook pages.

Find more information on how to prepare at [ready.gov](#) and [www.vitema.vi.gov](#).

Additional Considerations for Persons with Disabilities or Access and Functional Needs

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



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- 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 [Red Cross](#).
- Reach out to the Independent Living Center at www.independentlivingvi.org, call Felecia A. Brownlow at 340-777-4978 or email vialstt@gmail.com.

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.
- 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. The average flood insurance claims payment in the Virgin Islands for flooding damage from Irma and Maria is more than \$91,000. Also, remember to update your property insurance to cover current construction costs and be aware that a property insurance policy does not offer coverage for flood damage. For more information about getting flood insurance, visit floodsmart.gov.

VITEMA Director Mona Barnes emphasizes, "It's very important that we all prepare. We encourage everyone to get ready now!"

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FEMA's mission is helping people before, during, and after a disaster.



For official information on the recovery effort following the hurricanes, please visit www.informusvi.com or www.usviupdate.com. Follow us on social media at twitter.com/femaregion2 and www.facebook.com/FEMAUSVirginIslands. To find out more about the Virgin Islands Territorial Emergency



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