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U.S. VIRGIN ISLANDS GOVERNOR URGES PUBLIC TO ‘KEEP THE FAITH’ AS HURRICANE MARIA APPROACHES

*Governor Mapp provides preparedness updates Monday, continuing his daily briefings
since Hurricane Irma’s passage*

U.S. VIRGIN ISLANDS - U.S. Virgin Islands Governor Kenneth E. Mapp is urging all residents, visitors and emergency relief workers remaining in the U.S. Territory to be prepared for the imminent arrival of Hurricane Maria, now a Category 5 storm. Maria is estimated to reach the U.S. Virgin Islands between Tuesday night and early Wednesday morning.

Together with key emergency management leaders, Governor Mapp held two news conferences Monday, providing comprehensive information regarding the locations and accessibility of [emergency shelters](#) on all three islands, including locations designated for individuals with special needs. Underscoring the potential dangers to come in the hours ahead, he announced the reinstatement of a [Territory-wide curfew, effective Tuesday morning at 10:00 a.m.](#) Previously, a curfew had been implemented in response to Hurricane Irma and subsequently adjusted to exclude St. Croix, given the relatively minimal damage the island sustained.

The Territory’s seaports will be closed at 8 a.m. Tuesday, and the USVI Water and Power Authority (WAPA) plans to keep St. Croix’s power supply system on until approximately 2 p.m. Tuesday afternoon.

Hurricane Maria is set to be the second major weather system to impact the area in less than two weeks. Given the National Weather Center’s forecast, including maximum sustained winds of 160 miles per hour, the hurricane’s path could take it fewer than 10 miles south of St. Croix, the largest of the U.S. Virgin Islands, in what would essentially be a

“direct hit” to the island.

In addition to the anticipated hurricane force winds, 12 to 18 inches of rainfall are expected for St. Croix, which was largely spared the brunt of Hurricane Irma’s destruction. Between eight and 12 inches of rain are expected in the St. Thomas/St. John district, which is still recovering from Hurricane Irma. Even after the passage of Hurricane Maria, heavy rainfall is forecast to continue in the Territory through the weekend and into next week. Hurricane force winds are not expected in the St. Thomas/St. John district.

The Governor asked the public to take seriously the warnings about the impending storm, including taking the necessary precautions should individuals choose to remain in their homes. Governor Mapp tempered his message of urgency and concern with a call to exercise common sense as well as faith to counter the inevitable feelings of anxiety that many in the Virgin Islands community are experiencing in the wake of unprecedented storms, devastation and disruption to the normalcy of life.

William L. Vogel, Federal Coordinating Officer of Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA) Region II, who has been stationed in the Territory to support Irma recovery efforts, echoed Governor Mapp’s warnings, adding that the tidal surge associated with hurricanes also poses a serious threat. While many relief workers have been evacuated from the Territory until after the passage of Maria, Vogel reiterated FEMA’s commitment to return in full force as soon as weather conditions permit and to continue rebuilding the islands.

The road to recovery and restoration is going to be a long one, Governor Mapp said. It will take weeks and, in some cases, months to restore power to everyone across the Territory. “That’s the reality,” he said.

Calling on all the “prayer warriors” to pray for the U.S. Virgin Islands, the Governor reminded the public to “keep the faith.”

“God bless each and every one of you and stay safe,” he said.

Governor Mapp will hold another news conference Tuesday morning at 11 a.m. The Government of the U.S. Virgin Islands will communicate with residents during the storm through local media, the Internet and social media. To stay informed of the latest updates, the public should visit informusvi.com and sign up for alerts at vialert.gov. Other resources include:

VITEMA - <https://www.facebook.com/vitema>

Government House - <https://www.facebook.com/GovernmentHouseUSVI/>

The Department of Tourism - www.usviupdate.com

Emergency Operation Centers:

(340) 773-2244 (St. Croix)

(340) 776-2244 (St. John)

(340) 774-2244 (St. Thomas)

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