



# **VITEMA** VIRGIN ISLANDS TERRITORIAL EMERGENCY MANAGEMENT AGENCY

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### **VITEMA MAKES HISTORY AS FIRST U.S. TERRITORY TO RECEIVE EMERGENCY MANAGEMENT ACCREDITATION**

CHARLOTTE AMALIE, U.S. Virgin Islands — The Virgin Islands Territorial Emergency Management Agency (VITEMA) achieved a historic milestone yesterday as the first United States territory to receive accreditation from the Emergency Management Accreditation Program (EMAP), marking a new chapter in emergency preparedness for the territory.

The accreditation, which will remain in effect for five years, recognizes VITEMA's compliance with all national standards across 16 critical categories including planning, resource management, training, exercises, and communications.

During the ceremony, Lieutenant Governor Trigenza A. Roach, Esq., emphasized the significance of this achievement while acknowledging its foundation. "So many successes that we have also reflect people who have contributed in the past, specifically former Director Elton Lewis and Assistant Director Barbara Petersen," said Lt. Governor Roach. "Our preparedness becomes the center of government responsibility for the people who we serve... we have to keep doing our thing, because our thing effectively serves all the people of the territory, it affects people who visit the territory, it effects our children and how they see the future."

EMAP Commissioner Jody Ferguson highlighted VITEMA's exceptional dedication to service. "This accomplishment is a testament to the unwavering hard work and dedication demonstrated by the team over the last 4 years, specifically the last 18 months with the huge amount of work completed," said Commissioner Ferguson. "What everyone needs to learn from the US Virgin Islands is that you recognize emergencies and disasters are about people. You care for family, friends, neighbors and visitors, and that is the heart of your work and that is what makes you successful."

The rigorous accreditation process required extensive documentation and evaluation of VITEMA's emergency management capabilities. Commissioner Ferguson noted that this achievement "builds a culture of excellence that is going to serve the US Virgin Islands for decades."

EMAP is an independent non-profit organization that fosters excellence and accountability in emergency management programs through established standards applied in a peer-reviewed accreditation process. This recognition establishes VITEMA as a benchmark for emergency management excellence in the Caribbean region.

*VITEMA is the sole Virgin Islands government agency designated to supervise, administer, and coordinate all-hazards response and recovery operations. By building and sustaining effective partnerships with federal, state, and local government agencies, and with the private sector - individuals, families, non-profits, and businesses - VITEMA ensures the Territory's ability to rapidly recover from large and small disasters by assessing and mitigating hazards, enhancing preparedness, ensuring effective response, and building the capacity to recover.*

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