

1.0 INTRODUCTION

The Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA) in the Disaster Mitigation Act of 2000 enacted far-reaching programs and policies that will affect how every level of government approaches emergency management. The new legislation reinforces the importance of mitigation planning and assigns certain responsibilities to state governments, which also apply to its territories such as the US Virgin Islands. The underlying concept of mitigation is that mitigation actions taken before a disaster strikes can greatly reduce the human suffering, damage to property, and the long-term economic impact of the disaster.

States and territories are required to prepare and submit a standard or enhanced state mitigation plan and review and update the plan every three years. The Virgin Islands Territorial Hazard Mitigation Plan (Plan) describes the interagency planning process and public outreach efforts that led to a strategy to implement a series of hazard mitigation actions for the US Virgin Islands. Three Island Hazard Mitigation Committees were established, one each on the islands of St. Thomas, St. Croix and St. John, to provide oversight and assist in the Plan formulation.

The Plan is intended to serve a number of purposes, including:

- Promote interagency coordination of programs, policies and practices regarding hazard mitigation opportunities;
- Enhance public awareness and understanding of hazards that affect communities and actions the public can take to make themselves safer;
- Provide guidance on incorporating hazard mitigation into day-to-day government operations and long-range land use planning studies;
- Identify, evaluate and prioritize a range of mitigation actions that are specific to St. Thomas, St. Croix, and St. John;
- Comply with Federal program requirements regarding eligibility for disaster recovery and mitigation grant funding.

This Plan was prepared to meet all applicable state mitigation plan requirements as outlined in the Interim Final Rule for DMA 2000, published in the Federal Register on February 26, 2002, at 44 CFR Part 201 and 206.

The Virgin Islands Territorial Emergency Management Agency (VITEMA) has been designated as the lead agency for the Plan's development. Various USVI departments and authorities actively participated in its development. VITEMA gratefully acknowledges the efforts of the departmental representatives for their participation as members of the Hazard Mitigation Committees, along with the numerous private sector and community representatives who gave their time and support to this undertaking. The complete list of Committee members is included in this Plan as Appendix A.