

>> Peace within without  
stepping on one another  
And do respect  
the women of the world  
Remember you all had mothers  
>> We got to make this land  
a better land  
Than the world in which we live  
>> And we got to help  
each man be a better man  
With the kindness that we give  
>> I know we can make it  
>> I know that we can  
>> I know darn well  
we can work it out  
Yes, we can  
I know we can, can  
Yes, we can, can  
Oh, why can't we  
if we we wanna?  
Yes, we can, can  
>> I know we can make it work  
I know we can make it  
if we try  
>> Oh, yes, we can  
I know we can, can  
Yes, we can  
>> Great gosh almighty  
>> Oh, yes, we can  
I know we can, can  
>> And we gotta take care of  
all the children  
The little children of the world  
'Cause they're our  
strongest hope for the future  
The little bitty boys and girls  
We got to  
>> Make this land a better land  
Than the world in which we live  
>> We gotta help each man  
be a better man  
With the kindness that we give  
>> I know we can make it  
>> I know that we can  
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if we wanna?  
Yes we can, can  
>> I know we can make it work  
I know that we can make it  
if we try  
>> Oh, yes, we can  
I know we can, can  
Yes, we can, can  
>> You know, to see if there's  
anything special that is done.  
>> It's 107.9!  
>> Da Vybe FM.  
>> That's what we should have  
had.  
[ The Pointer Sisters' "Yes We  
Can Can" playing ]  
>> I know we can make it  
>> I know we can  
>> I know darn well  
we can work it out  
Oh, yes, we can  
I know we can, can  
Yes, we can, can  
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if we wanna?  
Yes we can, can  
>> If we try  
>> I know we can  
I know we can, can  
>> Good morning.  
This is Ability Radio --  
You and Your Life."  
I'm Archie Jennings, here with  
my partner Julien Henley,  
and we're welcoming you this  
morning to Ability Radio.  
Remember, this is a call-in  
show.  
It's 779-1079 and 713-1079.  
And today we're going to go  
with some Very Important Persons  
from VITEMA.  
Again we're looking at  
recovery, but also  
preparation for the next  
hurricane season.  
This is a health-news program,  
but it touches upon persons with  
disability, the elderly, and the  
entire community about keeping

up with your health and health issues.

Our guest today is Mister...

>> Patton.

>> ...Patton and

Mr. Irvin Mason.

What's your first name?

>> [ Chuckles ]

>> What's your name, Mr. Patton?

>> Todd. Todd Patton.

>> Todd Patton? Okay.

...and Mr. Irvin Mason from VITEMA are present this morning for Ability Radio.

And with me this morning is my partner.

>> Yes, good morning.

I'm glad to be a co-host with you, Archie.

As you said, we have some great guests today.

And, you know, as we start to really wind through especially what has happened, it doesn't really change as far as from VITEMA.

And what we're hoping to get today is to really be able to inform the public of their goals, what they do, so they can better prepare.

Like Archie said, we have two guests.

And I'd like you to introduce yourselves, and what's your title, what your position is with VITEMA.

>> Good morning.

My name is Irvin Mason.

I'm the Trainer XIS Coordinator for VITEMA.

I've been with VITEMA now for about 17 years.

I'm responsible for writing all the training and exercise for all the first responders, and making sure they're ready any time

[Indistinct] any type of natural hazard that comes through the

territory.

>> Okay. And Todd?

>> Yes, and I'm Todd Patton. I'm the Deputy Director of Planning and Preparedness for VITEMA.

I've been here approximately 2.5 years.

And Irvin is one of my staff members, and the Planning and Preparedness Division is responsible not only for the training and exercises that Irvin mentioned, but also working with other agencies on plans, emergency plans and preparedness, our exercise program, our training program, and our outreach program.

>> Well, that's good that you brought that up, because part of it is it's not what VITEMA does, it's what we do here in the Virgin Islands in conjunction with VITEMA, and getting out and preparing for this upcoming season, as well as recovery.

Again, give me, overall, either one of you, a macro view about VITEMA.

>> As you know, VITEMA is not a respondent agency.

VITEMA is a coordinating agency. We coordinate the response with all the first responders, and also with FEMA.

So in the case of a disaster -- hazard disaster or natural disaster -- what we do, we have something at VITEMA we call ESF -- Emergency Service Functions, And you have ESC, Emergency Service Coordinator.

One Service Coordinator comes from each department of the Virgin Islands government -- Say, like, Public Works Department, Health and Human Services.

And that's including the private sector, too, okay, like Fire, Red Cross. All them comes in to VITEMA when a disaster hits and we accordingly respond.

So, in short, if something happened in the field the responders need additional help, they'll call in to VITEMA, and VITEMA will, accordingly, get that to the responders.

So, a lot of people think that VITEMA is a responding agency, but VITEMA don't respond. They coordinate the efforts, everything goes on.

>> And that's something that we're hoping to get today, because I'll tell you, just the thing that I've learned of VITEMA over the last couple of weeks really empowered us to say "We really need you guys to be on Ability Radio, because we have a very vulnerable disabled community that depends on first responders, depends on planning, depends on the government in so many ways. And they're sitting waiting, thinking, "Okay, if anyone is going to come and get me or do something for me, it's going to be VITEMA."

And you're saying that you're a planning agency.

Todd, I mean, are you within that same line?

As Director or Supervisor, what is your role as far as working together or joining forces, anything different from what Mason said?

>> Well, my role as Deputy Director is, one to try and, under the direction of Director Barnes, our director, is to work with the other agencies on the planning

process.

Yes, we have a territorially easy operations plan, and that is a big overview of how we should be working in the territory, and how we would coordinate and work with FEMA and federal agencies coming in. But it's just as important for the other territorial agencies, like Fire, like Human Services, like Health, they have to have their emergency plans, and they have to coordinate with us because we need to know, what are your capabilities?

What can you do, Department of Health, Department of Human Services? And then what outside resources do you need?

What can we do in the territory, and what do we need to ask for help with?

But that means there's a lot of coordination throughout the year that has to be able to -- "Okay, here's how we're going to prepare for hurricane season.

Here's what plans we have." How are we recovering from Irma and Maria, and what do we need to do different this year? So, that is, you know, just a big job.

>> And one of the things, as -- again, Disability Rights Center of the Virgin Islands is a legal advocacy program for persons with disability, mental and physical disabilities.

And I had worked with Red Cross after Irma, and one of the things the Director asked me is, "Where's the VOAD?" Volunteer organization to assist in disasters.

Now, all I knew from

Saint Thomas was that there was one on St. Croix at one point in time.

And I'm, I guess, right now trying to figure out, do we have a coordinated VOAD at this point in time to make sure we're getting the right people in the right places for the next hurricane season.

>> Well, we do have VOAD, because VOAD fall under Human Services.

That's on the ESF 6.

So Human Services is responsible all the volunteer organizations.

So they fall in line with Human Services on the ESF 6.

And right now, I know we have a VOAD on St. John.

We have one on St. Croix.

We also have one on St. Thomas.

And we therefore also created a long-term recovery group that does work hand in hand with VOAD.

So your group is essential to all of this, and you should be part of the VOAD organization, because what we need from you -- I don't know every--

You have more capability to know who is who have challenges and so in Territory or in St. Thomas.

So we need a representative from you to send in to VITEMA when a disaster hit.

So, in this upcoming hurricane season, we'd like for you to send a representative to VITEMA with information, because you got more information than that. I need somebody who can [Speaks indistinctly]

We have we in charge of the [Speaking indistinctly]

We are supposed to [Speaking Indistinctly]

someplace the  
mentally-challenged, the  
wheelchair-bound.

So we could get our information  
to VITEMA so we can send to the  
first responder.

Because if you don't come to us  
with it, we wouldn't know.

>> Right, right.

>> So we have to work in tandem.  
We have to work together.

And you need to sit at a table  
with that.

>> Yeah.

And I'd like to add to the VOAD  
that you just mentioned.

I believe it was a couple of  
weeks ago, the governor  
announced -- I believe it's  
Pastor Williams from St. Croix  
to lead the territorial VOAD  
process.

So, I mean, that's a good thing  
that's come up, and that  
they're trying to re-energize  
the territorial VOAD process,  
'cause that's very important.

>> So he would be the contact  
person for all three islands  
-- St. John, St. Thomas, and  
St. Croix?

>> Yeah, the Territorial  
Coordinator for the VOAD  
process.

>> Mm-hmm.

>> Great, great.

>> Each island has their own  
VOAD group with a coordinator  
from each island.

But he's in charge of  
the whole territory.

>> Okay. All right.

>> And, you know, we look at  
things like that because --  
One of the things, it's easy for  
us to react, but once we start  
to react a lot of things have  
already gone wrong.

So, you know, people thinking  
about VITEMA, once again, I'm



going to just kind of go back.  
When you look at a tsunami,  
when you look at an earthquake,  
when you look at hurricanes,  
what do you coordinate or what  
do you have in place from your  
agency if something like that  
happens?

Right now we're talking  
hurricanes and VOADs and all the  
different things.

Does those VOADs then fall in  
place, then, if we didn't have,  
like, a massive earthquake that  
damaged the hospital or  
other places like that?

Then what is VITEMA's role in  
something like that?

>> You go.

>> Okay.

I'll use an example -- you know,  
as we were looking at  
Hurricane Irma last summer.

As it looked like it was getting  
close to us, you know, we were  
coordinating days ahead of that  
with other agencies.

You know, the Governor  
activated agencies, Director  
Barnes talked to her  
counterparts in the other  
agencies.

There were update meetings to  
say, "Here's where we are at,  
and here's our plans going  
forward.

If this happens, we're going to,  
as a for instance, activate the  
Emergency Operations Center.

In the case of Irma, we did  
those on Tuesday before landfall  
on Wednesday.

So that Tuesday we started  
officially standing up,  
activating our Emergency  
Operations Center, calling  
people in and, you know, being  
ready for landfall.

So, I mean, there is that  
coordination that takes place

ahead of time that we have to talk with our counterparts. VITEMA's counterparts, both territorially and federally. We were talking to the FEMA folks.

FEMA had a team in here several days ahead of time that we were working with and trying to be ready, hoping that something didn't happen but be prepared if it did, which was a good thing this time.

So, you know, that is an example of what we have to do to get ready, and what we do try and do ahead of time so that we're not reacting at the last moment.

>> So, what type of public relations how do you have, as far as --

Okay, your agency right now, you're doing all the prep. You have Human Services.

You have Red Cross.

You have others.

We're 26 days away.

I know, out of any other season -- I was here for Hugo, Marilyn.

Born and raised in St. Thomas.

I've never seen people so on edge as far as talking about June 1st.

If you turn and ask anyone today, "What is June 1st?"

"Hurricane season."

People are really terrified after what we experienced last year, and they're wondering, "Okay, what is the plan?"

>> Basically, what we have to do is do a lot of outreach, lot of community outreach.

Because, I mean, we know hurricane season is from June 1st to November 30th.

And what they found out after this hurricane --

Before these two hurricanes hit, people wasn't taken heed of no

kind of hurricane and tsunamis and nothing.

"Oh, it's not gonna happen.

It happened 20 years ago."

But this hurricane is good and everything.

It wake people up that we need to be more prepared, all right?

We need to be more prepared.

We need to be more proactive than reactive, because we as a community, we react to stuff.

So we need to have more plans in our attic, okay?

You just don't depend on the government to respond.

I like to tell people, when you plan, you have to also make a family plan.

You have to get your family together, create a family plan, know where your family's gonna be at, know where everything's at.

So if you plan ahead of stuff -- I mean, disaster happen.

And people have to understand, in any disaster, people are going to die.

But what saves people's lives is how prepared they are.

You have to be prepared in order to survive.

>> And what would be your suggestion as far as preparation?

I know people have preparedness kits and different types of emergency kits.

But what do you think would be, based on a territory, the challenges that you see, that you faced after those two hurricanes.

What would be the best advice as far as food for seven days, food for three days?

You hear different amounts.

What would you encourage,

especially those who has challenges getting out? What would you say that they should do to prepare, and have in place every summer as we go through?

>> FEMA was saying you have to be prepared for 72 hours. We're going beyond that now. You have to be prepared for at least two weeks. At least two weeks. Have prepared for at least two weeks just in case you get shut in.

Have enough water, have enough canned food. Make sure you're prepared at least two weeks.

Two weeks. Okay? And you don't have to prepare two days before the storm or three days before the storm. You need to have your kit with everything, and then every so often you go back, you check it out to see if things is expired. Move it out, replenish it. So it is a continuous effort. It's a continual cycle that keeps going around.

>> I went into one of the retail stores here in St. Thomas, and they had beans -- I would say a couple -- maybe thousands of beans.

And I'm like, "Okay. I'm gonna come back." Two days later I went back, and there was none. And that was really a good thing, because, yeah, you see people, and every time you go to these retail outlets, you're seeing people that, in their cart, always have beans. So I guess some people are really taking, like you're saying, the steps, and maybe preparing for more days than

less days.

So, as we go forward, and we're starting to now look into the summer months, after June 1st, and we're working our way through the summer, what's your day-to-day function?

As you go in in the day, what's your day to day-to-day function at VITEMA when we're not in an emergency setting?

>> Well, you know, we're preparing.

So if we're not reacting or responding to an event, you know, we're preparing, whether that means we're working with our other agencies to update plans or review plans, in the case of Irvin, and begin training and exercises, we're working with other agencies to plan exercises to, you know, be ready -- or readier -- for you something that may happen.

They say, "Okay, we saw this. Now we need practice activating our EOC and what each job is," or, you know, maybe we need to practice on how EMS is going to respond to a mass-injury event of some sort.

So, those are the things that we're trying to do in between actual events.

And then we are trying to plan outreach.

We talk with agencies, or we talk with groups like yours that say, "Hey, we would like VITEMA to come and tell us what's going on or what we're doing, or talk about this particular subject."

So those are things that we're doing throughout the year when we're not in the middle of a response or recovery .

>> Because, as we're talking

right now, we do training and exercise.

As a matter of fact, next week we have a hurricane-preparedness training with the Department of Human Services and VI Housing.

We just did a training with two private schools on St. Croix, for the tsunami training. So we're out there giving training and advice and a lot of outreach.

And we advise people, If you have a problem, say you need to have your plan looked at, you can call us.

We could look at --

We're not gonna write your plan for you, because we're not plan writers.

I'm not a plan writer.

But I could give you ideas and guidelines how your plan should work.

We'll come to your school or your place of business and check your evacuation route and see if it's the right route.

Stuff like that, we could do.

I like to advise people --

Say, like, the challenged, disability, and people like that.

And I tell people all the time when I do presentations, "You have to know your surroundings.

You have to know who around you, because you might have a disabled person living in your house, and you're going out, and you have to tell your neighbor, "Hey, listen.

My mom is disability.

She don't move.

She is wheelchair-bound.

If something happens, could you look out for her for me, please?"

At least she know.

So if something happen over at Mr. Jones', they have to go look out for him.

So you have to work along with neighbors.

Know what you have.

Know your resources so when the time comes, you can be prepared. Don't wait till something happen to figure out what you're gonna do.

>> Well, going along those lines, we'll get right back to it, but we're gonna have to take a little break for our sponsors. This is "Ability Radio -- You and Your Life."

>> Thank you.

>> I know we can make it work  
I know we can make it  
if we try

>> Oh, yes, we can  
I know we can, can

[ Pointer Sister's "Yes We Can Can" plays ]

>> Welcome back to "Ability Radio -- You and Your Life."  
And remember, this is a call-in show.

And I'm-a have to get it right, because my partner's getting on me about it.

>> I got it.

I got the number for you.

>> You got the numbers?

Go ahead.

>> Yeah. This is 779-1079.  
You know, this is a call-in show.

We would love to, if you have questions for our guests, Irvin Mason and Todd Patton, you know, you can call, or if you have questions even for us. You know, we've been having great conversation, and I think that we've covered a lot of things I've never thought of as

far as the functions of VITEMA.  
And we look at, you know, a  
couple of months ago, we did  
have a meeting, and one of  
the things that woke me up was  
thinking, "Okay.  
You do drills.  
You guys drive up and down.  
You hear all the sirens."  
And I'm wondering, "Okay, we  
have Lucinda Millin that's right  
there on the waterfront.  
We have Pearson Garden, Gordian  
Terrace.  
They're right there.  
If there's a tsunami, those  
communities are gone.  
And, you know, I was wondering  
why you guys are not stopping  
there and including them in  
your preparedness.  
What should those communities  
be doing or depending on, if  
anything, from VITEMA if there's  
a tsunami?  
>> Well, I did a presentation  
at the Lucinda Millin home  
maybe about two years ago,  
and what I told the people,  
"If you look at the Lucinda  
Millin Home," it's more for  
the elderly.  
>> Right.  
>> And if you look in, there is  
mostly females working in there.  
You have nurses.  
You hardly have any males  
working.  
So what I told them is, in case  
of a tsunami, and you can't to a  
hill, evacuate upwards.  
It's called vertical evacuation.  
You go to the highest point to  
the building.  
You go to the third floor or  
whatever it is.  
But like I was saying with your  
partners, they say, "Well, we  
don't have no men to come help  
us with this."



I said, "Well, look around you.  
What you have?"

I say, "Right across, next to  
you, you have the Territorial  
Court, you have the marshals.  
You go over and you talk to  
the Marshal, you say,

"Listen, in case of emergency,  
in case of a tsunami, we will  
need your help."

Okay? So then if something  
happened, they'd come up and  
help them.

And you put that in your plan,  
okay, and when you're doing  
drills, you drill with them.  
Include them in the drill,  
So if something happened,  
if anything, they'll know,  
"Well, my first thing, I have to  
help Lucinda Millin Home."  
So that's things like we need to  
do.

And like I said, in a tsunami  
it's like...

There's two types of tsunamis  
we gonna talk about, right.  
You have a distant tsunami and a  
local tsunami.

And we don't worry about the  
distant tsunami so much, because  
that's happened far, far, far  
away.

If it happened in  
Portugal, how long will  
it take you to fly from  
Portugal to the Virgin  
Islands?

That's how long it take the  
tsunami to get here.

The one we worry about is mainly  
the local tsunami, like what we  
had in 1867.

And a lot of people don't know  
we had a tsunami in 1867.

We had a tsunami in the  
Virgin Islands that was in  
1867.

And the local tsunamis are  
tsunami that generated right

here in the Puerto Rican Trench  
or the Anegada Trench.

And you have 10 to 20 minutes  
before the first wave hit to get  
to safety.

And a lot of people will say,  
"Well, you know, we do the  
test."

They don't hear the sirens.  
The sirens aren't working.  
But the sirens work perfectly  
fine.

But a siren works best in a  
distant tsunami, okay, because  
you have time to turn it on.  
You have eight hours, so it's  
gonna be a constant noise.  
You have to send out the police,  
you have time to send out fire,  
you have time to send out EMS  
with the bullhorns and notify  
people that a tsunami is about  
to approach.

In a local tsunami, I like to  
tell people, once your siren,  
it's all quick.

Okay, because you have three  
natural warning signs of a  
local tsunami.

You have the earthquake.  
The sea will either go back or  
forward, or forward or you will  
hear a loud noise.

Once you feel the earthquake --  
and we ain't talking about no  
regular earthquake, because we  
get earthquakes every day.

>> Right.

>> Small. We're talking about  
earthquakes 7.2 to 8.2, 9.2.  
Like the one that hit Japan in  
2011, 9.2.

You know, constant shaking.  
The ceiling fan will come down,  
the TV will come off the wall.  
The first thing you want to do  
is drop, cover, and hold.  
After the earthquake pass, don't  
wait for no siren.  
Don't wait for nobody to tell

you to run.

You've got the time, you run.

You head to the closest hill.

>> Right.

>> Okay.

So, the natural warning signs of a local tsunami is an earthquake, the sea, and a loud noise.

You will feel, you will see, and you will hear.

So once you feel that earthquake, your head to higher hill, because you have 10 to 20 minutes.

The tsunami might never happen, happen because when you had an earthquake in Haiti, that 6-, 7-point, we had a tsunami.

We had a big earthquake here the other day, a 5-point-something.

Everybody panicked, okay?

Everybody panicked, so, you know, that's what you got to look out for.

>> And we have that population, too -- and we're trying to make sure we get some weather radios. They can't hear.

So, one of the ladies who was very concerned about the earthquake after the one came during, what, January or...

>> December.

>> ...was saying she lives out in Magens Point area, that housing community down there. She said there's no siren down there.

There's no signal.

I said, "Well, you know, I don't know if you really need --"

[ Laughs ]

>> There is a siren in Magens Point, but it's down on the beach.

>> Beach. Okay.

>> We don't usually put sirens on top of hills, because if you're on top

of the hill and you hear  
the siren, you might run  
down the hill.

[ Laughter ]

So we usually put a siren in the  
low-lying areas, right.

Okay? In the low-lying areas.

>> And that's what I tried to  
describe to her.

But you gave good advice,  
as far as a real earthquake  
and the sound after that.

>> Because because people say,  
"We don't hear the siren."

But if you're in a building, and  
you're working, and the  
air-condition on and the radio  
playing and the siren come on,  
you're not gonna hear it.

>> Right.

>> But you're gonna feel the  
earthquake.

>> Right.

>> You're feel the earthquake.

So, once you feel that  
earthquake, and it's a massive  
-- It's to last at least two to  
three minutes.

It's a constant shaking for at  
least two minutes.

So it's not going to stop.

The one we had a couple days  
ago, 4.2, lasts a couple  
seconds.

>> Seconds. Right.

>> But this earthquake going to  
be a constant shaking for about  
two minutes.

Constantly shake.

So, we don't want -- a lot of  
people say, when the earth  
quake, they was going to run out  
of their house, and --

You don't run out of your house.

You don't want to run out,  
because if you run out your  
house, something might fall and  
hit you in the head.

If you're out in the field, you  
got to a clear area where

there's nothing around, and you stand in the middle of the field.

That's what you need to do.

>> Okay.

And you also brought up another good point for Lucinda Millin -- the firehouse right there.

Just move over to that area, Barbel Plaza.

Go and make some arrangements with them in order to help move people if that's going to be an issue.

So that's a big plus.

They probably could even house some of the people who are in on the bottom floor, and move them over there in case of a big hurricane.

But, essentially, movement of the people I was describing to you, a lot of our clients are concerned about going to the shelters.

There's two things that happen. One is, Senator DeGraff put a registry law into place which allows people who want to register and make sure they're on a registry if they are living alone, disabled, elderly and homebound or alone. Go register.

You know, some people worry about confidentiality.

Well, you got that choice.

You're gonna have confidentiality, or you want to make sure your life is saved.

I don't know.

You're gonna have to make some hard choices.

As well as movement of going to the shelters, coordinating, I'm thinking, through the VOAD, making sure that people are identified, and that VITRAN Plus, which is one of our last movement -- Dollar Ride I don't

think is happening on St. Thomas anymore.

And there's another service -- What's that? Able?

>> Able. Right.

>> ...to help move these people to the shelters, if we have enough time and notice, so that they're there and in place before the storm hits.

I was concerned, because one time the shelters didn't open and VITRAN shut down before the shelters opened.

So that coordination that's why I really want this VOAD to work, so there is movement for people.

>> And one of the things -- I had a meeting with Public Works on Thursday, and one of the things that -- because they're the ones that's over VITRAN and VITRAN Plus.

And one of the things that they're looking at is, like, in areas where there's large populations that, in the storm season, they're gonna be probably using their fixed-route buses at points for those who can walk into the fixed-route buses without needing the lift, and try and use that as a vehicle to transport more, larger volumes of people instead of that VITRAN Plus Bus doing 20 trips.

that larger bus can then do fewer trips, but get more people to shelters.

And the other issue, I did reach out to the marshal office, and they said their game plan is totally different from -- it's somewhat like what you're saying.

Their responsibility as marshals is to get all the judges and their documents there.

They have a quick-respond kit that they have to do, and leave everything else.

So, as far as these communities, they need to really start thinking and stop being lazy about it.

Like Archie said, you know, you have choices, and these are some of the choices that we need to start --

You know, instead of always doing, empower people to do things.

And one of the areas we haven't touched on is the business community, the private community, as far as, like, VITEMA and tsunamis and all that.

Do you have a relationship with the Chamber of Commerce?

Is there any things that you guys do together with the Chamber of Commerce, seeing that that's private and you guys are government?

>> Well, I know the Hotel Association do come to the EOC, for EOC meetings and stuff like that.

And we've been trying to reach out to the Chamber of Commerce, because our economy is tourism-based.

Okay? So if the cruise ship don't come in and the plane don't fly in, we don't have no business.

And they play a big, big, big role in especially recovery, okay, especially in recovery. So we need to engage more with the business community, especially all the stores on Main Street.

If a tsunami hit, all are gone.

>> Right.

>> So we need to know what plans they have, what process

they have in place.  
So we need to bring them to  
the table, too.  
And all that, we're working on  
at VITEMA.  
Let me touch on the shelter for  
a minute, and an evacuation.  
We can't force people to move.  
Okay? We can't.  
Because I realized that, you go  
to people and tell them, "You  
have to evacuate."  
They say, "Listen, I been here  
through Hurricane Irma, and I  
been here through Hurricane  
Bertha.  
My house strong like ox.  
Me ain't going no place.  
I staying right here."  
[ Laughter ]  
We can't force -- we can't put a  
shotgun to your head and tell  
you, "You have to leave."  
That's your choice.  
What we can tell you -- and a  
lot of people say that's harsh.  
What we tell them, "Okay.  
You don't want to move.  
But what you need to do is  
get a magic marker and mark  
your Social Security number  
across your chest."  
And people think it's funny, and  
people think it's cool.  
But the reason we do that, just  
in case something happened or  
you die, so we need to identify  
you.  
I mean, as I say, but we cannot  
force people to leave their  
home.  
But what some people do, they  
decided they're not leaving,  
and they wait till the middle of  
the event, when the wind is  
kicking up high, and they in the  
bathroom holding on to the  
toilet bowl, to call for help.  
VITEMA is not gonna send a  
first responder out to help you.



>> Right.  
>> Okay? Because that's endangering the first responders' lives.  
Okay?  
You know your house ain't no good.  
You know you been blown on.  
[ Speaking indistinctly ]  
...a hurricane, but you didn't move, but you didn't strengthen your roof, so apparently it might blow off again.  
Please go to the shelter.  
And you need to know where the shelters is before something happen, okay?  
>> Correct.  
And that's one of my other issues, is whether or not -- Where are the shelters?  
Because that came up at our last disaster-preparedness meeting, which we had September 1st, 2017.  
And regarding to, where are the shelters and where can they anticipate -- because a lot of times people can't make it. But they have their own cars, like some of our clients would have their own car, they could go to the shelter.  
So coordinating all that, again, doesn't -- again, public. It doesn't all fall on VITEMA. The agencies have to work together.  
VITRAN and VITRAN Plus have to work with the shelters.  
Human Services are in charge of shelters, right?  
>> Correct. Yeah.  
>> Open any shelters.  
So it is a coordinated effort, that we all have to work together to make sure our entire community remains safe.  
And like Mr. Mason was saying, don't wait till the middle of

the storm.

I remember one time when Mitchell -- they were just talking about Hurricane Mitchell, and the President is cutting off all those Hondurans from there.

But during that storm, I was at Windward Passage, and I remember looking out a window, and somebody leaned up against the wind, trying to make their way across the waterfront to get to somewhere.

But it was too late.

You know, the police had completely cleaned the streets off.

Everybody was supposed to be somewhere, and that one person was trying to make it to...

You can't do that.

>> And we as an agency, too, have to put out that information, let people know in advance.

We cannot wait two days before the storm or a week before the storm to tell them where the shelters are.

>> Right.

>> You need to put it out way in advance so people could know.

People could drive by, see, "Well, is a shelter.

How long it will take for me to get to the shelter?"

So we, as a government agency, we have to put out the information in a timely manner, okay, so people can know exactly what's going on.

Because people need time to prepare.

>> Right.

>> And that's something that, if you have something like that in advance, that "Ability Radio" -- because with public services that service the individuals

with disabilities in our territory.

And having that information, I think, is something that we could repeat throughout -- you know, letting them know where shelters are, where things are.

And, like you explain about people that don't want to go, I experienced exactly that with a family member.

And I was calling VITEMA and saying, "Look, this person, I already got her husband out, and she don't want to move."

You know, "This is it."

And they actually went, and she was still, "I'm staying here with my dogs."

And they left her.

And...

You know, and that was choices that people make.

And so one of the things that would be great for us to know in advance is where are the shelters.

What's the plans.

You know, I think preparedness, as far as especially the deaf and hard-of-hearing community, those that, once they...

If they have devices that help them to read or see things that's going on, once that's cut off, they're cut off.

And they wouldn't be hearing any more announcements.

They wouldn't be hearing any more phone calls.

So we encourage those individuals especially to get into the shelter as early as possible, because that's the safest place for them to be.

>> And speaking of pets -- I don't know if you guys can address this, Mr. Patton, but

my understanding, pets got off the island.

>> Yeah, a lot of pets got off the island.

A lot of pets.

Really, there's a lot of people don't want to move without their pets.

In Katrina, a lot of people decided, "I ain't going unless my pet going with me."

>> Right.

>> Okay? Because some people, the pet is all they have.

>> Right, right.

>> And they're not moving without their pet.

So people have got to make concessions for that, too.

>> I want to address the shelter issue, because that's good timing, because I was actually talking with a Human Services representative, I believe it was a couple of weeks ago.

Draining me down.

All the days are flowing together, so I apologize about that.

But anyhow, you know, I talked about that.

And Human Services is actually very engaged working with the Department of Education, who has a lot of the shelters, but also other agencies, and they're looking at, "Okay, what do we still have available this year? What new shelters can we try, and should we change our sheltering plan, and maybe have more shelters out there?"

So, I will tell you, they are very engaged right now trying to put together some new plans, and how we're going to prepare and be ready for this upcoming season.

So, I know, once they get done with that, they're going to

provide that to us, and we'll be able to put that out in coordination with them, as well.

>> Another thing we're working on at VITEMA right now -- and that's something we found out after the hurricane and during the recovery process, is our distribution centers.

That was a big issue.

>> Yeah.

>> I mean, need to have a distribution center for the special needs.

So they don't have to go and stand up in that line. So we need to work something out, and we need to put our distribution centers in different places.

>> Right, right.

>> We have we have a plan that we can put -- we have plans all around the island where are distribution centers located at and stuff like that.

But somehow it fell through the crack, for whatever reason. But we do have that plan, we do exercise that plan all the time. So we need to work on that, and we need to have a special distribution point for the special-needs people.

We don't need them to go to the same distribution centers as everybody else.

>> Okay.

Again, we're going to take a small break for sponsors, and get back to you with regard to...

And remember, this is a call-in show at 779-1079, "Ability Radio" with representatives from VITEMA.

Take care.

>> And do respect the women of the world

Remember you all had mothers  
>> We got to make this land  
a better land  
Than the world in which we live

[ The Pointer Sisters'  
"Yes We Can Can" plays ]

>> Again, welcome  
back to "Ability Radio" with  
representatives from VITEMA.  
And those who have questions,  
it's 779-1079 and 713-1079.  
Again, Mr. Patton, you were  
about to speak to certain  
shelter issues.

>> Well, now, what I was just  
saying was the fact that Human  
Services, Red Cross, and their  
partners are actively engaged in  
trying to prepare for this  
hurricane season, and looking at  
the shelter plan and how they're  
going to regroup, what shelters  
are still viable and what new  
ones do they need?

So they are they are -- I'm  
confident they are working very  
hard on that, when I talk to  
them, and wanting to get  
something out as quickly as  
possible so that the public  
knows, "Here's our plan."

>> Okay. Okay.

>> All right.

>> Going back to the  
distribution centers.

What we have to realize is  
that all FEMA is responsible for  
is [Speaks indistinctly]  
and water.

That's all they're responsible  
for.

All the canned food and  
everything we was getting was  
privately donated from  
outside that came in.

So we can't expect -- you know,  
people come and say, "Well, with  
all the federal government,  
and VITEMA responds by giving

out food, water, and a tarp.

>> Okay.

>> And what we found out --  
I work on St. John through the  
whole hurricane season,  
so before the hurricane and  
after the hurricane.

And St. John, the private sector  
did a big, big, big job on  
St. John.

What happened before Maria hit,  
hit we had a lot of stuff come  
in from Puerto Rico.

We had a lot of stuff come in  
from St. Croix.

Well, soon as Maria hit and  
devastated Puerto Rico and  
St. Croix, that was it.

And a lot of our stuff is staged  
in Puerto Rico.

That needs to change.

Because if something hit us,  
it will hit Puerto Rico.

It will hit Florida.

We're in Region II,  
to Rio to New York.

That's why we're not in the  
Florida region, because we have  
-- because if something hit  
here, you're going up on the  
continent.

And once it hit Puerto Rico,  
our stuff stopped coming in.

>> Right.

>> It stopped, because Puerto  
Rico wanted to keep it for  
theirselves.

[ Laughs ] I mean, naturally,  
that's what they're gonna do.  
They will keep it for theirselves.

So we have to go about and  
revisit that and change that.

And like I said, on St. John,  
the private sector had a lot to  
do with it, too.

Because even before the  
Army came, and the Marines  
came...

>> Right.

>> ...you had a clear path from

Cruz Bay to Coral Bay.  
And as the local people come out of their [Speaking indistinctly] and things.  
What we need to do if a storm is coming -- because hurricane, you have days before hurricane approach.  
What we need to do, we need to stage stuff in different areas.  
[ Speaking Indistinctly ]  
We could stage one in Tutu.  
We could stage one at [Speaks indistinctly] so after the storm, we could contract in ways with private industries.  
So, after the hurricane, people come out and start helping us at least clear the roads.  
>> Right. Right.  
>> This is something we can look into.  
That's what we have to get. Private and government have to work together, because believe it or not, the private sector has more resources than the government.  
>> Right.  
>> They do.  
So we need to tap into the private sectors and get that done.  
>> You know, I've heard of a organization called YES.  
Is it YES, or we're volunteers in a territory, or something of that sort, that they would come together and form, like, volunteer groups.  
Like we have All Hands here now, that's full of helping hands, that's here doing volunteer.  
Is there groups that that you guys are training that VITEMA put together?  
I was told at one point that there were some groups that VITEMA have trained and certified to --



>> I thought it was citizens who learned --

>> What we do, we do the CERT.

>> The CERT. Okay. Sorry.

>> [Speaks indistinctly]

We could train -- if we are 15 individuals, say you have 15 individuals that want a CERT training.

We could give them the CERT training, give them a little open search-and-rescue, hurricane preparedness, and CPR for a CERT, and it's all free.

We could come into your community.

If you have a center, we could come in to your community.

You could give the training.

And after that, we also give you a disaster bag -- a bag with a flashlight, a first-aid kit, batteries in that bag.

And you keep it a helmet, and keep it wherever you have to crawl into.

And that's part of our community outreach.

If you're a church group.

And what it does for you, you have at least 50 to 20 people in your community.

If something happened, they could help themselves before the first responder get there, because it take a while before the first responder get there.

We also do it in the schools.

It's called Teen CERT.

So we have a group of students in the schools.

If something happened in the school, they could help each other before the first responder get inside.

And it's no cost.

>> Do you have, like, a general one?

Maybe I can call into VITEMA and say, "I want to be on a CERT team," and call in and see if...

>> Well, you could.

We have what an outreach coordinator.

>> Okay.

>> That's a good call.

They can call in to VITEMA, ask for the Preparedness Division and talk to Mr. Patton, talk to myself or Mr. Connors, and we could organize it to you, and we could come out.

And basically it's a three-day program.

2.5 days.

It starts Friday evening, about 6:00.

Finish about 9:00 that night.

Then Saturday is all day, and

then Sunday we go, and then

after we do a big mock drill.

Everything we learned, we put it together with one big drill.

>> Okay.

>> So it's a very, very, very good program.

>> Yeah, actually I've been through it, in about 2007.

>> Yes.

>> And we could do it to you once you have the --

And we provide all the materials, so all you have to do is show up.

>> Yeah, the CERT program is great.

And that's it.

That's one of the valuable tools we have.

But as you mentioned earlier, the volunteers out there, you know...

Irvin mentioned the donations of food and goods.

But there needs to be that

volunteer, the group of

volunteers in the community that comes out and works as

donations, works with Human Services and Mass Care, saying "I want to help get that out there."

Those are the resources that the communities need, is people that come out and assist with gathering those donations, being able to distribute them to where they need to go.

That is is a big thing.

I mean, you know, we can see them coming in, work with FEMA. We can work with people coming in with those donations.

But if there is not the people in resources out there to go through them, to package them up, to work with Red Cross, get them delivered to where they need to go, then we can't make the best use of those.

So community needs to be involved.

They need to have volunteer groups that want to help, and be ready to help when they can, if they can.

>> And my question is, just like after, with this meeting, if I wanted to, say, sign up with you to get on a CERT team -- This idea, again, to work with a Red Cross.

And that's what we're doing -- packaging and delivering water, packing and delivering those mop-up kits.

Besides Red Cross, what other organizations of people -- Because people came down to Nisky Center, joined Red Cross. But where else can they go if they're not that close?

>> Well, it's working with Human Services, who manages the donation and volunteer process, and then your local or your island VOAD, volunteer agencies.

>> Okay.

>> Figuring out what groups are out there, getting on the list, getting on the group.

"How can I help?

Where can I help?

What groups do I need to go get a hold of so that, if something happens, I know where I can go in and be able to assist the community?"

>> And if you go to your churches, okay --

Your churches, your congregation, and say, "Listen, our church group want to do a CERT program.

We have 20 members that will come out and do it for you."

We have community centers.

We have parent-teacher meetings.

We have all type of avenues that we can use.

But we need the volunteers.

We need them to come through.

So that's gonna --

Because it's working together.

I mean, the government can't do everything by itself.

>> Right. Exactly.

>> And if you look at it, who is the government?

We are the government.

>> Exactly.

>> So we can sit on sit on a simple, "The government didn't do this.

The government didn't do this."

The government gonna do as much as it can.

>> Right.

Here's old Ben Franklin saying if -- "If we don't hang together, we'll hang separately."

>> So, we have to work together. And VITEMA will provide the resources.

It will provide whatever

resources we have to provide for you, if it's a CERT kit and the bags, bring in training, whatever we have to do.

And I bring a lot of training to the territory, okay.

Most of the training is open up to anybody, okay?

We cater it to the first responders, basically.

But if you want to come to a training, all you have to do is come to one.

Just call and say, "Listen, I see this because"...

Our website is guaranteed to come back up.

So everything is gonna be on the website and everything like that, so you go on the website, you look at it, say,

"I'm interested in this training.

Let me call VITEMA, see if I can get into this class."

Okay?

>> Might want to touch that website search again.

[ Laughter ]

>> I'm glad you just brought that up, because one of the things that we were working as a group was the weather radios.

And we know that there were some challenges with your

transmitters and so on, because these weather radios, we felt, would be one of the best devices for those who have disabilities.

And their home, there's different attachments that they would have, that they would be able to get notices, emergency notices that might come across.

And what's the status on your transmitters, if you know where and how that's going, because I know there were some major delays with that being completed.

>> Actually, the Weather Radio service -- NOAA Weather Radio, and that is run by the National Weather Service. So that's out of -- the local office is Puerto Rico, so, you know, we certainly have to touch base with them.

I know they were trying to do some work.

Off the top of my head, I believe the transmitter -- that services the territories in St. Croix, as I recall.

I do not know what the status is of it off the top of my head.

>> Right.

>> You know, we've been following up on it, and they are still -- It's street transmitters in a territory that feeds off of Puerto Rico, and they were trying to get equipment in to get them up, because the one that's up in the territory, I think there's one station that deals with St. Croix that has an extremely big antenna.

But the transmitter for the Weather Service, that's what was destroyed, so they are trying to work on all of that.

So I'm just throwing that out to see if you had any updates on that.

>> And again, Disability Rights Center, in conjunction with the University of the Virgin Islands and the VI Coalition of Disabled Persons, will be holding a disaster-preparedness meeting May 22nd at the Havensight Offices for St. Thomas, and May 24th, University Great Hall.

So persons with disabilities, the elderly and other persons from the general public, please call 776-4303 to save your spot,

to make sure we have enough room.

And issues with regard to availability and transportation is the biggest issue, so we want to make sure VITRAN Plus is on notice, that you have transportation to these events. And we'll go over some of the things we talked about today, but also here from the Red Cross and other agencies that are helping get disaster preparedness.

I like to thank Mr. Patton and Mr. Mason for coming this morning and giving some great information.

And hopefully you'll keep in tune, and follow up with these issues.

because, again, this is part of living in the Virgin Islands and being in this environment.

Any last words from Mr. Patton? Mr. Mason?

>> No, thank you.

I appreciate you inviting us out today, and to notify the public. It's very important.

Thank you very much.

>> I would like to say that, if anybody anybody out there need a presentation -- tsunami, hurricane, whatever presentation -- I don't care what time it is. After work hours.

Afternoons. Sunday. Saturday. Give me a call.

I have no problem coming out to do a presentation for your group, whatever it is, because my thing, the more information you get, it's better.

And it don't cost you anything for me to come out to do a presentation for your group or your church or anybody like that.

So feel free to call me.

I'm gonna give my number out.  
It's 340-227-7686.  
And it's not a problem for me to  
come out to do a presentation.  
The only thing I ask from you is  
just have food.  
Have food, will travel.

[ Laughter ]

>> And I really want to say  
thank you, because this is the  
first set of other things that  
we will have as we prepare for  
this hurricane season.  
We wanted VITEMA to be number  
one, because we know that you  
are the strong arm that connects  
a lot of the dots and bring  
comfort to a lot of people in  
the territory, and informing  
them today.

I think after today people are  
going to want to start getting  
their groups together, start  
getting their evacuation plans  
together and all of that.

So, thank you from the  
Disability Rights Center.  
My name is Julien Henley, along  
with host Archie Jennings.

>> And thank you, John Public.  
Take care.

>> Have a great weekend.

>> Yes, we can

I know we can, can

Yes, we can

>> Gosh almighty

>> Yes, we can

I know we can, can

>> This is WLDV 107.9 FM,  
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