

>> ...find peace within without
stepping on one another.
>> And do respect the women of
the world.
Remember you all have 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.
>> Oh, yes, we can.
I know we can can.
Yes, we can can.
Why can't we?
If 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.
>> Yes, we can.
I know we can can.
[Instrumental music plays]
>> Good morning, Virgin Islands,
and welcome to "Ability Radio --
You and Your Life."
We are broadcasting from
Da Vybe Radio Station, 107.9 FM,
on St. Croix this week.
My name is Iris Bermudez,
and I will be your hostess
this morning.
With us today are
representatives from FEMA,
the Office of Disability
Integration and Coordination --
Candice Alder and Alex Rico.
Good morning, guys.
>> Hi. Good morning.
>> Good morning.
>> Thank you for being with us.
Please note the opinions
expressed on "Ability Radio --
You and Your Life" are those of
the Disability Rights Center
of the Virgin Islands and those

of our guests.

"Ability Radio" is a live call-in show, and we encourage the listening audience to call 340-779-1079 or 340-713-1079.

Well, again, good morning, and thank you for being here with us.

We really appreciate you being here.

I know you have a lot of really good information to share with our listening audience, so let's start.

Tell us and the listening audience about yourselves and what has been your experience working in the Virgin Islands following both storms.

>> Okay, I'll go ahead and go first.

My name is Candice Alder.

I'm a Disability Integration Advisor with FEMA.

I've actually been with FEMA a little less than two years.

I have a background in the Americans with Disabilities Act.

I worked for the ADA National Network for 12 years, and then I also worked for the Colorado Commission for the Deaf and Hard of Hearing.

So I have a background in providing information to individuals to have them self-advocate and make sure that they are afforded their equal rights in many different instances where disability-rights laws impact them.

So when I came to FEMA, my experience has been that I wanted to bring that knowledge of disability rights to FEMA and help people who we call survivors be able to navigate the FEMA system and get the assistance that they need

and make sure that FEMA's programs are inclusive of people with disabilities.

So, I came on-island on September 14th of last year. So I've been here almost a year, working, and I worked in St. Croix for the majority of it, but I did spend some time in St. Thomas, and I spent some time on St. John, as well, providing information to survivors with disabilities and looking at how we can better serve individuals and get our disability partners, such as yourself, such as the Disability Rights Center, to connect with us and make sure that we're not missing people and collaborating to find out what the needs are and see if we can find other partners that are on- and off-island to help bridge some of those gaps and find ways to address some of the needs of the people here after the two hurricanes, so...

>> When you retire, just come and work with the Disability Rights Center.

[Laughter]

Alex?

>> Hi.

Yes, my name is Alex Rico, and I work in FEMA Region II in External Affairs, and my background is in government and in communications, so my job is basically to relay information, anything important to our partners, survivors, stakeholders to let them know what's going on in the territory when it comes to FEMA programs and the recovery.

I actually got here on September 3rd, around then, with the Region II Incident Management Assistance Team. So those are the teams that pre-deploy ahead of a storm,

and they liase with
the territorial government
to make sure that the response
goes as smoothly as possible.
So I was here from September
to December, and I just recently
got back at the end of June,
and even just seeing then
the progress that's been made
in recovery and how people --
You know, it's a wonderful place
down here, so I'm very happy
to be here.

So it's -- Everybody's very
nice, and it's good to see
how things have progressed
since I left and came back.

>> I'm so glad you said that
because we keep hearing on
the radio on some radio shows
that a lot of people in
the community don't feel
that there's progress that has
been made.

Could you talk a little --
address that?

>> Sure.

And I think what's important for
people to remember and
understand is that recovery
is a long process, and
especially from FEMA's end,
we want to make sure that
everybody understands that
we're not going anywhere.

We are gonna be here.

If there's any rumors out there,
I'd like to put those to bed
now.

FEMA is definitely gonna be
around for a while.

You know, the recovery phase
takes a while, and it is driven
by the locals, and we're here to
support and assist and advise
on the recovery matters.

>> Okay. Good, good.

Could you provide some
information with respect
to the mission of your offices
and your roles within each
office?

>> Sure.
So for, like I said, in External Affairs, our main job is to convey information and to take in information and make sure that we have situational awareness of what's going on on the islands and what's going on within our community. We work closely with VITEMA to make sure that our press releases and anything else that we work on is done in conjunction with our partners here, and if it was to switch back to response, it would be concentrating into life-saving and life-sustaining operations. But right now, it's mostly letting people know to stay prepared, have a kit, be ready, and to kind of provide periodic updates on the recovery.

>> Yeah, we want to talk a little bit more about the differences, and we would like to ask you -- Well, let's do it now. Please explain emergency preparedness, one, response to -- well, recovery, then response, then mitigation, because I think the listening audience really needs to understand what all that entails so that we can be ready if we get hit by another Category 5, because that was terrible.

>> Yeah, and let's hope that doesn't happen. So preparedness -- There are four stages, I guess, to disasters is the best way to describe it, or to a disaster -- what we call a disaster cycle. The first stage is preparedness or prevention. So we like to make sure -- What that means is we do everything we can ahead of time,

that for the things we can really think ahead of and try to get creative and to what to predict, but, you know, you can't predict everything, but as much as you can, right?

>> Right.

>> So what that means is having a kit, having all your papers in order, making sure that they're waterproof, anything that has to do with your house, having extra supplies, having extra medication, and I know Candice will cover some of that in a little bit.

>> Yeah.

>> But that's the preparedness phase, right?

So making sure that you're prepared to respond, you have a place to go to if something happens, you're paying attention.

Response for us is directly responding to an incident, whether it be manmade or a natural disaster, and so that just means it's a phase between when people's lives might be in danger, and we're responding, and we're making sure that they're okay, if property is in danger, and we're making sure that there isn't -- you know, we're kind of, like, making sure, yeah, that property doesn't get too damaged, and then so that's -- response is kind of short usually, right? So it's shorter than the recovery phase, which takes a long time, and that's recovering from an incident and making sure that -- you know, working with local partners, it's local-driven, and it's building back to a new normal, right?

So it's getting to a spot where we're getting prepared for the next storm or the next

incident and getting back to as close as we were prior to the incident.

And mitigation is kind of like preparedness, but we're targeting different aspects of the territory to see what we can build upon to sort of make sure that these things don't happen again.

>> Candice?

>> I wanted to mention the preparedness side of things a little bit because, especially here on the island, I know we were having a bit of an offline conversation about how people who live on islands do have a bit of a disadvantage when it comes to getting services and getting supplies and getting things, especially after a storm happens.

>> Right.

>> Because it takes a while to get things to the Virgin Islands.

>> Right.

>> And it's even more challenging when you don't have the mail running, when you don't have a phone to call somebody, when you don't have the Internet, when you lose power and other services. There were a lot of lessons, I think, that people can take away from the two storms that happened here in the Virgin Islands in terms of their own preparedness, and it's important that people are thinking about how they're taking care of themselves if another event happens, because it may be a while before they get the services or if people get to them or even the responders get here. So, the preparedness side, we've been working alongside other disability organizations

on the islands, in the territory to get to persons with disabilities and go to senior groups, and we've even taught some kids classes on preparedness for people with disabilities and what that might look like compared to other types of plans, such as your communication plan...

>> Mm-hmm.

>> ...making sure that your communication plan includes things like these are the things that are medically necessary for me.

These are the type of medications I take.

These are the kind of allergies I have.

>> Right.

>> This is the amount of medication I may need, and this is my communication plan if I'm a person who is deaf or hard of hearing or blind or low vision, these are the ways in which you can communicate with me.

We tell people to add that information into their disaster-preparedness kit inside of a water-safe ziplock bag -- something that can be easily accessed.

The other big part of it is the communication plan.

We have a lot of ability to get services when we can communicate, but what happens when those services are gone?

And so having a backup communication plan of having people or a support network of people that you can be in contact with either by having a plan to come and visit you or for you to meet them in a central location, having a plan of "A", "B," and "C" of where you will meet if another disaster happens --

those kind of preparedness steps are important for everyone, but also incredibly important if you have any kind of access or functional need or if you have any difficulties with being able to care for your own needs independently if you lose certain types of services.

>> Right, especially when you're prepared.

I remember you when I had went to a training where we provided a piece of paper with information on it where the individuals could put down their medications, their dosages, you know, to make sure that if anything happened, they had that information so that if they got caught up in a storm or couldn't get to a hospital, and someone went to see how they were doing, they would have access to those medications that that individual is using.

>> Right.

And, also, it's easy when you have any kind of pre-existing condition to be prescribed a lot of different types of medication, and some individuals will lose track depending on the different amounts of medication. People don't necessarily pay attention to the amount of dosage that they're taking, or if they're taking a generic brand, they may not know the actual name of the prescription.

>> Right.

>> So there's a lot of information that, I think, in a way, we take for granted, and we don't think about, but that we need to be prepared to provide someone...

>> Right.

>> ...if we don't have access to our own medical care.

>> So you were talking -- okay,
and that helps take care of
preparedness.
>> If I may? Sorry.
>> Go ahead. No. Go ahead.
>> You know, ready.gov,
that's a good place that has
information for on preparedness
and kind of gives you some tips
on what to plan and pack,
and we even have materials
that are specifically for folks
with disabilities and access
and functional needs, and, also,
I really recommend --- VITEMA
has vitema.vi.gov --
vitema.vi.gov, and that's for
alert, looking and you're
interested in seeing, oh, what
should I put in my kit or how
do I know -- you know, is there
something that I could write
my list of medications on?
Ready.gov has some things for
you.
>> Oh, okay.
That's great.
And I think we're ready for
a break now.
>> And do respect the women of
the world.
Remember you all have 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.

[The Pointer Sisters'
"Yes We Can Can" plays]
>> Now's the time for all good
men to get together with one
another.
We got to iron out our problems
and iron out our quarrels and
try to live as brothers.
>> And try to find peace within
without stepping on one another.

>> We're back, and you are listening to "Ability Radio -- You and Your Life."
This is a reminder that if you have missed any portion of today's show, it is being recorded and will appear on our website at www.drcvi.org. Again, drcvi.org.
With us today, again, is Candice Alder and Alex Rico from FEMA, and before we went for a break, we were discussing preparation for storms, and we'd like to stay on that topic for a little while because it's really important that we make sure we understand how we have to prepare, and I'm saying "have to" because of those two storms we had back-to-back.
>> Mm-hmm.
>> You really have to.
Candice?
>> Absolutely.
Preparing for any disaster -- I will actually speak to my own experience that I had when I was in a forest fire in 2013.
>> Wow.
>> So, one of the reasons I got interested in emergency management was because in my own community -- I lived in Colorado Springs, Colorado, and I lived in a small town just outside of Colorado Springs called Black Forest, and we had a forest fire out there, and I will say that I was actually traveling back to Colorado on the day that the forest fire started, and when I got home, the first thing that I found was that I needed to, in a very big rush, put together all of the things I need to evacuate from my home, and I had no, really, rhyme, reason, plan, ability to really think clearly when you're in a panic.
>> Right.

>> I did not have the ability to really feel in control of that situation. I left really important documents behind. I left things behind that probably would have helped me be more prepared, and so by not having that plan, I put myself at risk for a lot of compromising situations, such as losing my important documents, such as my birth certificate and my Social Security Card I had left behind, and I had another person living with me at the time that left their military paperwork, and those kind of things you don't think about in a disaster when you're directly impacted by that, but that was something that because of that experience, I learned that I needed to be more prepared.

>> Mm-hmm.

>> And I think that we do tend to sometimes think, "Okay, this isn't going to happen to me," and I think that was definitely my experience is that I never thought I was gonna be in a forest fire or thought that that was going to be something that impacted me, so I never prepared and never thought about it.

>> Right.

>> I think even though we live in -- and I lived in a forested area in a dry place, and so you would think, naturally, you would want to prepare for a forest fire, but, again, it just kind of goes away in the back of your mind, and the same goes for people who live in areas of hurricanes. We don't necessarily think that this is going to happen to us.

>> Mm-hmm.
>> Because we've experienced other types of hurricanes that were downgraded to a tropical storm or they moved, and it wasn't so bad, but we prepared, and --
>> It went south, it went north.
[Laughs]
>> Exactly.
So we don't always think it's going to actually happen to us, and so that's, I think, one of the biggest mistakes that we can make is that we just blow off whatever the National Weather Service is saying.
So the first thing is to just, I guess, admit that this could potentially happen again, it happened to me, and even people who weren't impacted as adversely as others are still at risk.
>> Yeah.
>> And so even if they didn't take the brunt of the storm the last time, it's very, very possible that they might have other challenges if another storm comes.
So that's why this preparedness part is so important, and now that we have so many lessons learned, we are able to now take away a lot of things from those lessons and use that to our advantage.
For example, losing power.
>> Yeah.
>> We didn't think about a lot of the implications of power. I think I've taken power for granted for a long time.
>> Mm-hmm.
>> Mm-hmm.
>> And I had never really thought about what life would be like living without electricity, and, also, without my technology -- in front of me, I have two phones, I have

a computer.

I also have a portable charger because my -- and, also, this thing has saved me on so many occasions where I found a place with power for a short time, or a generator, I plugged this portable charger in, and then I was able to charge my phones later when I ran out of battery power because I also --

as a person that has communication-access needs, I need my phones.

I need to be able to utilize that technology.

I need to use texting.

I need to be able to use certain apps to help me with communication, and so that's one way in which I take care of myself and I prepare myself by having things and devices and technologies that will help me function in the world.

>> Right.

>> So that's just one small example of how me, personally, I have to think about my own personal plan and what my own needs are.

After the storm, when you went to a store, if you didn't have enough cash, you weren't able to buy the things that you needed.

>> Exactly. Exactly.

>> And if a person is reliant on their medication, and the storm comes along and takes out a certain part of their house and compromises their medication, they're going to still have that need for their medication.

So you're going to want to plan to have enough money, have enough cash on you if a storm comes to be able to cover those types of expenses if you should have a loss such as that.

So that was another big lesson

learned about power.
People had money in their
bank accounts, but --
>> They couldn't access it.
>> They couldn't access it.
>> [Laughs] Yeah.
>> Or they couldn't use
a credit card to get things.
>> Yeah.
>> And I never -- hadn't --
You know, because that had never
impacted me before, I hadn't
thought about it, and so we have
to be really thinking about
the things that we depend on,
and I think that's a big part
of the preparedness is to be
thinking about what kind of
things do I really depend on
and how will that impact me
if I lose those things?
If you have somebody who comes
to your house and takes care
of you during the day and cooks
you meals...
>> Mm-hmm.
>> ...and then a storm happens,
that individual has to take care
of themselves, too.
>> First, yeah.
>> And so what are you gonna do
and what's your plan if that
person can't come to your house
to take care of you?
What is your backup plan?
So there's a lot of things,
I think, we have to do for
ourselves in analyzing and
assessing what kind of things
we're really dependent upon...
>> Mm-hmm.
>> ...and it could be really
basic, fundamental things...
>> Mm-hmm.
>> ...such as I'm really
dependent upon talking to my
family or communicating with my
family, or I'm really dependent
on this type of medication
or I'm dependent upon eating
a certain diet.
>> Mm-hmm.

>> One of the things in our Civil Rights, Civil Liberties Session is we had the folks from the Department of Homeland Security come and talk to individuals with disabilities about their experiences after the storm.

There were a lot of people with diabetes...

>> Yes.

>> ...who were impacted by this storm because they couldn't refrigerate their insulin, and they were also given MREs, or meals ready to eat, and those are meant as a stopgap until a person can supply their own food.

It's not meant as something that is a long-term nutritional supplement for an individual, but it's very, very difficult on a person with diabetes.

Even the low sodium can be very difficult for a person with diabetes, so if you are dependent upon a certain diet, how are you going to prepare for that?

That's something to think about.

If you are dependent upon a service animal, how are you going to take care of a service animal during a disaster?

What kind of supplies are you going to acquire before a storm comes and impacts you?

>> Right.

>> What ways are you gonna protect the equipment or technologies that support you? For example, people lost their hearing aids in the storm.

>> Yes.

>> And as I heard from multiple persons, acquiring hearing aids can be really difficult because there are limited services for hearing aids on-island.

>> Right.

>> So protecting those devices

that help you mitigate a disability or help you function as an independent individual is really important. So you think about that.

>> Right.

You know, before we went on break, Alex, you were talking about ready.gov.

>> Mm-hmm.

>> What if a person with disability doesn't have access to the Internet or any other type of technology, such as that?

>> Mm-hmm.

>> What would you suggest that they do to prepare for a hurricane or for storms?

>> Sure.

And Candice brought up a lot of good ideas.

>> Yes.

>> And I think, you know, an important thing is whether you use ready.gov, or you're listening to us, it's definitely important to personalize your kit, right?

So what are the things that you really need?

And some of those things even include things to make you feel better and feel happy.

>> Mm-hmm.

>> You know, if you just really want that good book in your bag, then put it in there.

>> Put it in there, yes.

>> Some people may not think of that, but it's a stressful time, and it's good to have something to comfort you.

One of the things that we recommend is having something -- folks having enough supplies for 7 to 10 days.

>> Seven to 10 days.

>> So -- and that could be a lot, but that's really about the time that, you know, if worse-case scenario kind of

thing.

We advise that people store water for drinking and for sanitation, food, medications, have a first-aid kit, hygiene products that the store supplies to meet the needs of your individual family members.

This could include infants, young children, elderly, anybody with medical conditions, or, specifically, with any sort of disabilities, pets, service animals, and, also, kind of like what Candice was talking about, definitely protect important documents.

So anything -- vital records, insurance policies, medical information, property and finance records, and having those in a place that is watertight and you can grab. Some of those things, if another event were to happen, and FEMA was to come in, those are the documents that you'll need to be able to get assistance. So it's important that on top of all these other life-saving things for people to prepare long-term to be able to get assistance much quicker, you have all these important documents ahead of time.

>> You said 7 to 10 days.

Could we stretch it a little?

[Laughter]

Because we don't know

[Laughs], you know, if anybody is gonna come in to a specific person -- maybe 10 days or something like -- I mean, 15 days or something because we don't know.

>> Yeah.

And I think it's a guideline, and I think that -- again, you know, I think it depends on the individual and what they really need.

You know, again, Candice brought

up a great point about if you have dietary restrictions...
>> Right.
>> ...the MREs are only meant to be a short-term solution.
>> Right.
>> So if you really do need something specific -- and, again, it could just be something to relax you. I just want that bar of chocolate so bad...
>> Yes, yes.
>> [Laughs]
>> ...have that in your kit, yeah.
So it's good to think of these. Like, these are not just supposed to be these generic kits, right?
They're personalized. Have it in a bag that you know that you want to use, that's a fun bag.
If you have kids, make sure that they're involved in creating it, right -- they're involved in putting it together.
It teaches and promotes resiliency.
It gives them confidence.
It calms them down because they know, "Okay, I can go grab my bag," and it's the one with, you know, the stickers on it, and it's good, so...
It's good to kind of get everybody involved in this, and, you know, again, power supplies.
If you have, like Candice was saying, with the charger, maybe a backup battery, having a flashlight that's kind of like a hand-charged flashlight, having batteries and things like that for a regular flashlight, a radio -- you know, things that also will help you listen to the outside world or if you can access it and having that because when

power goes down, communication goes down, you know, we'll do our best to get all this information out there, but it's also good to be able to have different avenues to access, so...

>> Yeah.

>> And I wanted to add about the backup batteries.

I also want to talk about a backup generator.

>> Yeah.

>> If you can access on, if you are able to purchase one for your household, especially if you have anyone in your household who relies on certain types of medical equipment, such as CPAP machines...

>> Mm-hmm. Yes.

>> ...if you have asthma, and you have a nebulizer that runs on power, if you have a power wheelchair, making sure that you are also planning for the need for power for those types of life-sustaining devices is very important, as well.

>> Yes.

We have a caller.

>> Hi. Good morning.

>> Good morning.

>> And a great show -- great information, Candice, and all.

This is Julien.

>> Hi, Julien.

>> Hi, Julien.

>> Hey.

Yeah, it's just really refreshing to hear all the things that you're touching on, and the empowerment that your person followed as to individuals wanting to be empowered to -- or empowering individuals to take responsibility for the things that they need, especially personalizing it.

>> Right.

>> One of the other things,
when you look at dietary,
right now is the best time
to go and shop for the things
that's dietary, because once
there's an announcement of
a storm, then everything that
you might want, everyone already
picked that up, so then you're
left with --

>> Nothing, yeah.

>> ...once again, things with
sodium and all the different
things that affects your diet
if you have special diets
like that, individuals with
diabetes and so on.

>> Yes.

>> But, also, could you touch
on, you know, how to safeguard
people with hearing aids --
the batteries and what to put
them in -- just to share that
with your audience because
that also was a major problem
with the moisture.

It affected a lot of individuals
after the storm.

>> Yeah, absolutely.

>> So, but I'll keep listening
on and great, great information.

>> [Laughs]

>> Thank you.

>> Thanks for calling, Julien.

>> Thank you, Julien.

>> So --

>> All right.

>> ...I want to touch on
Julien's first comment about,
you know, that this is the right
time to be gathering your
supplies and getting the types
of food in case something comes
along.

We are in hurricane season
currently, and so you want to be
storing up on all of those
things.

I just thought of a really
kind of funny story --
when Y2K happened in 1999.

>> [Laughing] Yes, I remember.

>> My grandmother canned.
She loved to can food, and she
canned and canned her heart out
to prepare in case Y2K was
actually real, and then I joked
to her, and I said, "Grandma,
your house is the first place
I'm gonna go to if there's
a disaster."

[Laughter]

And, you know, that ended up
sustaining her for a long period
of time in keeping that food
storage, and so, like Julien
mentioned, this is absolutely
the right time...

>> Yeah, take stock.

>> ...to be preparing and
stocking up on supplies
and keeping foods that are
nutritious for your body.
I was also thinking that when
your diet is changed, and you're
under a high amount of stress,
it can also have adverse effects
on your mental health.

You're already under a lot
of stress, and then you're
putting other additional types
of stress on your body with
adding a different type of diet,
and if you have any kind of
medical conditions, that can
really cause problems with --
It can just really create more
challenges in a person when
they're trying to navigate
all of these different things.

The other thing that Julien
mentioned was about the hearing
aids and making sure that you're
keeping it in a dry place.

There are devices that you can
purchase now that you put your
hearing aids into, and it keeps
them dry, and I think they're
just called a hearing-aid dryer.
I can't remember exactly
what they're called, but it kind
of looks like a little case
that you put your hearing aids
in.

I would recommend, if you think a storm is coming, to make sure that you at least put them in a ziplock bag, keeping them stored somewhere that is safe because if they do get waterlogged and wet, they don't function, so -- and it is really difficult to replace them. The other problem is, is that if they do get a little wet and they start to work and they start to mold, you can have other types of issues that come up --

>> Right.

>> ...with using those hearing aids.

So it's important to keep them dry.

They can be really difficult to replace.

A lot of insurance companies do not cover hearing aids to begin with, so they're very expensive, and so I would also say safeguard those kinds of things, especially because we have such a need for communication and access to that communication during disasters, and the more tools that we have in our toolbox to be able to get that type of communication, the better.

>> Yeah, you mentioned something that's very important, and that's stress.

>> Mm-hmm.

>> Mm-hmm.

>> I, myself, went to the doctor, like, two weeks ago 'cause I was feeling funny.

[Laughs]

That's how I could put it. I was feeling funny.

And he said, "Iris, we just went through two 5 Category hurricanes.

You don't expect to feel some kind of stress, like post- --"

>> Post-traumatic stress.

>> ..."post-traumatic stress?"
>> Absolutely.
>> And then it hit me because most of the times when a hurricane is passing, we're up almost all night. Then after that hurricane passes, like what we experienced in September, we go out and we start cleaning up our houses and mopping up and trying to put things back in order and stuff, that's all very stressful, but we kind of don't recognize it 'cause we're, like, going, going, going -- just trying to get things done. Can you talk a little bit about that, especially with the disability community?
>> Oh, absolutely. So when you have any type of change to your environment, we as humans, we're creatures of habit.
>> Yes.
>> We like our environments to look a certain way, to function in a certain way, and when a disaster comes, it really kind of disrupts the natural order of the life that we've set forth for ourselves.
>> Right.
>> I remember during the forest fire that I mentioned earlier, just the stress alone of now knowing, like, when I was going to recover, you know, when I was going to go home and everything was going to be fine. Luckily, my home did not sustain damage, and so in that particular instance, I was dealt with the stress of, you know, will the fire touch my house or won't it? Same comes when a hurricane is coming -- whether it actually impacts us or not, we are still

absorbing a lot of stress...
>> Yes.
>> ...from just thinking about it.
>> Yes.
>> I did a class with a group of individuals here on-island...
>> Mm-hmm.
>> ...and while I was talking to them, I mentioned that we need to be prepared because, you know, another storm -- we're in hurricane season and that it was the first day of hurricane season, and I watched the air -- like it was like an air going out of a balloon and watched everybody kind of take a big gasp and go, "Oh, no."
[Laughter]
"This is terrible," and I thought, "Oh, I just delivered the worst news."
>> Yeah.
[Laughs]
>> And I watched everybody, you know, face go from being happy to being very --
>> Deflated.
[Laughs]
>> ...very stressed out, and so it's really important that we also prepare for our own mental health, our own mental preparedness, and the more we prepare, the less stressed we are.
>> Mm-hmm.
>> That's true.
>> And so that's actually why the preparedness is so important is because it really mitigates that stress.
What am I going to eat in the storm?
Well, I've put together --
>> My kit.
>> ...my kit, and I have this food available to me that I know won't make me sick.
>> Right.

>> That's gonna reduce a lot of the stress...
>> Mm-hmm.
>> ...knowing where you're gonna go in a disaster, knowing where your important documents are, keeping your important documents stored in case something happens to them and you can't protect them.
>> Right.
>> That mitigates a lot of stress, so the more that you're thinking about it, and, although we may have some post-traumatic stress from what we experience, the more that we say, "Okay, well, this happened to me, but if this happens again, I'm going to be stronger, and I'm going to be able to navigate it better the next time," that actually is going to empower you in the event of another disaster and another storm.
>> Yeah, absolutely.
I think you hit the nail right on the head.
I think that's perfect.
And, you know, again, I was talking about creature comforts, things that help you, like, feel better, and I think it's also planning something -- some tips I've heard have been like, okay, I've got "X" amount that I'm going to spend on food this week.
I'll grab this item and store it away, you know, and I'll store -- Oh, okay.
This weekend I'm gonna just devote these two hours to -- So it doesn't have to be such a monumental task.
You break it up, you know, and it's easier that way, and it's easier for everybody, and, again, like, you know, involving kids, right?
Make it a game.

You can help them get involved,
and it kind of takes away some
of that, oh, this is
a monumental task, and it's very
foreboding, but, no.

You know, we're all involved.

We're all kind of --

It's an afternoon activity
kind of thing, so...

>> You know, when Hugo hit
the islands back in '89,
I was here, and my kids were
little, and I didn't know what
to expect 'cause I had never
been through one, but I really
learned quick.

You know, after the hurricane
passed, I really learned that
you got to protect your
important documents, you have to
prepare with a kit, you have to
store water, and you learn all
these things, but still, since
it's so unpredictable, we don't
know what's gonna happen,
you know, when the hurricane
hits, so it's still
nerve-racking.

>> Mm-hmm.

>> Absolutely.

>> Still nerve-racking.

>> If I could also just add
one quick thing -- and I think
if you do need someone to talk
to, I think there are services
out there, and you should
definitely seek them out.

>> Mm-hmm.

>> I think, you know, it's good
to talk about these things.

It's good to find, like,
a mental-health provider that
can help you do those things,
and we definitely encourage
that.

>> Okay.

We'll be right back after
a break.

Oh, we have a phone call.

Okay.

We'll get the phone call first.

[Laughs]

Caller. Good morning.
>> Thank you.
Good morning.
>> Good morning.
>> Good morning.
Good morning.
How are you?
>> We're fine.
Thank you.
>> Speaking of mental-health support, I remember in a training, Candice -- This is Amelia.
>> [Laughs]
>> ...that there was this text that was very -- I was impressed because I tried it, and it was -- the response was amazing. Could you share that information with us if you recall?
It's a communication device when out communication is seriously hampered, but we were able to communicate if we had a phone with text capacity to do that text, and there was a service available that was very responsive -- you know, that could help you in a situation such as that.
>> Yes, and, Amelia, I'm trying to pull it up on my phone here, that text number, and it's gonna -- speaking of connectivity issues, it might take me a minute to pull that up.
[Laughter]
>> You could do that during the break.
How about that?
[Laughter]
>> Hey, I think that's a really great idea, Amelia, but I do want to talk about that. That's really important. There are, actually, disaster hot lines that are available, and you can talk to individuals about the disaster, and during the storm, I remember working with a couple of individuals whom were really having a tough

time with the impact that the storm had on them and their family.

You know, some people lost their job, some people had lost their home and their job, or their transportation, home, and their job.

So there's a lot of impact that can happen as a result of a disaster, and so there was no connectivity on the island except you could text.

You could send a text message, and every once in a while, it would go through, or if you went up the hill, you went over by the refinery and then kind of sat up the hill.

I watched a whole line of cars that would sit there all day because you would get service in that one spot, or --

>> It was a hot spot.

[Laughs]

>> It was a hot spot.

So, you could actually send a text message, and I know that it's a number that I'm going to try to pull up on the break here, but it's a text line that you can call for disaster services, and you can text a person, a counselor, and they will talk to you via text back and forth -- also a really great service for an individual who may be hard of hearing or deaf --

>> Yes.

>> ...to have that type of access.

>> Access. Right.

So we're going on a break.

>> And I can attest to the fact that it's very fast -- very quick response.

>> Yes.

I utilized it with a couple of individuals whom needed a little extra support, and it was a very effective

tool.
>> Okay.
Anything else, Amelia?
>> Well, thank you.
No. Excellent show.
I mean, just a fount of
information -- really, much
appreciated.
My mom and I are listening.
[Laughter]
>> Hi, Amelia's mom.
[Laughter]
>> Well, thank you so much.
>> All right. Thanks.
>> Thank you.
Bye-bye.
>> 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.
>> Oh, yes, we can.
I know we can can.
Yes, we can can.
Why can't we?
If 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.
>> Yes, we can.
I know we can can.
[Instrumental music plays]

>> ...we can work it out.
>> Oh, yes, we can.
I know we can can.
Yes, we can can.
Why can't we?
If 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.
>> Yes, we can.
I know we can can.
[Instrumental music plays]
>> We're back, and you're
listening to "Ability Radio --
You and Your Life."
This is a reminder that if
you've missed any portion
of today's show, please, please,
please go to www.drcvi.org.
We received a lot of really
great information with respect
to preparation, and this is why
we stayed on that topic because
it's so important that we really
prepare.
A lot of us think that we are
prepared, but then like Candice
experienced with the wildfire
that sometimes we're so trying
to get ready for whatever is
coming that we maybe lose sight
of something.
So it's always good to have
a list of things that you need
to do, start doing them now.
You know, like Alex shared,
start doing them now little
by little so that you are ready
when the hurricane comes.
One of the things that I was --
Offline we were talking before
the show started was
the Hurricane Recovery
and Resiliency Task Force
Report, and that report predicts
hurricanes will become more
intense, but not necessarily
more frequent, and this is kind
of scary given the damage we
sustained with the last two
hurricanes.
My question to you both are,
is how inclusive is this plan
for people with disabilities?
>> So we have community planners
and disability integration
advisor cadres that look at
certain types of ways that we're
planning and preparing for

disasters and how we're including people with disabilities.

>> Mm-hmm.

>> And so we do provide feedback when we look at these types of task-force plans that are initiated by the V.I. government, and we will provide comprehensive feedback to them and other resources to help their preparedness and their mitigation of and their inclusiveness of people with disabilities.

So we have provided guidance throughout our stay here in the Virgin Islands and our work since the two hurricanes to the local territories on accessibility and looking at -- We provided examples of which we can add inclusiveness when it comes to effective communications in their community planning, when it comes to physical access -- whether to be to access to transportation during a disaster, access to sheltering.

We do provide technical assistance, guidance to the territory in terms of what their obligations are under certain types of disability-rights laws, but also providing real-world strategies and how to implement some of those guidelines, and we had been serving as advisors to the territory and also to FEMA in terms of accessibility, and then they have to be the ones to take that information and implement that within their own planning purposes.

>> Right. Right.

>> And I'll just add on a more general note, right -- the steps that FEMA and

the territory have been taking.
So I believe it concluded
last week...

>> Yes.

>> ...but we had an exercise,
and it was an in-depth
discussion with the territory,
our federal partners, and FEMA
really talking about this
hurricane season, identifying
any things that we want to look
at, and, also, just a good way
of talking back and forth
and preparing, and, you know,
the other -- one thing that,
again, like, I said this at
the beginning, and I'll say this
again now is that we're not
going anywhere.

>> Yes.

>> So FEMA is here to stay
for a while, and we really are
gonna continue providing that
technical assistance, continue
supporting the territory.
Our partners on the federal
level are making sure that
people are ready for a disaster.

>> Yeah, and like you said
before, Alex, recovery is a long
process.

>> Mm-hmm.

>> So we still have a ways to
go, and we hope and pray that we
have no other disturbance
because that would set that
back, wouldn't it?

>> It might, yeah, but I think,
again, you know, we worry about
the next storm when it comes,
and I think that it's important
to get all our ducks in a row
and say, "Okay, we're gonna
start preparing now for those
things just in case they
happen," but this is not done
in a vacuum, you know...

>> Right.

>> ...so individual preparedness
is absolutely important, and
that's what we encourage and
promote.

>> Okay.
>> And for us, you know,
at the federal and territorial
level, we're also preparing.
>> Did you find the number?
>> I didn't.
>> Okay.
>> I'm still having some
connection issues, but Alex has
the Disaster Distress Hot Line
number.
>> Yes.
So if you're feeling emotionally
distressed or you just need
someone extra to talk to
due to the hurricanes,
you can call the National
Disaster Stress Helpline
at 800-985-5990.
That's 800-985-5990.
And they answer any time
day or night, and you'll be
connected to a trained
counselor, and we encourage you
really to reach out if you need
to.
>> And our children are
the future, and, Candice,
you mentioned working with
children at the schools.
What was that experience like
in the last few minutes
that we have of the show?
>> Well, I think children are
impacted by the hurricanes
and the storms just as much
as anyone, and we also consider
children to be persons who have
access and social needs,
as well.
>> Right.
>> We look at what the access
needs are of children, and one
of them is to kind of navigate
and understand what kind of
impact a storm may have on them
or how to recover from an event
that impacted them or their
families...
>> Right.
>> ...and how to talk about
those types of events, but,

also, as Alex mentioned,
having them be a part of
the preparedness, having them
be a part of the solution
is a great way of mitigating
stress on children.

>> Right.

>> And so we have been teaching
-- the disability integration
advisors have been also teaching
preparedness and kits to
children, and so we've been
talking about the disaster
and how that impacted them
and talking about what kind
of things that they can put
in their own kits to be prepared
and ways that they can also
encourage grownups and they can
teach grownups about
preparedness, as well, because
they also are great learners,
but they're also great teachers,
as well.

>> They're so honest,
and they'll tell you.

>> Yes.

>> [Laughs]

>> "Mom, we're not prepared.
We need to do this."

[Laughs]

>> Well, in closing, I want to
thank you both for being here
with us today, and I'm asking
the listening audience to please
pick up the -- what is this? --
the Hurricane Recovery and
Resilience Task Force Report.
It is very, very important
that you understand what
happened, what's going on,
and the recommendations that
have been made for our recovery
here in the Virgin Islands.
I thank you very much,
both of you, for being here
on a Saturday morning, and we
hope you might be able to come
back sometime soon.

>> Be happy to.

>> Thank you very much.

>> Thank you so much.

>> Thank you. Thank you.
>> Thank you for having us.
>> Now's the time for all good
men to get together with one
another.
We got to iron out our problems
and iron out our quarrels and
try to live as brothers.
>> And try to find peace within
without stepping on one another.
>> And do respect the women of
the world.
Remember you all have 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...