

FEMA Awards Bureau of Corrections \$14.2 Million to Replace Alva A. Swan Correctional Annex

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The Federal Emergency Management Agency last week awarded the Bureau of Corrections \$14.2 million to replace the Alva A. Swan Correctional Annex (Swan Annex) on St. Thomas, B.O.C. made known Friday.



The Swann Annex was destroyed by Hurricanes Irma and Maria in September 2017, the bureau said.

"This is a major accomplishment for the Bureau. FEMA's first offer would have left us only \$3 million to repair — not replace — the Swan Annex. With the help of Witt O'Brien's, we fought for more than a year to convince FEMA that the Annex needed to be completely replaced and brought up to code," said B.O.C. Director Wynnie Testamark. "Our fight has paid big dividends for the people of the Virgin Islands." The final FEMA award is almost 500 percent more than initially offered."

The bureau said it worked with Witt O'Brien's to become the first local agency to successfully complete the Independent Expert Panel review, which is used to challenge FEMA's award decisions for losses caused by Hurricanes Irma and Maria. "That challenge resulted in a total FEMA obligation to B.O.C. of \$17.6 million," B.O.C. said.

After cost-share and insurance deductions, B.O.C. will receive \$14.2 million in federal funds to replace the Swan Annex. The Swan Annex served as the main pre-trial detention center on St. Thomas before it was destroyed by Hurricane Irma. It has been abandoned ever since.



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According to the B.O.C. release, upon arriving at the Bureau in February 2019, Ms. Testamark was adamant that FEMA funds should be used to rebuild the Swan Annex, instead of merely repairing it, given the extensive hurricane damage. The B.O.C. release said Ms. Testamark rejected the first 2 FEMA offers before accepting FEMA's \$14.2 million award.

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