

# Federal Agency Update on Hurricane Maria Response and Relief Operations

---

Release Date: septembre 26, 2017

**WASHINGTON** – There are thousands of Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA) personnel and partners providing life-saving and life-sustainment resources to Puerto Rico and the U.S. Virgin Islands, while aggressively working 24-hours, seven days a week, to restore power and communications, and reestablish port operability to allow increased access for additional commodities and personnel into disaster-affected areas. Several airports are opened on the U.S. Virgin Islands and Puerto Rico, currently limited to flights bringing life-saving resources.

The **Department of Energy** is working with its federal partners to facilitate fuel deliveries across the U.S. Virgin Islands and Puerto Rico for generators at critical facilities and response efforts, and is also working with the Energy Information Administration to assess fuel supplies and the status of facilities in the region. In response to the impacts of Hurricanes Harvey and Irma, the Secretary of Energy authorized the release of up to 5.3 million barrels of oil from the Strategic Petroleum Reserve, and to date, more than 4.6 million barrels have been delivered to areas impacted by all three storms.

The **U.S. Coast Guard (USCG)** reports the ports of Guayanilla, Salinas, and Tallaboa are fully open, and the ports of San Juan, Fajardo, Culebra, Guayama, and Vieques are open with restrictions in Puerto Rico. The ports of Crown Bay, Charlotte Amalie, East Gregerie Channel, West Gregerie Channel, and Redhook Bay on St. Thomas, the ports of Krause Lagoon, Limetree Bay, and Frederiksted on St. Croix, and the port of Cruz Bay on St. John are open with restrictions. Other ports are undergoing assessments.

Power is restored to Centro Médico Hospital in San Juan and San Pablo Hospital in Bayamón, Puerto Rico. The Governor Juan F. Luis Hospital in St. Croix and the Schneider Regional Medical Center in St. Thomas are re-energized and re-established as mobile hospitals.



**FEMA**

Page 1 of 7

FEMA, working in coordination with federal partners, provided more than 4 million meals, 6 million liters of water, infant and toddler kits – which include supplies for 3,000 infants and toddlers – and 70,000 tarps and 15,000 rolls of roof sheeting to the U.S. Virgin Islands and Puerto Rico since Hurricane Maria’s landfall.

Ten **FEMA Urban Search & Rescue (US&R)** task forces are relentlessly conducting operations in Puerto Rico. To date, the US&R teams rescued 557 lives and five pets, while searching over 2,600 structures. The **U.S. Coast Guard (USCG)** is continuing its search and rescue operations, and continues working to restore radio communication towers in the Caribbean.

### ***Federal Efforts Underway as of September 26, 2017***

- The **American Red Cross** sent 5,000 of each the following items to support [response efforts](#) on the islands: comfort kits, blankets, and clean-up kits. Specifically for Puerto Rico, they are mobilizing 9,000 comfort kits and several thousand tarps, flashlights, batteries, blankets, and hand sanitizer. They are also preparing to send tens of thousands of bags of rice and beans, in addition to cots, blankets, comfort kits, tarps, trash bags, sponges, hand sanitizer, and insect repellent to the U.S. Virgin Islands.
- The **Corporation for National and Community Service (CNCS)** deployed two AmeriCorps members with specialized training to Puerto Rico to support the American Red Cross. CNCS also committed four AmeriCorps Disaster Response Teams to provide shelter operation support for Save the Children.
- The **U.S. Department of Agriculture’s (USDA)** is supporting the Virgin Islands’ Department of Education requests for waivers/flexibilities for school meals for when schools reopen. USDA Animal and Plant Health Inspection Service (APHIS) Animal Care collaborated with non-governmental organizations and other entities to coordinate donated hay/feed and match that with the requests.
- **U.S. Department of Defense (DoD)**
  - The **U.S. Army Corps of Engineers (USACE)** has more than 750 personnel engaged. Temporary emergency power assessments are underway in Puerto Rico and the U.S. Virgin Islands.



**FEMA**

Page 2 of 7

- Temporary roofing: In Puerto Rico, USACE is performing critical assessments as requested by FEMA. USACE estimates that 30,000 roofs are damaged. Materials are scheduled to arrive this week. In the U.S. Virgin Islands, USACE is collecting Right of Entries, and performing assessments and installations. USACE estimates 13,000 roofs are damaged across the islands (7,000 in St. Thomas; 1,000 in St. John; 5,000 in St. Croix). The first Blue Roof in St Thomas was completed September 23, 2017.
- Temporary power: Assessments are underway in Puerto Rico and U. S. Virgin Islands at critical facilities (hospitals, water treatment facilities, airports, shelters, etc.). The team coordinated transportation of more than 300 FEMA or Defense Logistics Agency (DLA) generators from across the U.S. to meet anticipated requirements in the islands. In Puerto Rico, the team completed 27 of 32 requested assessments of critical facilities. Six step-up DLA transformers are expected to arrive this week. In the U.S. Virgin Islands, deployed experts continue to meet with FEMA, territory representatives, and other agencies to assess power priorities. USACE completed 90 of 131 requested assessments of critical facilities and began generator installations.
- Debris management: In Puerto Rico, USACE is conducting surveys with the debris contractor to determine the current state of pre-identified routes for debris removal. In the U.S. Virgin Islands, debris removal operations are expected to begin in early October for both St. Thomas and St. John. Debris experts performed aerial assessments of St. John to reassess damage and verify estimated debris quantities. For St. John, St. Thomas, and St. Croix, the total debris estimated for removal is 1.3 million cubic yards, the equivalent of 400 Olympic-size swimming pools.
- The **U.S. National Guard Bureau's (NGB)** priorities are moving food and water to those in need, augmenting local law enforcement to ensure community safety, and engineer support to help rebuild essential infrastructure.



**FEMA**

Page 3 of 7

- In Puerto Rico, the National Guard is continuing to improve island communications. Four Joint Incident Site Communications Capability stations are there, and two more are currently en route, with others being sourced. They are also coordinating lifesaving search and rescue operations in affected communities.
- In the U.S. Virgin Islands, the National Guard reopened St. Croix's airfield to receive critical resupply and is facilitating reopening of sea ports as well. They are also clearing and repairing roads, manning and securing distribution points and shelters, and providing power generators to support critical infrastructure. Soldiers from New York's 105th Military Police Company as well as Virginia's 116th Infantry Brigade Combat Team are en route to the U.S. Virgin Islands.
- The **U.S. Northern Command's (NORTHCOM)** has 16 missions scheduled to deliver water, meals, helicopters, communications equipment, security forces, and communications and contingency response units. DoD is providing rotary lift support to FEMA Urban Search and Rescue movements and commodities distribution across Puerto Rico.
- San Juan airport's air traffic control radar is now operational with reduced capability, which facilitates an increase in flow of traffic into the aerial port of debarkation (APOD). San Juan, Jose Aponte de la Torre, and Ponce Airports are established as major APODs to facilitate FEMA's hub-and-spoke distribution to sites across Puerto Rico.
- The **U.S. Navy and Marine Corps**, alongside the Puerto Rican National Guard, continue efforts to replenish hospital generator fuel supplies.
- **U.S. Department of Energy (DOE)** The Department of Energy continues to work with its partners in response and power restoration efforts in Puerto Rico and the U.S. Virgin Islands. DOE emergency responders have deployed to Puerto Rico and are assisting the Puerto Rico Electric Power Authority (PREPA), FEMA and private sector partners in damage assessments – which show significant damage to significant damage to transmission and distribution systems – as well as in restoration efforts to critical facilities such as hospitals. A team from the New York Power Authority is also assisting in those efforts.



**FEMA**

Page 4 of 7

DOE is posting Situation Reports [here](#), and WAPA is posting updates [here](#).

- The **Western Area Power Administration (WAPA)** is continuing to work with the U.S. Virgin Islands Water and Power Authority on damage assessments and power restoration efforts, and additional crews are expected to deploy later this week. Some critical facilities have been restored and potable water is available. Local updates about restoration work are available on [U.S. Virgin Islands Water and Power Authority website](#).
- The **Environmental Protection Agency (EPA)** has a 6-person team in the U.S. Virgin Islands and an additional 18 en route. EPA began sampling drinking water facilities in St. Croix. Existing staff residing in Puerto Rico are starting assessments of wastewater facilities.
- The **Federal Aviation Administration** reported that the St. Thomas airport is operational with restrictions. The San Juan tower is operational with the building, terminal radar, and frequencies on a generator. At San Juan Radar Approach and En Route Center, Grand Turk and Isla Grande long range radars are both back on, and the FAA is starting to get beacon-only data from Pico. Several radio en route frequencies from the El Yunque site were restored and remain active with everything being single string on generator power. The building is on a single generator with the parts for the second generator being flown in tonight or tomorrow. The full size backup generator is being loaded onto a modified Lockheed C-5 Galaxy today in Raleigh-Durham, North Carolina. As normal radar procedures are implemented later today, FAA is amending the slot program to an 18 per hour rate and could possibly go to a 36 per hour rate if everything holds. FAA coordinated closely with the airport authority, the Transportation Security Administration (TSA), and DoD about the increase.
- The **U.S. Department of the Interior (DOI)** deployed 135 personnel to assist communities recovering from Hurricanes Maria and Irma. In coordination with local officials, Interior life-saving and sustaining activities on Puerto Rico, St. John, and St. Croix include water rescue and searches, law enforcement, damage assessments, evacuation assistance, flood measurements, and daily reporting of water heights.



**FEMA**

Page 5 of 7

- The **U.S. Department of Health and Human Services (HHS)** has more than 300 personnel on the islands with additional teams of HHS medical professionals remaining available if needed. HHS, along with the **Departments of Defense and Veterans Affairs**, coordinated the evacuation of dialysis patients from Puerto Rico and the U.S. Virgin Islands to Atlanta and Miami.
- Teams from the **National Disaster Medical System (NDMS)** and **U.S. Public Health Service (USPHS) Commissioned Corps** set up a base of operations with medical equipment and supplies adjacent to Centro Medico; an emergency and trauma center in San Juan, and are staffing the locations to assist the center and local hospitals that are seeing an overwhelming number of patients, or are short-staffed as the territory works to respond to and recover from the hurricanes. NDMS and USPHS teams are also providing care at temporary medical sites in St. Thomas and St. Croix in the U.S. Virgin Islands.
- The **Food and Drug Administration (FDA)** continues to work closely with federal and local partners, and medical product companies with manufacturing sites in Puerto Rico to prevent shortages of medically necessary products, such as [drugs and devices](#).
- A team of public health and environmental health experts from the **Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC)** also deployed to assist Puerto Rico and the U.S. Virgin Islands with assessments of shelters, water systems, and other environmental health needs.
- **U.S. Department of Homeland Security (DHS)**
  - The **U.S. Customs and Border Protection's (CBP)** office of field operations-special task force team is currently providing force protection for public health and medical operations, and search and rescue missions to include FEMA US&R task forces and DMAT support in San Juan, Puerto Rico. Ten team members are providing security to FEMA ships, the Celebration, and the SS Wright, in St. Croix and St. Thomas.
  - FEMA **Office of Disability Integration and Coordination (ODIC)** is leading FEMA's commitment to achieving whole community emergency



**FEMA**

Page 6 of 7

management, inclusive of individuals with disabilities and others with access and functional needs, by [providing guidance, tools, methods and strategies to establish equal physical, program, and effective communication access](#). ODIC is coordinating the collection and shipments of durable medical equipment to Puerto Rico and U.S. Virgin Islands to assist people with disabilities whose equipment was lost, damaged or destroyed in Irma and Maria.

- The **U.S. Postal Service's (USPS)** recovery efforts continue in the U.S. Virgin Islands and Puerto Rico. Limited handout mail service began September 26 on St. John in U.S. Virgin Islands (9 a.m. - 2 p.m.); St. Thomas began over the weekend. There will be no retail service (stamps, money orders, and shipping) available on St. John. Postal facilities in St. Croix and Puerto Rico will remain closed today, but postal employees are being asked to return to work, if possible, to begin recovery efforts at those locations in anticipation of reopening where and when it is safe to do so. Customers can find the latest service statuses at [USPS Service Alerts](#).

###

*FEMA's mission is to support our citizens and first responders to ensure that as a nation we work together to build, sustain and improve our capability to prepare for, protect against, respond to, recover from and mitigate all hazards.*

*Follow FEMA online at [www.fema.gov/blog](http://www.fema.gov/blog), [www.twitter.com/fema](https://www.twitter.com/fema), [www.twitter.com/femaspox](https://www.twitter.com/femaspox), [www.facebook.com/fema](https://www.facebook.com/fema) and [www.youtube.com/fema](https://www.youtube.com/fema). Also, follow Administrator Brock Long's activities at [www.twitter.com/fema\\_brock](https://www.twitter.com/fema_brock).*

*The social media links provided are for reference only. FEMA does not endorse any non-government websites, companies or applications.*



**FEMA**

Page 7 of 7