

Three Years After Hurricane María, FEMA Obligations Reach \$7.3 Billion

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Over \$4.2 billion of this historic amount of federal aid has been disbursed

GUAYNABO, Puerto Rico – The unprecedented recovery from Hurricane María has reached a milestone in the obligation of FEMA funds. Three years after one of the largest and most complex disasters in the Agency’s 40-year history, nearly \$7.3 billion has been approved to help rebuild the Island - from critical infrastructure to historic buildings

As of today, a total of over 4,800 projects have funding obligations, the vast majority to repair and rebuild roads, bridges and public buildings as well as cultural treasures like theatres, town squares and other characteristic sites in the municipalities. The Central Office for Recovery, Reconstruction and Resilience, known as COR3, has disbursed nearly \$450 million to municipal governments for these purposes, resulting in an injection to the local economy and a stimulus to the job market.

“This year we have seen that the commitment of our team is unwavering. There is much work to be done and I am confident that together with the government of Puerto Rico we will achieve our goal of a Puerto Rico that will be the model of resilience in the Caribbean,” said Federal Disaster Recovery Coordinator for Puerto Rico and the U.S. Virgin Islands, Alex Amparo.

Procurement processes begin

To date, funds have been allocated for about 1,200 roads and bridges in municipalities throughout the Island, mostly in the areas severely affected by flooding and landslides caused by the storm. Utuado tops the list with 153 projects under this category for repairs as well as for architectural and engineering design studies. The municipality is currently in the procurement process for the work.



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Similarly, Jayuya and Villalba have rebuilt roads for the benefit of their communities. The mayor of Villalba, Luis Javier Hernández Ortiz, stated that the bridge that serves the Cerro Gordo community will begin construction soon, and it will have a useful life of 70 years. “This project has an obligation of over \$2.5 million and benefits over 500 families,” said the municipal official.

Ponce is another municipality that is moving its recovery forward. The drainage pump system that is essential to prevent flooding in the area will initiate the bidding process this month. “The reconstruction that is kicking-off in our city thanks to the first 105 projects that will begin work in the next few weeks represents the creation of jobs and an increase in economic activity in Ponce. For every million dollars invested, 50 local jobs are generated”, said the mayor. María “Mayita” Meléndez Altieri.

Updates to police headquarters and command stations

The facilities that ensure public safety such as police stations, command stations and emergency systems will also be strengthened with over \$2.7 million in federal funds. The grants include funding for police stations and command posts in Aguadilla, Añasco, Arecibo, Cabo Rojo, Caguas, Hormigueros, Humacao, Las Marías, Maricao, Mayagüez, Orocovis, Ponce and San Juan.

“The repairs that will be made to the police stations will help us maintain proper working conditions for our staff and the citizens who visit us. With the collaboration of FEMA, we have been able to improve the structures that were affected by Hurricane María and the various emergencies that have affected our area,” said the Puerto Rico Police Commissioner, Henry Escalera Rivera.

Resilient medical care centers

As part of the efforts to strengthen the Island's medical system, approximately \$116 million has been allocated to repair nearly 100 health care facilities including hospitals and clinics. Among these is an obligation of over \$3.4 million for the Rio Piedras Medical Center as well as a \$1 million grant for the Lajas community health center, known locally as a CDT, the only health care facility in the municipality.



Another important element in the recovery is identifying opportunities to increase the resilience of the projects that will be part of the reconstruction. To this end, approximately \$153 million of the approved project obligations are earmarked to help reduce loss of life and property.

“Three years have passed since we faced the unprecedented event caused by the impact of Hurricane María. While there is still work to be done, certainly in the last year we have made progress in the reconstruction process. We will continue to work diligently for as long as it takes to make the Island stronger and more resilient,” said the Executive Director for COR3, Ottmar Chávez.

For the new Federal Disaster Recovery Coordinator for Puerto Rico and the U.S. Virgin Islands, Jose Baquero Tirado, “the achievements in the last three years on the Island are historic, and also pave the way for groundbreaking obligations for our Energy, Water and Education sectors. The changes ahead will be transcendental for Puerto Rico. At this time, coordination between the government of Puerto Rico and the federal government is key for the development of our large-scale projects. Solutions have been identified to ensure a more resilient infrastructure; it is work that will chart a course for a better life for our future generations,” added the Coordinator.

For more information on Puerto Rico's recovery from Hurricane María, visit fema.gov/disaster/4339 and recuperacion.pr. Follow us on our social networks at Facebook.com/FEMAPuertoRico, Facebook.com/COR3pr and on [@COR3pr](https://Twitter.com/COR3pr).

