

Federal Disaster Assistance for Puerto Rico Earthquakes Tops \$104 Million

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PONCE, Puerto Rico – More than \$104 million in federal disaster assistance is helping fuel the recovery of Puerto Rico residents and businesses that suffered damage from the earthquakes that began Dec. 28.

As of July 13, FEMA’s Individuals and Households program approved **more than \$55.3 million** in Housing Assistance to repair disaster-damaged homes and pay for temporary housing. Another **\$2 million** was approved under Other Needs Assistance, a FEMA program that provides funding for disaster-related expenses and serious needs including medical, dental, transportation, funeral, moving and storage expenses.

As of July 13, the U.S. Small Business Administration approved **more than \$39.9 million** in low-interest disaster loans to **1,395** homeowners, renters and businesses including:

- **more than \$37.4 million for 1,315** homeowners and renters;
- **more than \$2.5 million for 80** businesses.

To date, **more than \$575,676** was approved for repairs under FEMA’s Public Assistance program, the primary source of assistance for essential government agencies, public institutions and certain private nonprofits.

The Government of Puerto Rico has been working with FEMA to ensure the **88** eligible applicants that have made Requests for Public Assistance accurately assess and document damage to schools, buildings and other critical infrastructure. Site inspections to determine damage began after Gov. Wanda Vázquez Garced eased island-wide restrictions due to the COVID-19 pandemic, allowing a gradual reopening of businesses and schools.

Exactly **40,095** individuals and households in 33 designated municipalities applied for FEMA disaster assistance after Puerto Rico received a major disaster



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declaration for the earthquakes on Jan. 16.

FEMA's Transitional Sheltering Assistance program has paid more than **\$3 million** for temporary lodging in hotels and motels while survivors sought a permanent solution to homes that were damaged or destroyed by the ongoing earthquakes.

Several strong earthquakes jolted the island in the past six months, including a magnitude 5.4 aftershock on the southern coast on May 2. The aftershocks continue, with a magnitude 5.3 on July 3.

FEMA has provided **\$3.2 million** to fund the Crisis Counseling program for **249,496** residents who have called because they are experiencing anxiety or stress. The program offers toll-free virtual assistance through Línea Pas until July 15.

FEMA funding for the Disaster Unemployment Assistance program, which is overseen by the U.S. Department of Labor and managed by the Puerto Rico Department of Labor and Human Resources, is **\$726,492**. As of June 30, **864** residents have received assistance.

Disaster Legal Services, a partnership between Puerto Rico Legal Services, the American Bar Association Young Lawyers Division, DisasterLegalAid.org and FEMA, received **\$5,000** in FEMA funding. The program has already provided legal casework assistance to **304** low-income earthquake survivors who were dealing with various problems such as insurance claims for doctor and hospital bills and with home repair contracts and contractors.

As the earthquake recovery operation moves forward, FEMA has reopened seven Disaster Recovery Centers in Ciales, Guánica, Guayanilla, Peñuelas, Ponce, San Sebastián and Yauco under COVID-19 safety measures. Residents can speak to specialists in person and update their applications. The centers are expected to stay open until July 24, and other centers will reopen as needed.

Fifteen fixed and mobile Disaster Recovery Centers were opened after the earthquake disaster was declared Jan. 16. As of July 12, there were **29,731** visits to the recovery centers, including the ones that reopened after FEMA's three-month suspension of field operations.



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The deadline to apply for FEMA assistance and SBA physical damage loan applications was **July 2**. The deadline for businesses to submit economic injury disaster loan applications to SBA is Oct. 16.

FEMA specialists remain on the island to support earthquake recovery efforts and are still a phone call away. The FEMA Helpline at 800-621-3362 (FEMA) or (TTY) 800-462-7585 remains open for questions or updates to an application. Press 2 for a Spanish-speaking operator. Lines are open from 7 a.m. to 11 p.m. daily.

For more information on Puerto Rico's recovery from the earthquakes, visit www.fema.gov/disaster/4473 and on Facebook, facebook.com/femapuertorico.

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FEMA's mission is helping people before, during, and after disasters. Disaster recovery assistance is available without regard to race, color, religion, nationality, sex, age, disability, English proficiency or economic status. If you or someone you know has been discriminated against, call FEMA toll-free at 800-621-FEMA (3362) or 711 for Video Relay Service. Multilingual operators are available. (Press 2 for Spanish.) TTY call 800-462-7585.

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