

FEMA Continues Hurricane Fiona Response Efforts: Sept. 23 Updates

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WASHINGTON -- President Joseph R. Biden, Jr. made additional assistance available to the Government of Puerto Rico Sept. 22. During a briefing on Puerto Rico's response activities at FEMA's Region 2 office in New York City, the President announced 100% federal funding for debris removal and emergency protective measures for 30 days. He also announced three additional municipalities, Añasco, Hormigueros and Mayagüez, are now eligible for FEMA's Individual Assistance program, allowing more survivors to apply for federal assistance.

On Sept. 21, President Biden, approved Puerto Rico Gov. Pedro Pierluisi's request for an expedited major disaster declaration. The declaration now authorizes FEMA to provide individual assistance to survivors in 58 municipalities, and public assistance and hazard mitigation in all 78 Puerto Rico municipalities.

FEMA surged hundreds of employees to Puerto Rico to support the response. This is in addition to 700 staff who live and work on the island. We have teams on the ground conducting damage assessments and are also using data obtained from flyers and satellites to expedite our review. More municipalities can be approved for Individual Assistance as those assessments are completed and adjudicated.

Survivors who live in the 58 declared municipalities can apply for federal assistance at www.DisasterAssistance.gov, by calling 800-621-FEMA (3362) or by using the [FEMA App](#). Survivors using a relay service, such as a video relay service, captioned telephone service or others, can give the FEMA operator the number for that service. FEMA Disaster Survivor Assistance teams are in affected municipalities and are conducting outreach and working to help survivors apply for assistance.

Federal and Partner Actions to Support Areas Affected by Hurricane Fiona



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- Five FEMA Incident Management Assistance Teams and four Urban Search and Rescue teams are in Puerto Rico to bolster response efforts. Additionally, Mobile Emergency Response Support, Incident Support Base, Staging Management Teams and Mobile Communication Office Vehicle operators are on the island. Disaster Emergency Communications are repairing the La Santa Communication Tower in Humacao.
- Water Distribution Task Force, federal, commonwealth and private sector members are coordinating water delivery to isolated communities.
- The U.S. Small Business Administration is making low-interest disaster loans available to residents, businesses and most private nonprofit organizations in eligible Puerto Rico municipalities. Small businesses, small agricultural cooperatives, in aquaculture and most private nonprofit organizations, may apply for an [Economic Injury Disaster Loan](#) to help meet working capital needs caused by the disaster.
- The U.S. Army Corps of Engineers is installing generators at critical facilities and preparing and staging additional generators to support requests. Additional personnel are conducting damage assessments in support of the commonwealth and federal response. USACE issued \$30,000 in funding that will support deploying a team of engineers to assess federal projects and infrastructure and coastal areas for post-storm damages.
- The U.S. Environmental Protection Agency and USACE continue to assess drinking water and wastewater infrastructure.
- The U.S. Department of Education is assessing damage and needs of schools on the island.
- Mental health resources are available. Survivors experiencing emotional distress can call or text the SAMHSA Disaster Distress Helpline at 1-800-985-5990 to connect with a trained crisis counselor. The helpline is confidential, toll-free and multilingual crisis support.
- The American Red Cross is working closely with the local government to provide support. More than 200 trained Red Cross volunteers are assessing damage, delivering emergency supplies to shelters and have provided more than 700 households with emergency supplies.
- The Salvation Army is distributing hot meals to survivors on the island.
- More than 550 Puerto Rico National Guard members are conducting search and rescue, commodity distribution, security operations and more. Additionally, U.S. Customs and Border Protection is supporting the island's search and rescue response.



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- The U.S. Department of Health and Human Services declared a Public Health Emergency, and also deployed an Incident Management Team, Health Incident Management Team, Disaster Medical Assistance personnel and three medical support teams to aid Urban Search and Rescue operations.
- The U.S. Department of Agriculture Food and Nutrition Service approved a waiver to allow hot foods to be purchased with Nutrition Assistance Program benefits for one-week. Additionally, the USDA Food & Nutrition Service approved the use of USDA foods for congregate feeding for 2,500 at shelters.

Stay Alert to Continuing Risks

- **Avoid downed power lines:** Do not touch or drive over downed power lines. Always assume a downed power line is unsafe and contact the power company and emergency personnel.
- **Be aware of areas where floodwaters have receded:** Roads may have weakened and could collapse under the weight of a car.
- **Use a generator safely:** Keep generators far from your home. Never use a generator inside a home, basement, shed or garage even if doors and windows are open as these could allow carbon monoxide to come indoors.
- **Stay safe during extreme heat:** Avoid strenuous work or exercise during the warmest part of the day. Use a buddy system when working in extreme heat and take frequent breaks.
- Download the free [FEMA App](#) (available in English and Spanish) to receive emergency alerts and real-time safety notifications, emergency preparedness tips, and disaster resources. Visit [Ready.gov](#) or [Listo.gov](#) to learn how you can keep yourself, your family, and your pets safe.

