

# FEMA Continues Hurricane Fiona Response Efforts: Sept. 24 Updates

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WASHINGTON -- On Sept. 21, President Joseph R. Biden, Jr. approved Puerto Rico Gov. Pedro Pierluisi's request for an expedited major disaster declaration. That declaration now authorizes FEMA to provide individual assistance to survivors in 63 municipalities and public assistance and hazard mitigation in all 78 Puerto Rico municipalities.

Five additional municipalities were added to the declaration on Sept. 23, allowing eligible survivors in Arecibo, Barceloneta, Cabo Rojo, Loíza and Manatí to apply for federal assistance. We have teams on the ground conducting damage assessments and using data obtained from satellites to expedite our review. More municipalities may be approved for Individual Assistance as assessments are completed and adjudicated.

Survivors who live in the 63 declared municipalities can apply for federal assistance at [www.DisasterAssistance.gov](http://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, conducting outreach and working to help survivors apply for assistance.

FEMA approved Critical Needs Assistance for disaster survivors who have immediate or critical needs because they are displaced from their primary dwelling. Immediate or critical needs are life-saving and life-sustaining items. This assistance is a one-time payment of \$700 per household. Since declaration was approved, more than 168,000 survivors applied and FEMA has awarded \$40 million as we continue to process applications.

FEMA is committed to making assistance available to all eligible applicants. The agency expanded the type of documentation needed to prove homeownership and occupancy, making it easier to apply for assistance. These include motor vehicle



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registrations, documentation from schools, federal or state benefit providers, social service organizations or court documents. Survivors with heirship properties, mobile homes or travel trailers who do not have the traditional documentation of ownership verification may also self-certify ownership.

## **Federal and partner actions to support areas affected by Hurricane Fiona**

- FEMA and other federal agencies deployed more than 1,000 employees to Puerto Rico to support the response. This is in addition to 700 staff who live and work on the island and the hundreds of trained volunteers who also deployed to assist.
- Five FEMA Incident Management Assistance 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.
- A Water Distribution Task Force with members from the federal and commonwealth government and private sector companies are coordinating water delivery to isolated communities.
- FEMA and the Puerto Rico Department of Housing (Vivienda) are developing a multi-agency Sheltering Transition Team plan to include actions for sheltering and housing resources.
- The Puerto Rico Emergency Management Bureau continues to provide support to communities and monitor commodity delivery to communities where road access may be limited.
- 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 to support 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.



- 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 900 households with emergency supplies.
- Non-profit organizations provided more than 125,000 meals and more than 60,000 pounds of other relief supplies to survivors.
- More than 590 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.
- The U.S. Department of Health and Human Services declared a Public Health Emergency and deployed an Incident Management Team and Health Incident Management Team.
- 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

- **Be aware of areas where floodwaters have receded.** Roads may have weakened and could collapse under the weight of a car.
- **Be careful when cleaning up.** Wear protective clothing, including a long-sleeved shirt, long pants, work gloves and sturdy thick-soled shoes. Do not try to remove heavy debris by yourself. Use an appropriate mask if cleaning [mold or other debris](#). People with [asthma and other lung conditions and/or immune suppression](#) should not enter buildings with indoor water leaks or mold growth that can be seen or smelled. Children should not participate in clean up.
- **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.



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- **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.



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