

# FEMA Approves Construction Funds for 17 Early Warning Systems

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**GUAYNABO, Puerto Rico** — The Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA) approved over \$41.3 million for the construction phase of the Early Warning System (EWS) for 17 dams in 12 municipalities.

This system will help identify certain conditions that may endanger dams in Puerto Rico; provide notifications to residents during weather-related scenarios; and detect developing failure modes during normal operations.

In August 2023, FEMA approved an initial EWS set in 20 dams, totaling over \$53 million in funding. All these approvals are part of a mitigation project oriented towards strengthening dam safety measures, with an award of nearly \$100 million to install EWS in 37 dams in Puerto Rico.

“The EWS is vital to the community’s safety. Through these alarm systems people will be notified in case of emergencies such as extreme floods, controlled flood releases or seismic activity, so they can take timely action to reduce disaster risks. Besides helping save lives and property, this will strengthen disaster preparedness and risk reduction in the communities located downstream of each dam,” said FEMA’s Federal Disaster Recovery Coordinator José G. Baquero.

The dams approved for this group include: Dagüey and Ajíes in Añasco; Regulador in Isabela; La Plata in Toa Alta; Las Curías in San Juan; Carraízo in Trujillo Alto; Río Blanco in Naguabo; Toa Vaca in Villalba; and Ana María 2, Ana María 5, Cerrillos, La Ponceña and Portugués in Ponce. The dams in Cidra, Comerío and Fajardo are also included.

The Puerto Rico Electric Power Authority (PREPA) is in charge of the execution of this project. The EWS systems would be installed in all the dams of the Government of Puerto Rico, which belong to PREPA, the Puerto Rico Aqueduct and Sewer Authority, and the Puerto Rico Department of Natural and Environmental Resources. Aside from these dams, there are others which are



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private or under the management of the municipality.

This project will cover the various components of each EWS such as dam instrumentation, the siren system, the GPS and controls system, evacuation route signage, flood poles and the community outreach program.

Knowing of a danger in advance is an important mitigation measure that will equip people when facing future disasters, as they will be able to familiarize with the warnings, plan ahead and identify evacuation routes.

Meanwhile, the executive director of the Central Office for Recovery, Reconstruction and Resiliency (COR3), Manuel A. Laboy Rivera, thanked FEMA for this project's approval and said that "this important work adds to the other efforts already underway by various government agencies through FEMA funds, which provide resilience to that type of infrastructure in order to safeguard people's lives in case of emergency. Our team will continue to provide the technical assistance required in this new process, which begins with the construction phase of this project."

To date, FEMA's Hazard Mitigation Grant Program (HMGP) has approved over \$2.6 billion for 112 projects that will address damage caused by Hurricane María and which will prepare the island to face future disasters.

