

**3. How many have been sent? Are more on the way?**

The Association is aware that Whitefish has also reached out to other contractors and electric utilities, but has no detailed information on the status of those efforts. Because the Association does not have personnel on the ground in Puerto Rico and has not to date been officially asked to help coordinate restoration efforts in Puerto Rico, USACE and Whitefish would be the best source for this information.

**4. What is mutual aid — how does it work? How is it invoked?**

Mutual aid is just what it sounds like — utilities helping each other in times of need. The Association, together with state and regional public power utilities and organizations, coordinates the mutual aid network for the nation’s public power utilities. More than 1,100 utilities across the country participate. Utilities that want to give and get help for power restoration after a disaster sign up for this network. The network also maintains a list of independent contractors that can be called upon when extra help is needed.

When (and even before) a major disaster hits a utility’s territory and the utility knows that its own crews and equipment won’t be enough to restore power quickly, it calls for mutual aid. It provides its best estimate of how many people it needs and what type of skills they should have. The utility also specifies equipment and material needs. Other utilities in the network respond with what they can offer.

The actual dispatch and movement of crews from different utilities is coordinated by utility and public power association personnel who volunteer as regional and national mutual aid coordinators. Such efforts require substantial logistics management. The utility that is requesting mutual aid must make arrangements to house, feed and care for the crews that come in from outside, and provide them the necessary work/safety briefings to do their jobs effectively. Requesting utilities generally send their own employees out to support visiting crews.

**5. Who pays for mutual aid?**

Typically, a public power utility requesting help pays other utilities that send help. Rates are determined through agreements that are put in place well in advance of a disaster. As units of state and local government, public power utilities are generally eligible for partial reimbursement of restoration expenses by FEMA, if all the relevant conditions and requirements are met.

In the case of Puerto Rico and the United States Virgin Islands, the federal government has declared certain categories of expenses (debris removal and emergency service restoration) 100% reimbursable from FEMA if incurred within 180 days from the declaration of a major disaster.

**6. Is the Puerto Rico situation different? Why hasn’t the Association coordinated mutual aid to assist PREPA?**

Support through the Association’s mutual aid network is initiated when the affected utility requests aid. To date, PREPA has not requested aid from the Association; rather, it has engaged Whitefish to marshal the resources required to undertake power restoration. Communications with PREPA and Whitefish have been difficult due to the telecommunications issues on the island.

**7. Why is the pace of restoration so slow?**

Again, the Association would have to refer detailed questions about the pace of restoration to USACE, Whitefish and PREPA, since they are on the ground in Puerto Rico and are much closer to the actual situation. But the situation is vastly compounded by the geography and terrain. All crews and equipment must be transported from the mainland by plane or barge. FEMA has given resources necessary to sustain life (food, water, medical supplies and personnel) first priority.

**8. What's happening in the Virgin Islands?**

Federal government crews from the DOE's Western Area Power Administration have been in USVI and are helping with the restoration effort.

The local utility, USVI Water and Power Authority, is an APPA member. USVI WAPA has requested mutual aid from the Association, to complement contract crews already engaged. The Association has worked with its mutual aid network to obtain over 40 personnel and associated equipment to go to the aid of USVI WAPA. They will commence deployment starting this weekend.

###

*The American Public Power Association is the voice of not-for-profit, community-owned utilities that power 2,000 towns and cities nationwide. We represent public power before the federal government to protect the interests of the more than 49 million people that public power utilities serve, and the 93,000 people they employ. Our association advocates and advises on electricity policy, technology, trends, training, and operations. Our members strengthen their communities by providing superior service, engaging citizens, and instilling pride in community-owned power.*



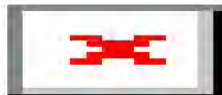
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<b>Date:</b>	2017/10/17 17:56:08
<b>Priority:</b>	Normal
<b>Type:</b>	Note

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**From:** Simoneau, Grace  
**Sent:** Tuesday, October 17, 2017 5:53 PM  
**Subject:** Media Analysis Report DR-4339-PR 10/17/17 (evening)

Please see attached for the evening Media Analysis Report for DR-4339-PR.

Maria- please distribute to all-hands.



# *Media Analysis Report*

## **Puerto Rico - Hurricanes Irma/Maria**

### **DR-4336/4339-PR**

*Tuesday, October 17, 2017, Evening Edition*

#### **News Clips Analysis / Trends:**

- English and Spanish language coverage of the tainted water issue continues, with most emphasis on the EPA; rage
- Power restoration developments in both English and Spanish generated several stories; neutral coverage except for one Weather Channel story that questions hiring of Montana firm
- Also significant coverage today of medical and business recovery issues, Spanish and English stories; neutral treatment

#### **News Clips Highlights/Summary:**

- TV station in western NY state interviews EPA chief Pruitt about unsafe drinking water in Puerto Rico; he says **FEMA**, DoD working on it.
- Other local and press coverage of the Dorado water continues
- Spanish - El Nuevo Herald reports: For the victims of Hurricane Maria, the water obtained from aquifers contaminated with toxic substances adds to the risk already represented by water contaminated with sanitary discharges and bacteria transmitted by rat urine.
- Laid-up ship from Hawaii carrier to be reactivated to haul bottled water to Puerto Rico. Horizon Sprit's owner is partnering with Lipsey Mountain Spring Water, **FEMA**'s prime contractor of bottled water, to deliver more than 15 million bottles of water to the island. Jones Act mentioned
- The New York Foundling organization in Puerto Rico reports to Catholic Charities that it is trying to keep its day care centers open and the greatest need is water.
- Spanish - The Legislature will hand over its power to Governor Ricardo Rosselló Nevares to do, as he sees fit, the promise of consolidation and reduction of agencies.
- Spanish - Price controls remain, DACO announces
- Travel + Leisure magazine examines the extent of damage and struggle to recover
- Corps of Engineers hopes to have in place by next week — more than a month after Hurricane Maria made landfall in Puerto Rico — two 25-megawatt generators at a plant in San Juan, Puerto Rico, to help stabilize electricity there. The turbines were received Oct. 13
- Spanish - General Electric Co., which built the Palo Seco Thermoelectric Plant, hired to implement an infrastructure repair plan for the cost of \$ 4.7 million in order to normalize the power the energy in the northern area.
- Weather Channel story looks at hiring of unknown Montana company for power restoration work; **FEMA** and Army Corps of Engineers have distanced themselves from PREPA's contract with the company
- Spanish - Trump said during a press conference that Puerto Rico will need to improvement on Palo Seco's infrastructure and all its electrical system to restore hurricane damage



- NY Daily News reports on the mostly empty beds on the USNS Comfort
- FDA commissioner says US is likely to see shortages on certain drugs after Hurricanes Irma and Maria knocked out power to Puerto Rico, as about 10% of drugs prescribed in the United States are manufactured here
- The Commission of Health seeks a law to facilitate satellite communication to every hospital and medical service in case of a natural disaster
- Spanish - Economic losses of between 25.000 and 50.000 dollars, countless people moving to the United States and businesses operating at half capacity, are some of the limitations of all small businesses in Puerto Rico after the hurricanes
- Medical marijuana industry here will struggle to get back on its feet
- Spanish - Artistic cancellations and cultural activities rare suspended due to the collapse of the power generator that transmits electrical energy to the Fine Arts Center in Santurce.
- Spanish - Economic officials seek incentives to merchants and industrialists who were affected by Hurricane Maria. Businesses in Old San Juan, heart of tourism industry, were hit hard
- Spanish - Meeting was held with the President of the House of Representatives and the regional administrator of EPA
- St. Louis Cardinals' catcher Yadier Molina returns to native Puerto Rico to bring relief supplies
- Jewish philanthropists organize online relief effort
- Eater magazine features Chef Andres' meal provision work; story contains a **FEMA** criticism from the celebrity chef
- In White House PSA, Melania Trump asks for aid to Puerto Rico
- Florida food distributor steps up to help Puerto Rico
- Two analyses make the case for Puerto Rico crisis exposing or worsening divide between the territory and US mainland
- The Hill has an article with comments from Jenniffer Gonzalez, based on her interview with Politico (see Page 11 today's morning edition of this report)
- Responding to White House PSA in which Melania Trump asks for aid to Puerto Rico. Newsweek writer suggests "Maybe she should tell her husband"
- **Social Media Summary:** Frustration and tensions are high today with many looking for someone to blame for slow progress. Recent videos include the wasted supplies, footage from the Sheraton in San Juan, and reports of **FEMA** employees leaving the agency to volunteer. There is hope in reports that cell service and power is gradually coming back. Recent rains continue have caused more flash flooding and landslides. People continue to express gratitude for the efforts from the National Guard, lineman and volunteers providing needed resources. The USNS Comfort continues to be of great interest to locals

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## WATER

### **Running out of options: Puerto Rican residents tap into known contaminated water sources (WENY)**

By Isabel Garcia, Anchor/Reporter

Oct 16, 2017 11:58 PM

[WENY, CBS-ABC, Horseheads, NY](#)

WASHINGTON, D.C. (WENY) -- Hundreds of people in Puerto Rico continue to tap into a water source which has been federally designated as contaminated.

"It looks like you guys are sending help, but we're buying it, we're not getting it, at all," Lucia Irrizary from Dorado, Puerto Rico says.

With no other water source to turn to, Puerto Ricans in the town of Dorado are left with one option.

They are taking water from a federally designated Superfund site. That's an area that has been designated by the Environmental Protection Agency as hazardous. But people in Dorado said the bottles of water being shipped to the Island aren't getting to them.

"All we've seen is helicopters, no bodies passed by, this is the second time in a week that truck has come by. In other places in other sections they have water we still haven't had water. We had water once. They said it was going to be one-day yes, one-day no. We still haven't had anybody. We've been here more than 6 hours, there is a lady there that fainted, a little boy fainted, we're not animals," Irrizary added.

There are several potentially contaminated wells in the area and, although the EPA spent the weekend testing them, concern from residents and officials grow around the long-term effects of drinking from it.

At EPA Headquarters in Washington D.C., Administrator Scott Pruitt is urging Puerto Ricans to drink bottled water, but it's hard to find.

"It's a very, very difficult situation," Pruitt said Monday.

Pruitt said Puerto Rico's water infrastructure wasn't in a good place prior to Hurricane Maria. When the storm hit, he said, it made it even worse. But Pruitt said he's going to continue to work with government officials on the ground to make sure residents have access to safe drinking water.

"If you're drinking from an area that is impacted or near a Superfund site that shouldn't continue. What should be the focus is making sure they have the access whether its' bottled water or otherwise we need to make sure as an agency working with DOD, working with FEMA, working with these other agencies that are responding to the situation there that they have access to safe drinking water," Pruitt added.

Over the weekend the EPA re-installed fences to re-secure the hazardous wells.

They said they're working with FEMA and local officials to ensure clean water are available to residents in the Dorado community.

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## **Pozos contaminados con sustancias químicas, otro peligro en Puerto Rico (El Nuevo Herald)**

por Eliván Martínez Mercado  
Centro de Periodismo Investigativo  
16 de octubre de 2017 12:01 PM

[El Nuevo Herald](#)

**For the victims of Hurricane Maria, the water obtained from aquifers contaminated with toxic substances adds to the risk already represented by water contaminated with sanitary discharges and bacteria transmitted by rat urine.**

Para los damnificados del huracán María, el agua que se obtiene de los acuíferos contaminados con sustancias tóxicas se suma al riesgo que ya representan el agua contaminada con descargas sanitarias y las bacterias transmitidas por el orín de rata.

“Con el desespero de que no había agua después del huracán, la gente empezó a abrir los pozos cerrados. Ante la necesidad, la gente hace lo que puede”, contó Carlos Pagán, quien vive frente a Maguayo #5, uno de los 11 pozos de esta zona cerrados porque están en un área contaminada. Para cargar sus contenedores por medio de mangueras de jardinería que han conectado al sistema, la gente entra por detrás de estas instalaciones de la Autoridad de Acueductos y Alcantarillados (AAA), por el hueco de una verja rota. No hay ningún letrero de ninguna agencia local o federal que disuada la extracción de agua en el lugar.

Desde 2016, el Dorado Groundwater Contamination Site es parte de la Lista de Prioridad Nacional, un programa de descontaminación a largo plazo financiado por el gobierno de EEUU mediante el programa conocido como superfondos. La EPA reconoce que el líquido que se extrae de este sistema de acuíferos puede representar un riesgo para la salud y el medioambiente. Ha encontrado en el agua solventes clorinados, como tetracloroetileno y tricloroetileno, usados principalmente para limpieza industrial, y que pueden causar cáncer y daños al hígado.

En una conferencia de prensa llevada a cabo este sábado en el Centro de Convenciones, el gobernador Ricardo Rosselló dijo que hubo cuestionamientos sobre la calidad de las aguas de pozos de Dorado.

“La información no es correcta. El agua sí es potable”, dijo.

Pero se refería a los puntos de extracción Santa Rosa y Nevárez, que se encuentran frente a un centro comercial de Dorado y que, según el Departamento de Salud (DS), están en cumplimiento. El DS dijo al Centro de Periodismo Investigativo (CPI) que no tenía disponibles las pruebas de calidad de agua para mostrarlas. Las declaraciones del gobernador no abordan el hecho de que hay personas usando aguas de otros cuatro pozos del [Dorado Groundwater Contamination Site](#), un ‘superfund site’, que habían sido cerrados. El CPI comprobó que estaban en uso por vecinos de la zona.

La oficina local de la EPA indicó a este medio que estos pozos son los únicos de los 18 ‘superfund sites’ alrededor de todo Puerto Rico donde han detectado consumo de agua. “Hemos visitado todos los lugares de superfondo para asegurar sus condiciones luego del huracán. En algunos había verjas y letreros que se llevaron los vientos. No todos estos pozos tienen verjas”, explicó Carmen Guerrero, directora de la EPA en Puerto Rico.

“Estamos trabajando para orientar a las comunidades, y no solo tiene que ver con los lugares de superfondos, sino que se aseguren de que el agua que toman incluso de la AAA cumpla con estándares de calidad. Y que al igual que se ha observado en ocasiones anteriores, como en la sequía de 2015, los poceros no estén expandiendo los pozos sin permiso de Departamento de Recursos Naturales”.

La oficina local de la EPA aclara así una noticia de los cuarteles generales de la agencia federal en Washington DC, que emitió un comunicado el 11 de octubre, indicando que los damnificados en Puerto Rico estaban llevando a cabo esta práctica, sin indicar en cuáles de las 18 zonas



contaminadas. “La EPA hace una advertencia contra la manipulación de los pozos sellados y con candado, o beber de esos pozos, pues puede ser peligroso para la salud de las personas”, indica la comunicación.

“Como esto es un pozo de acueductos, el agua se ve más clarita”, opinó Jorge Vázquez, quien había llegado desde el vecino municipio de Toa Alta a llenar contenedores plásticos de cinco galones, sin saber que estaba tomando del Maguayo #2, uno de los pozos del ‘superfund site’ de Dorado. Después del huracán, se había abastecido de aguas de manantial en su pueblo. Ante la alerta de posibles brotes de leptospirosis, la bacteria que transmiten animales como la rata, y de que el agua podía estar contaminada con coliformes fecales, acudió a este lugar.

“Como no hay agua en otro lado, esto es ‘tómalo o déjalo’. La estoy usando para el fregado y para cocinar”. Vázquez era uno de los muchos vecinos que hacían fila para entrar al lugar mientras había tres funcionarios de la AAA en las inmediaciones. Durante la visita, estos no impidieron el paso a los damnificados ni les informaron que se encontraban un ‘superfund site’.

Los pozos de la AAA se conectan a acuíferos, reservas subterráneas de agua que ahora tienen secciones contaminadas por desperdicios industriales.

Tras el paso del huracán el pasado 20 de septiembre, la falta de acceso a agua ha exacerbado la crisis humanitaria. Este sábado 14 de octubre, el 40 por ciento de los clientes de la AAA no tenían acceso a agua potable, según el gobierno. Uno de los problemas de la agencia es la falta de electricidad para energizar su sistemas de bombas. La administración de Ricardo Rosselló ha advertido sobre la posibilidad de patógenos en el agua potable, y desalentó la práctica de que la ciudadanía beba agua de ríos y manantiales. Hasta el momento han muerto cuatro personas que se sospecha fueron afectados por leptospirosis, y hay otros seis casos en vigilancia.

En una esquina del parque de pelota del barrio de Maguayo, Carlos López indica que ya ha comenzado a llegar el agua al barrio. Durante los primeros cinco días tras el paso del huracán, cuando del grifo de su casa no salía ni gota, consiguió una guagua pick up, le puso una cisterna y empezó a llenarla en pozo Maguayo #6 para luego irse a repartir por el pueblo. Fue luego cuando se enteró de que podía estar contaminada. La verja del lugar estaba tumbada, en señal de que había sido forzada. “Eso está abierto. De ahí ha estado sacando el agua todo el mundo”.

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## **Llevar agua potable a Maguayo (Primera Hora)**

Por Melisa Ortega Marrero / 10/16/2017 |07:18 p.m.

### **Primera Hora**

### **Bringing safe water to Dorado, where people were tapping into water from an EPA Superfund site**

Un contingente federal distribuiría 10 paletas con paquetes de botellas de agua y 30 toldos.

Dorado.- Aunque debía estar clausurado, en el pozo #2 del barrio Aguayo aún hay rastros de las personas que acudieron allí para coleccionar agua e, incluso, bañarse.

El problema descansa en que el agua de este pozo de la Autoridad de Acueductos y Alcantarillados (AAA) proviene de un acuífero del Dorado Groundwater Contamination Site, enumerado en la Lista de Prioridad Nacional de la Agencia federal de Protección Ambiental (EPA, por sus siglas en inglés).

Tras la destrucción provocada por el huracán María y la falta de servicio de agua potable en el País, ciudadanos vieron, en estas tomas clausuradas de la comunidad de Maguayo, una alternativa para suplirse del indispensable líquido. Muchos ajenos, tal vez, a la peligrosidad de su consumo.

“En esa zona que hay un acuífero, hay unos pozos de la AAA que se ha encontrado que algunos tienen altos niveles de compuestos orgánicos volátiles y eso puede ser muchas cosas: solventes,



derivados de la gasolina, residuos de proceso industriales, por ejemplo”, explicó la directora de la EPA en Puerto Rico, Carmen Guerrero.

Luego de que trascendiera en medios periodísticos el acceso de damnificados al acuífero potencialmente contaminado, los pozos de esta comunidad fueron colocados hoy bajo vigilancia de una empresa privada, observó este diario. La verja que rodea el pozo #2 había sido forzada y, en el suelo, fueron abandonados pedazos de mangueras, envases plásticos, un jabón y una toalla.

En septiembre de 2016, el Dorado Groundwater Contamination Site fue colocado en la lista de atención prioritaria de la EPA. Previo a su inclusión, la agencia federal había informado que el muestreo realizado detectó niveles elevados de tetracloroetileno y tricloroetileno, solventes utilizados en procesos industriales.

Sin embargo, Guerrero aclaró que no todos los pozos de ese municipio suplen agua que incumple con los estándares de calidad, pero sí deben ser monitoreados con frecuencia a modo de prevención.

Por ejemplo, el pozo de Santa Rosa recibió el aval del Departamento de Salud, y los muestreos realizados allí por la AAA durante el fin de semana arrojaron resultados favorables, precisó Guerrero. La EPA realizó sus propios análisis, pero los resultados no estarán disponibles hasta el viernes, señaló.

“Los pozos que hoy día exceden los estándares de calidad, según los estudios de Salud, la EPA y la AAA están cerrados, y la gente no deberían estar accediendo a ellos. No debería haber ningún tipo de maquinaria para manejarlos”, puntualizó la directora de la EPA a nivel local, al advertir sobre los daños a la salud que puede provocar el consumo prologado de fluidos contaminados.

#### Advertencia federal

Hoy, funcionarios federales llegaron hasta el pozo #6 de Maguayo precisamente para distribuir agua embotellada.

Elizabeth Brownditch, del Negociado federal de Investigaciones (FBI, por sus siglas en inglés), explicó que la misión del grupo era suplir agua a las personas que residen cerca de los pozos #2, #4 y #6 de Maguayo y “correr la voz de que el agua que sale de ellos está contaminada”.

El contingente federal distribuiría 10 paletas con paquetes de botellas de agua y 30 toldos, abundó Brownditch.

Pese a las expresiones de la directora de la EPA en Puerto Rico y de la empleada del FBI, el secretario de Estado, Luis Rivera Marín, alegó que el agua que sale de los pozos clausurados en Maguayo provienen del Superacueducto.

“Estos pozos no están energizados. No están energizados y no están extrayendo agua de aquí. Aquí la presión que hay es del Superacueducto. Así que las muestras que se puedan estar cogiendo de aquí, lo que están cogiendo son muestras de agua del Superacueducto. Pero más allá de lo que me puedan decir, quise venir y ver las conexiones (de donde extraían el líquido)”, expresó al secretario, quien negó la información sobre agua contaminada en Maguayo.

El funcionario arribó, sin previo anuncio, a los predios del pozo #6 mientras las autoridades federales distribuían la asistencia.

“Nosotros no tenemos que ver nada con toda esa gente que acaba de llegar”, se le escuchó decir a uno de los integrantes del grupo federal.

Este medio realizó llamadas tanto al presidente de la AAA, Elí Díaz Atienza, como a su portavoz de prensa, Leticia Jover. Sin embargo, al cierre de esta edición no fue concedida la reacción solicitada.

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**Pasha to use laid-up ship to deliver water to Puerto Rico (JOC.com)**

Joseph Bonney, Senior Editor



Oct 17, 2017 11:38AM EDT

[JOC.com \(Journal of Commerce\)](#)

Pasha Hawaii is pulling a 37-year-old ship out of layup to move 800 containers filled with bottled water for hurricane relief in Puerto Rico, where political arguments over Jones Act's US-flag shipping requirements have flared since Hurricane Maria.

The Horizon Spirit will be loaded at Long Beach and will transit the Panama Canal en route to Puerto Rico by the end of October. The vessel will be available for additional Puerto Rico relief service afterward, Pasha said.

The carrier said it is partnering with Lipsey Mountain Spring Water, the **Federal Emergency Management Agency's** prime contractor of bottled water, to deliver more than 15 million bottles of water to the island.

The Horizon Spirit is one of several old steam-powered vessels that Pasha acquired when it took over Horizon Lines' US West Coast-Hawaii service after Horizon was broken up at the end of 2015. Pasha is building two liquefied natural gas-powered ships to replace its older vessels.

Puerto Rico's humanitarian crisis after Maria sparked renewed criticism of the Jones Act, the 1920 cabotage law that requires US domestic shipments to move in US-flag vessels built, owned, and crewed by American citizens.

President Donald Trump granted a temporary waiver of the law, allowing non-US-flag ships to carry cargo between the US mainland and Puerto Rico, but the waiver [was allowed to expire](#) after 10 days. The Jones Act does not prohibit non-US-flag ships from serving US ports from other countries.

Jones Act critics claimed US-flag restrictions on domestic shipments were delaying delivery of aid. The act's supporters said Jones Act carriers Crowley Maritime, TOTE, and Trailer Bridge began funneling cargo to San Juan as soon as the port was reopened. They said delivery problems were due to disrupted inland distribution, not vessel supply, and that cargo delivered by Jones Act ships was piling up at the Port of San Juan.

[Crowley has added six vessels, and Trailer Bridge has deployed](#) an additional barge to its Jacksonville-San Juan service. Crowley said that through last week it had delivered more than 6,500 loads of FEMA and commercial cargo from 20 vessels, and that it expected nine vessels carrying 2,500 to 3,000 loads to arrive in Puerto Rico this week.

Republican Sens. John McCain of Arizona and Mike Lee of Utah have introduced a bill to repeal the Jones Act, but the effort faces long odds. Republicans and Democrats at a House Transportation and Infrastructure subcommittee hearing Oct. 3 [expressed unanimous support](#) of the law.

Industry representatives told the subcommittee that loosening the Jones Act would undermine US shipbuilders and would not help Puerto Rico because international carriers would likely serve the island's small trade by transshipment and would ignore the money-losing northbound backhaul that US-flag lines now serve.

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## RESPONSE and RECOVERY

### Legislatura cede su poder para reducir las agencias de gobierno (Primera Hora)

Bárbara J. Figueroa Rosa

10/17/2017 |00:00 a.m.

[Primera Hora](#)

## **The Legislature will hand over its power to Governor Ricardo Rosselló Nevares to do, as he sees fit, the promise of consolidation and reduction of agencies.**

La Asamblea Legislativa le cederá su poder al gobernador Ricardo Rosselló Nevares para que haga, como mejor le parezca, la prometida consolidación y reducción de agencias.

El proyecto de administración a esos fines se presentaría hoy en ambos cuerpos cuando arranca la sesión legislativa interrumpida por el paso del huracán María.

El gobernador hizo el anuncio ayer en una mesa redonda con periodistas, pero pidió embargo hasta que se presentara la medida de la que no se le dio copia a la prensa.

Según detalló el mandatario, la idea de ceder la facultad de hacer cambios en las agencias provino del presidente senatorial Thomas Rivera Schatz como una medida para agilizar el proceso y no se negoció ni se pidió nada a cambio.

“Va a ser una ley que va a facultar al gobernador, que le hace una delegación de poderes al gobernador para que mediante orden ejecutiva haga los cambios a la rama ejecutiva... hasta tanto y en cuanto en algún momento en el futuro, cuando digamos que pase el tiempo en que esta ley tenga vigencia, se haga otro cambio o algún otro ejecutivo haga otro cambio”, dijo Rosselló Nevares.

De esta manera cumple con su plan de reducir el tamaño del gobierno de 131 agencias que existen actualmente a entre 35 a 40 como máximo. A su juicio lo que cambia es “el mecanismo para hacerlo de manera más eficiente dentro de la emergencia”.

“El objetivo siempre fue ir rompiendo (sic) lo que eran los programas del gobierno, de los distintos servicios que se daban y preguntarnos cuáles eran duplicados para integrarlos, cuáles de esos servicios se podían externalizar, cuáles no eran necesarios (e) incluir alguno que fuera necesario de cara al futuro”, declaró.

El proyecto dispondrá que un total de 15 agencias no se pueden modificar ya sea por disposición constitucional o porque cuentan con autonomía propia o son entes fiscalizadores.

Las agencias que están protegidas por la Constitución son los departamentos de Estado, Justicia, Hacienda, Educación, Trabajo, Transportación y Obras Públicas, Desarrollo Económico, Salud y Agricultura.

Las otras que no se cambiarán son el Panel del Fiscal Especial Independiente, la Oficina del Contralor, la Oficina de Ética Gubernamental, la Comisión Estatal de Elecciones, la Oficina del Contralor Electoral y la Universidad de Puerto Rico.

Adicional a esas, tampoco se harán cambios en las corporaciones públicas que ya tienen un Plan Fiscal aprobado o están acogidas al Capítulo III de Quiebras dentro de la Ley federal Promesa, ya que esas tienen encaminados sus procesos de reconstrucción, dijo el gobernador.

Todas las procuradurías estarán bajo evaluación y Rosselló Nevares no descartó que se consoliden sus respectivas funciones con las de otras agencias.

Mientras, los proyectos que estaban bajo consideración de la legislatura -como la consolidación del Departamento de la Familia y el de Seguridad Pública- se dejan sin efecto para que los cambios se hagan mediante orden ejecutiva. De hecho, el único estimado de ahorros con los ajustes en las agencias es el de unos \$50 millones que ya se había difundido con esos dos proyectos de ley.

Ramón Rosario, secretario de Asuntos Públicos de La Fortaleza, dijo que la idea es que se reduzcan gastos, se mantengan los servicios públicos, a la vez que se promueve la economía.

El funcionario aseguró, además, que no se afectarán programas que reciban fondos federales y que tampoco implica el despido de empleados públicos.

Mientras, Rosselló Nevares indicó que habrá programas que se deleguen a Alianzas Público Privadas, pero no adelantó cuáles serían más allá de lo que anunció en conferencia separada relacionado a la generación de energía eléctrica y de transportación marítima.

### **Proyecto de emergencia**



Por otro lado, Rosselló Nevares también presentará hoy otro proyecto de administración de respuesta en caso de emergencia

La medida incluirá muchas de las órdenes ejecutivas que el mandatario aprobó desde el paso del Huracán María para que se activen de forma inmediata en caso de que ocurra una nueva catástrofe incluyendo la activación de un comité de respuesta preestablecido con anticipación.

“La idea de todo esto... (es) coger todas las lecciones aprendidas, todas las órdenes ejecutivas y lo que habíamos visto sobre este proceso y aprender de estas mejores prácticas que se implementaron, como en Katrina, y hacer una ley de emergencia para que, en caso de que esto vuelva a ocurrir, tengamos una hoja de ruta para ejecutar”, declaró el gobernador.

Del mismo modo, la ley incluiría cancelación de convenios colectivos durante el periodo de emergencia, la flexibilización de compras gubernamentales y se extendería seis meses el periodo para poder tomar vacaciones.

“Algunas veces los convenios tienen horarios establecidos, tienen funciones establecidas y en la emergencia todo el mundo tiene que hacer de todo y esas regulaciones, incluso la paga adicional y el pago por hora o compensatorio, dejarlo sin efecto... sería en favor del trabajador y del servicio”, dijo Rosario.

La medida, cuyo texto tampoco se distribuyó, establecería un cuerpo de auditores que velen por la entrega adecuada de suministros.

También se le exigiría a los hospitales, égidas y otras instituciones que tengan un plan de contingencia listo que incluya por obligación equipos de generación de energía y sus respectivas reservas de combustible por hasta siete días para que no haya que hacerles entrega cada dos días, como sucede ahora.

En términos de contribuciones se autorizaría al secretario de Hacienda a establecer cambios temporeros en los códigos, tales como eliminar o reducir tasas de intereses o penalidades en el retiro de cuentas IRA “para fomentar la recuperación de los individuos”, según explicó el mandatario.

En el área de telecomunicaciones se dispondrá que un funcionario podrá entrar a cualquier lugar privado para reparar una línea que esté rota y se le releva la responsabilidad.

Rosselló Nevares dijo que se establecerá una reciprocidad en servicios de salud con quienes ayuden en la emergencia y se facilitará la entrada de cuerpos de paz, entre otras medidas.

El primer ejecutivo enfatizó que busca tener listas las medidas “de antemano”.

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## **DACO asegura que no eliminará órdenes de congelación de precios (Metro PR)**

lunes 16, octubre 2017 18:09

[Metro Puerto Rico](#)

**Because the island remains in a state of emergency, the DACO secretary assured that he maintains control of the prices of basic necessities that prohibit an increase in the profit margins**

El secretario del Departamento de Asuntos del Consumidor (DACO), Michael Pierluisi Rojo, aseguró hoy que no levantará las órdenes que congelan los precios de artículos de primera necesidad y las que prohíben un aumento en los márgenes de ganancia, ya que la isla continúa en emergencia.

Pierluisi explicó en una comunicación escrita que reconoce que los comercios se encuentran operando con más gastos operacionales como gasto de diésel, seguridad y mayor personal, entre otros elementos, que y se les hace más difícil operar. “Pero el comerciante no puede olvidar que muchos consumidores perdieron su trabajo, su carro y hasta su casa”, sentenció.

Además, aseguró que DACO es flexible con el cumplimiento de las reglas porque está comprometido con la reactivación de la economía, mientras no se trate de las órdenes de emergencia,



como las de congelación de precios de artículos de primera necesidad y de márgenes de ganancias de gasolina, diésel y gas licuado.

"Hemos otorgado solicitudes de aumento de precio cuando el costo de adquisición aumenta para importar a Puerto Rico productos que escasean como agua y hielo, entre otras cosas. Eso ha estado claro desde un principio", explicó Pierluisi.

"En todo momento he resaltado el compromiso del sector comercial que cumple con su deber. Pero les recuerdo que en este momento hay un deber social que va por encima de muchas cosas. He visto a muchos tener ese fin en su conciencia porque me lo han dicho los propios consumidores durante mis visitas a los comercios", expresó Pierluisi.

Ayer el vicepresidente de la Cámara de Mercadeo, Industria y Distribución de Alimentos (MIDA), Manuel Reyes, declaró a Metro que los comerciantes han experimentado un alza en sus costos debido al diésel, piezas para las plantas eléctricas y personal de seguridad adicional.

Este exhortó a los comerciantes que respeten la congelación de precios de artículos de primera necesidad y agregó que el Gobierno deberá evaluar si se mantiene vigente por más tiempo.

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## **Latest in Puerto Rico Recovery: No Water, No Power & Trailers Stuck at the Port (Catholic Charities of New York)**

Posted on October 17, 2017

By Alice Kenny

[Catholic Charities of New York/New York Foundling](#)

**First-Hand from New York Foundling in Puerto Rico**

Check out this just-updated Puerto Rico hurricane recovery report from New York Foundling, a Catholic Charities affiliate that typically cares for nearly 1,500 children at more than 42 Head Start programs throughout island.

By Carmen Jirau-Rivera

Chief Program Officer

The New York Foundling

It's dire out there. Our island is still very much in need of assistance. Hurricane Maria blew off daycare center roofs, broke windows, and tore out air conditioners, leaving our sites surrounded by downed trees and power lines, water-sodden walls, branches inside classrooms and classroom equipment and supplies that need to be replaced.

We had to clean and decontaminate the premises in order to resume services in as many of our daycare centers as possible because children we serve are hungry and parents are in need of respite and need to return to work themselves.

We are literally operating without power, with little water and food supplies are limited. So far, we reopened 17 of our 42 daycare centers in the municipalities we serve.

We are so appreciative to Msgr. Sullivan at Catholic Charities for the \$25,000 check he gave us last week on behalf of Catholic Charities NY and to Caritas, Catholic Charities' sister agency in Puerto Rico, for the \$20,000 they gave us to provide vouchers for the families and to secure food for the centers.

Our center staff has initiated the cleanup necessary to resume services, and we relied on our local contractors to remove debris and ensure entrances and playground areas for the children are safe. Our staff, 37 of whom lost their own homes or sustained such damage that they had to vacate, have returned to work and engaged in the tasks necessary to clean and decontaminate centers to ensure the centers comply with and adhere to the health and safety regulations.

We open our centers between 7 and 8 a.m. and keep them open until noon to provide each child with breakfast and lunch, and a much needed sense of normalcy during this time of upheaval in the



lives. We ask our parents to stay so we may provide them with a light meal as well and much needed respite.

Our nutritionists are running around the island to secure food supplies. This means they have to keep refueling and waiting on line. Thankfully, the lines for fuel have decreased.

But waiting for food can take a full day and not every vendor has an ample supply of food. Our nutritionists have to wait hours in their cars just to get into food distribution sites' parking lot. Then, for crowd control, they have to wait in lines to get into the stores. Inside, the food supply is limited.

There is almost no access to fresh fruit and meat, just carrots, peppers and some dried food. We cook everything we get and deliver it to our daycare sites. We know there are these huge trailers sitting at the port yet supplies are not getting into supermarkets fast enough.

Nowhere on the island do our daycare sites have power, not even at our main office. Some of our centers have gas and they are able to cook a simple hot meal.

We keep our daycare sites open until noon because by then it becomes unbearably hot and the children and staff can't stand it.

The most pressing need, however, is water. We have running water in our centers but supplies are so low we're running out. We use all the gallons of water we have to flush toilets. We met with businesses to see if we can get water and have it delivered straight to our central office so our staff can disseminate water to our daycare centers.

Without water we'll have to shut down.

Thanks to our partner and affiliate, New York Foundling, along with our sister agency, Caritas Puerto, Catholic Charities NY is on the ground, helping Puerto Rico rebuild and is serving as a conduit for donations for Puerto Rico Relief and Recovery efforts.

Help us help Puerto Rico recover.

Donate by Mail: Make checks payable to "Catholic Charities/Estoy Con Puerto Rico" and address to:

Catholic Charities/Estoy Con Puerto Rico, 1011 First Avenue, 11th floor, New York, NY 10022

Donate Online: Visit [Catholiccharitiesny.org/helppuertorico](http://Catholiccharitiesny.org/helppuertorico)

On the web form, type "Estoy con Puerto Rico" in the text field below "Optional: Designate Your Contribution"

Learn more about our recent disaster relief efforts: [Catholiccharitiesny.org/disasterrelief](http://Catholiccharitiesny.org/disasterrelief)

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## **Puerto Ricans Are Still Without Food, Water, and Power One Month After Hurricane Maria (Travel + Leisure)**

By Isis Briones

October 16, 2017

[Travel + Leisure](#)

Puerto Rico was hit by [Hurricane Maria](#) nearly a month ago, but [recovery from the Category 5 storm](#) is just beginning.

"People are dying in this country," San Juan Mayor, Carmen Yulín Cruz Soto, [pointed out](#) on September 30 — prior to President Trump's [visit two weeks after](#) the disaster. "I am begging, begging anyone that can hear us, to save us from dying. If anybody out there is listening to us, we are dying, and you are killing us with the inefficiency and the bureaucracy."

There's no food and no water

[According to a news release](#) published by the Environmental Protection Agency (EPA), water safety in Puerto Rico is critical. All water, whether it's being used for drinking, bathing, or brushing teeth, must still be boiled before use, as livestock waste, human sewage, and chemicals may have contaminated all major water supplies.



And many Puerto Ricans are relying on rations for food. Manuel Reyes, the vice president of Puerto Rico's chamber of marketing, industry, and distribution of food [told a local CNN affiliate](#) that "resupplying [the food supply chain will] take some time."

Until then, many grocery store shelves will remain barren.

Everyone's living without power

Hurricane Maria [knocked out all of Puerto Rico's electric grid](#) — and since then, not much has changed. Puerto Rico Governor Ricardo Rosselló announced on Sunday, October 15 that he plans to [restore power to 95 percent of the island](#) by December 15.

"This is an aggressive agenda, but we cannot be sort of passive in the face of Puerto Rico's challenges," Rosselló told CNN. "We are going to need all hands on deck."

Some estimates suggest Puerto Ricans may still be without power [in five or six months](#).

Generators are running on empty

According to [Vox](#), leaving the island is almost impossible, with some airlines reporting waiting lists of more than 20,000 people. In most areas, private generators are the only power source, but fuel shortages mean they may not be running for much longer.

Even hospitals are affected. No generators mean patients with life sustaining devices like dialysis machines won't be able to get the treatment they need. Miami-born performer, Pitbull, was so moved by the situation that he recently lent his private jet to to Puerto Rico to help [evacuate Puerto Rican cancer patients](#) to Fort Lauderdale, so they can resume treatment.

People can't communicate

The restoration of cell service continues to be a slow process. On October 6, the [FCC reported](#) that 83 percent of Puerto Rico's cell sites are still not working. "It is critical that we adopt a coordinated and comprehensive approach to support the rebuilding of communications infrastructure and restoration of communications services," said U.S. Federal Communications Commission (FCC) Chairman, Ajit Pai, when he announced his plan to create a [Hurricane Recovery Task Force](#).

Google's parent company, Alphabet, also has a plan to [bring back service through giant floating balloons](#). Called "[Project Loon](#)," the experimental effort will supposedly provide a network to the 3.4 million residents stranded in the area. The balloons are able to remain airborne for 100 days or more. It's unclear exactly when the devices will arrive at the Caribbean island, but the [FCC allowed](#) Alphabet to drop 30 of them on October 7.

But people are coming together

On Saturday, October 14, celebrities including Jennifer Lopez, Demi Lovato, Gwen Stefani, and others came together for the One Voice: Somos Live, a [hurricane relief concert](#) that raised \$20 million. Even more impressive, a junior college student at Carnegie Mellon University [crowdfunded more than \\$82,000](#) to fill up a plane with supplies and deliver it to Puerto Ricans in need.

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## **POWER / INFRASTRUCTURE / COMMUNICATIONS**

### **Puerto Rico Takes Steps to Boost Electric Power by Next Week (NBC News)**

by Suzanne Gamboa

Oct. 17, 2017

[NBC News](#)

WASHINGTON — The Army Corps of Engineers hopes to have in place by next week — more than a month after Hurricane Maria made landfall in Puerto Rico — two 25-megawatt generators at a plant in San Juan, Puerto Rico, to help stabilize electricity there.



The turbines were received Oct. 13, and the Army Corps wants the generators to be operational by Oct. 25, spokeswoman Catalina Carrasco said Tuesday.

Carrasco said preparations to install the turbines at the Palo Seco Power Plant in San Juan were slowed by the continuous rains that Puerto Rico has been having. Once installed they will allow for customers to have consistent power while repairs are made.

The generators should boost the share of customers with power from the grid from 13.7 percent to 30 percent, Fernando Padilla, project manager for the Corps [told](#) El Nuevo Día newspaper in Puerto Rico. The hope is to also make it more stable.

Wednesday will mark one month since the hurricane began charging through the island, causing massive devastation to the island's power grid and infrastructure. As of Tuesday, 17.7 percent of the island's electric utility customers had power from the grid, though it's still not reliable. Others in Puerto Rico, though not all, have power through diesel-fueled generators, but only as long as the diesel lasts.

Officials want to provide stable power to hospitals and water and wastewater treatment plants in the northern part of San Juan and then connect lines in the southern part of the capital. The Corps [told El Nuevo Día](#) it also is important to get power to pharmaceutical companies on the island because they are a key part of its economy.

The Corps awarded a \$35.1 million contract to [Weston Solutions](#) based in West Chester, Pennsylvania, for the work.

Also, the Corps awarded a \$240 million limited competition contract to [Fluor Corp.](#) based in Irving, Texas. The company will provide personnel, technical expertise and equipment for work on the transmission and distribution lines. According to the company's website, it previously built a coal-fired power plant in Guayama, Puerto Rico, that provided power to 9 percent of the island's electrical capacity.

Puerto Rico Gov. Ricardo Rosselló has set a goal of re-establishing electricity to 30 percent of the island by the end of the month and 95 percent by Dec. 15.

Carrasco said that as of Tuesday, the Corps has received \$577 million from the **Federal Emergency Management Agency** for power restoration, and that the figure is likely to rise.

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## **Gobierno reparará la Central Palo Seco ( Metro PR )**

Cybernews

martes 17 de octubre del 2017

11:37 10/17/2017 |3:50 p.m.

[Metro PR](#)

**General Electric Co., which built the Palo Seco Thermoelectric Plant, hired to implement an infrastructure repair plan for the cost of \$ 4.7 million in order to normalize the power the energy in the northern area.**

El secretario de Asuntos Públicos de Fortaleza, Ramón Rosario confirmó el martes la contratación de la compañía General Electric (GE), que construyó la Central Termoeléctrica Palo Seco, para implantar un plan de reparación de esa instalación a un costo de 4.7 millones de dólares para así poder normalizar la generación de energía en el área norte.

“Mientras General Electric hace las reparaciones y la planta se puede prender, lo vamos a hacer. Nosotros queremos funcionar con normalidad, la presión la recibimos nosotros. Nosotros queremos ya generación en el norte”, dijo Rosario en un aparte con algunos medios al concluir una conferencia de prensa.

Incuso, el funcionario aseguró que “ya General Electric estará trabajando en esa reparación”.



Esto, a pesar que la semana pasada, el director ejecutivo de la Autoridad de Energía Eléctrica (AEE), Ricardo Ramos rechazó tajantemente la recoendación de la Unión de Trabajadores de la Industria Eléctrica y Riego (UTIER) de encender las unidades uno y tres de Palo Seco para aumetar la generación de electricidad en el norte. Alegó que un informe de una firma de ingenieros establece que esa planta tiene daños estructurales y que las vigas que soportan las calderas están corroídas, lo que supone un riesgo para los empleados.

El secretario de Asuntos Públicos detalló que el contrato a GE se otorgó a principios de esta semana y que se estuvo negociando desde que salió el informe sobre el estado de la planta antes del impacto de María. Además, dijo que el monto inicial del contrato era de 7 millones de dólares, pero que la cifra luego se redujo a 4.7 millones.

“General Electric es la empresa que hizo la planta (Palo Seco). Ciertamente esto va a coger un tiempo. Antes de eso vamos a tener soluciones. Antes de que Palo Seco esté estructuralmente apta para ser encendida, vamos a tener soluciones”, aseguró.

Rosario dijo que el martes el por ciento de generación es de 17.7. Aclaró que se mantiene la meta del gobernador, Ricardo Rosselló de lograr que el 15 de diciembre el 95 por ciento de los clientes de la AEE tengan energía.

Indicó que al 30 de octubre se debe haber mejorado la generación de electricidad en un 30 por ciento con la interconexión de las plantas generatrices del sur y las del norte y con la instalación de los generadores que el Cuerpo de Ingenieros del Ejército de Estados Unidos gestionó para la Central Palo Seco.

El Cuerpo de Ingenieros ha desembolsado 115 millones de dólares en equipos y 35.1 millones para la contratación de Weston Solutions para los generadores de Palo Seco. También se contrató la empresa Whitefish y el lunes se anunció la contratación de Fluor Corporation por 240 millones de dólares para la reparación de sistemas de transmisión y distribución. Esperan llegar a 966 brigadas de aquí a tres semanas.

Otros detalles sobre el estado de la recuperación del país tras el impacto del huracán María, están disponibles en el portal [estatus.pr](http://estatus.pr).

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## **Puerto Rico Turns to Unproven Montana Company for Massive Power Restoration Job, But No One Knows Why (Weather Channel)**

By Marcus Stern

Oct. 17

[weather.com](http://weather.com)

At a Glance

Power restoration in Puerto Rico has been slow, raising concerns whether Whitefish – the company hired outside the usual channels for the job – is up to the task.

Why did Whitefish, a two-year old private company with few resources of its own, win the contract? **FEMA and the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers are at a loss to explain.**

Facing the destruction of almost its entire electrical grid after Hurricane Maria, Puerto Rico turned to a little-known Montana company to restore power rather than rely on a vast network of public power companies that usually comes to the rescue after disasters.

Overall, progress has been slow and uneven, stoking concerns about whether the unproven company is up to the task – and raising questions about the irregular way in which the territorial government awarded the contract. Ordinarily, the **Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA)** provides money and the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers oversees federally led recovery efforts after a disaster. Neither agency said it had a role in awarding or supervising the contract Puerto Rico awarded to restore its power lines.



Concerns eased Monday after FEMA and the Army Corps belatedly announced a \$240 million contract with Irving, Texas-based Fluor Corporation to take the lead in restoring transmission and distribution lines. But head-scratching continues over the curious and opaque manner in which heavily indebted Puerto Rico eclipsed FEMA, the Army Corps and a national network of public utilities – brimming with line workers and bucket trucks – by turning over such an immense responsibility to a two-year-old private company with few resources of its own.

Typically, immediately after a disaster, the American Public Power Association – a public utilities trade group – emceeds a conference call with its membership – 1,100 public utilities across the country – to get all the needed line workers and bucket trucks to the stricken area as soon as possible under what are called mutual aid agreements. For instance, the public power association facilitated the rapid deployment of many thousands of workers and their equipment to Texas and Florida after hurricanes Harvey and Irma struck.

But the Puerto Rico Electrical Power Authority (PREPA) took a different route after Maria's 155 mph winds decimated the island's already-failing electrical grid on Sept. 20, leaving 3.4 million residents, hospitals and businesses without electricity – possibly for months.

When the power association convened its conference shortly after Maria struck, PREPA told participants it wouldn't need the network's help because it had already contracted with Whitefish Energy Holdings LLC, a two-year-old consultancy, to spearhead the restoration efforts.

Whitefish, having to subcontract almost all of the work, had recruited and deployed 160 of the 1,000 workers needed to do the job – 16 percent – three weeks after Maria struck. By then, coincidentally, 16 percent of the power grid has been restored. Last week, the effort saw reversals when a large number of people whose power had been restored lost it again when a transmission line tripped.

"It's a bit unclear why PREPA chose to go down that route, especially considering the offer was made to them for this mutual aid from the American Public Power Association that apparently wasn't taken advantage of," said Cathy Kunkel, an energy analyst with the Institute for Energy Economics and Financial Analysis, a non-profit that focuses on utility issues.

It might have been "reasonable" to try to act quickly given the devastation caused by Maria, she said. However, she urged a federally appointed board overseeing Puerto Rico's finances to obtain "a copy of that contract and do oversight on how that money was spent" to ensure that local ratepayers and U.S. taxpayers aren't getting "ripped off."

The slow progress and questions surrounding the contract led the public power association to confirm Monday that Puerto Rico bypassed its vast resources by awarding the contract to Whitefish.

"To date, PREPA has not requested aid from the Association; rather, it has engaged Whitefish to marshal the resources required to undertake power restoration," the power authority stated. "Communications with PREPA and Whitefish have been difficult due to the telecommunications issues on the island."

The contract was reportedly awarded through a phone call placed in the days immediately after Maria hit. A PREPA employee who happened to have a satellite phone and phone number for Whitefish made the call, according [a story published by E&E News](#), an independent news organization that focuses on energy and environmental issues.

The employee had the phone number for Whitefish because PREPA had issued a request for proposals several days earlier to handle far-less-extensive damage caused by Hurricane Irma. It had grazed Puerto Rico two weeks earlier. Whitefish was one of only two companies to respond to the request, and so its phone number was handy after the power grid went dark because of Maria. But the timing left PREPA almost no time to vet the company.

The E&E article was based on an interview with Ricardo Ramos, PREPA's CEO, who told the publication, "The day that the Corps of Engineers showed up and offered the assistance, we



immediately accepted because we knew that financially it was a better model. The benefit is that I don't have to spend the remaining dollars that are needed for recuperating the system."

The Army Corps denied any role whatsoever in the awarding or execution of the Whitefish contract.

Andrew Techmanski, who founded Whitefish in May 2015, [told Bloomberg News](#) in Puerto Rico that while other power companies were "afraid of the question of how are we going to get paid, Whitefish Energy was the company that actually made the leap of faith and was able to get over here."

But PREPA spokesman Carlos Monroig Aceveda told [weather.com](#) that it had paid Whitefish "\$2 million for the costs of mobilizing personnel and equipment," adding that its contracts "are evaluated and awarded by the U.S. Corps of Engineers in coordination with **FEMA**, which disburses the money."

His statement that the Corps was supervising didn't square with what Catalina Carrasco of the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers told [weather.com](#). She said the Corps "does not have any involvement with the contract between PREPA and Whitefish, adding in an email that the Corps "does not know how PREPA negotiated the contract. USACE does not know how PREPA is paying Whitefish. The contract is between PREPA and Whitefish. Corps of Engineers, did not negotiate, does not have ANY involvement between PREPA and Whitefish." The emphasis was in the email.

William Douglass, a spokesperson for **FEMA**, said the agency's databases do not show any dealings with Whitefish, although he added that **FEMA** gives money to agencies like PREPA and those agencies sometimes give some money to a third party like Whitefish without **FEMA** necessarily knowing.

Both **FEMA** and the Army Corps of Engineers have distanced themselves from PREPA's contract with Whitefish. But **FEMA** has given PREPA \$97 million to restore the power lines and PREPA could have used some of that money to pay Whitefish. **FEMA** announced Monday it was approving an additional \$128 million for PREPA.

PREPA itself is bankrupt, \$9 billion in debt and currently generating no revenue. Even before hurricanes Irma and Maria struck, the island was experiencing frequent blackouts because of its aging power infrastructure. PREPA has existed for decades on financial vapors, resulting in critical maintenance being deferred and significant deterioration of its power generation, transmission and distribution infrastructure.

Whitefish's Techmanski was working in Puerto Rico and couldn't be reached for comment, according to spokesman Brandon Smulyan, who was himself unable to answer basic questions about the company because he has only been working with Whitefish under a contract for the past week. For instance, he couldn't say how many employees Whitefish has. Public records list Andrew Techmanski as the president and Amanda Techmanski, whom public records identify as a registered nurse, as the manager. Andrew Techmanski has an extensive background in power-line work, according to his LinkedIn profile and other public records.

Smulyan said the young company is funded by two private equity firms – HBC Investments and Flat Creek Capital – both based in Dallas, Texas – and Brazil-based Comtrafo Transformers, which builds power transformers.

"To date," Smulyan wrote in an Oct. 11 email, "Whitefish has visited, assessed and created operational bases in Cayey, Arecibo, Salinas, Manati, and Ponce and San Juan. Whitefish has repaired structures, conductors and lines in Salinas and has built access roads to the southern portion of the Salinas 230kv line."

It also has contracted with JEA, a public utility serving the Jacksonville, Florida, area to send 41 line workers and service personnel to Puerto Rico. New York has sent a contingent of line workers, as well.



Separately, the Army Corps of Engineers has put in a purchase order for 50,000 utility poles and 6,500 miles of cable. It also awarded a \$35.1 million contract to West Chester, Pennsylvania-based Weston Solutions to install a 50 megawatt generator in Puerto Rico's Palo Seco Power Plant.

FEMA, the Army Corps of Engineers and the U.S. Department of Energy all have personnel on the ground coordinating power restoration efforts.

Puerto Rico's power infrastructure has been a concern for decades partly because it lies in the heart of a hurricane corridor. Previously, the territory's power grid was ripped up by Hurricane Georges in 1998.

After Georges, the Clinton administration gave \$133 million to PREPA to fix the power grid and begin putting lines underground. In 2000, the administration issued a glowing report saying the improvements had "empowered" Puerto Ricans to "withstand even the most unreliable weather."

When Hurricane José struck Puerto Rico in 1999, the report said, the improvements left people, including PREPA officials, "confident" the island would not lose power. And it didn't.

But 18 years later, María utterly destroyed the grid and it remains unclear when – and for how long – power will be restored.

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## **Trump: Puerto Rico necesita nuevo sistema eléctrico tras daños causados por huracán (Spuntnik Mundo)**

América del Norte

00:51 17.10.2017

Spuntnik Mundo

**Trump said during a press conference that Puerto Rico will need to improvement on Palo Seco's infrastructure and all its electrical system to restore the damages caused after the passage of the hurricanes Irma and María**

WASHINGTON (Sputnik) — Puerto Rico necesitará realizar una importante reforma de su sistema eléctrico para restaurar los daños causados tras el paso de los huracanes Irma y María, dijo el presidente de EEUU, Donald Trump, durante una conferencia de prensa.

"(Vamos a) tener que construir un nuevo sistema de instalaciones eléctricas en Puerto Rico (...) su sistema eléctrico ya estaba en horribles condiciones antes de los huracanes y quedó en peores condiciones después de su paso", sostuvo el mandatario.

El pasado sábado, el gobernador de Puerto Rico, Ricardo Roselló, fijó como meta restablecer 30% del servicio eléctrico antes de fines de octubre, con el objetivo de restaurar 95% del servicio antes de finalizado este año.

Además, Trump afirmó durante la conferencia de prensa que los desafíos específicos que Puerto Rico ha enfrentado a raíz de los huracanes incluyen el acceso externo limitado y la falta de personal para entrega de ayuda humanitaria.

Más de tres semanas después de que los huracanes Irma y María azotaran la isla caribeña, poco más de una décima parte de los hogares de este país ha podido restaurar su servicio eléctrico y los generadores se usan continuamente para entregar energía a los hogares que restan.

El huracán María tocó tierra en Puerto Rico el 20 de septiembre como una tormenta de categoría 4, causando un gran daño a la infraestructura y la red eléctrica de la isla.

Puerto Rico es un estado libre asociado de EEUU que carece de autonomía y de recursos para hacer frente a la destrucción del ciclón.

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## **Baja la cantidad de abonados que ya tenían agua (El Nuevo Dia)**

martes, 17 de octubre de 2017 –



1:00 PM

Por Gloria Ruiz Kuilan1

[El Nuevo Día](#)

**The Director of the Aqueducts and Sewerage Authority (AAA) confirmed "Finally we were able to install the fourth engine of the" superaqueduct ", which suffered serious damage to its engines due to the hurricane path."**

La Autoridad de Acueductos y Alcantarillados (AAA) experimentó hoy una baja en la cantidad de abonados a los que ya se le ha restablecido el servicio de agua potable.

Mientras que la Autoridad de Energía Eléctrica (AEE) aunque logró aumentar la cantidad de generación, tuvo una falla que dejó nuevamente sin luz las instalaciones del Cuartel General, el centro comercial Plaza Las Américas y las oficinas del correo, todas ubicadas en la avenida Roosevelt en Hato Rey.

Como es de costumbre el director de la AEE, Ricardo Ramos no estuvo presente en la conferencia diaria del gobierno en el Centro de Convenciones. Allí estuvo el secretario de Asuntos Públicos de La Fortaleza, Ramón Rosario así como el director ejecutivo de la AAA, Elí Díaz.

El director de la AAA dijo que las recientes lluvias afectaron las operaciones en la represa Carraízo y la planta Sergio Cuevas, que actualmente trabaja con generadores de energía. Esto provocó una baja de un 7% en la cantidad de abonados, por lo que el porcentaje de abonados con servicio bajó de 72% a 65.43%.

“Tenemos varias personas en el área metropolitana afectadas por una situación en Carraízo ,como sabemos hubo mucha lluvia durante el día de ayer. Esto trae mucho sedimento. Se tiene que controlar un poco la producción de agua. Se apagaron dos de las bombas que bombean agua de Carraízo a la planta de Sergio Cuevas”, explicó Díaz Atienza.

Dijo que en horas de la tarde y/o de la noche debe haber “alguna mejoría” en el servicio.

Reconoció que hay intermitencia en el servicio puesto que hay pueblos como Caguas, Carolina, Guaynabo, Cidra, Cayey y Bayamón en donde el agua va y viene.

“Muchas de esas áreas tienen que ver con el flujo de Sergio Cuevas y son las áreas más cercanas al sistema. Por lo tanto, es normal de que al haber ido de cuatro bombas a dos bombas en la producción de agua, las áreas más lejanas son las que se están afectando y las áreas que están en el mismo medio van a sentir intermitencia porque puede que por el consumo les llegue menos (agua) y de momento, puede que por la noche –que hay menos consumo- les llegue más (agua)”, explicó.

También hubo intermitencia con el suplido de agua del Superacueducto porque “finalmente pudimos instalar el cuarto motor del Superacueducto”, dijo. Desde el azote del huracán, este sistema sufrió daños en sus motores que han sido reparados paulatinamente.

Pese a estas fluctuaciones en el servicio, hoy es cuando se refleja una baja en la cantidad de abonados con servicio. Aun así ambos funcionarios dijeron que las cifras provistas por el gobierno se ajustan diariamente.

En cuanto al servicio de la AEE, Rosario dijo que la meta de que haya 30% de abonados con luz al finalizar el mes de octubre, se logrará “con la conexión de energía de la generación del sur al norte y con los generadores que ya se están instalando por el Cuerpo de Ingenieros en Palo Seco”.

Esta instalación es posible gracias a la contratación de Weston Solutions por \$35.1 millones. Ese contrato lo concedió el Cuerpo de Ingenieros del Ejército de los Estados Unidos y ayer otorgó otro por \$240 millones a la empresa Fluor Corporation, con sede en Irving, Texas.

Por su parte, la AEE contrató a la empresa Whitefish para atender la conexión de la zona norte, la de mayor demanda, con la del sur que es donde hay más generación. A preguntas de este diario, Rosario dijo que empleados de la empresa Power Secure hacen una evaluación del sistema energético. Esta misma semana Rosario Cortés había dicho que esa empresa había sido contratada por la AEE y luego se dijo que aún no se ha firmado contrato.



“Power Secure se ordenó la movilización de servicios adicionales. Está haciendo los assessment. Ciertamente ya se le dio la instrucción de moverse a Puerto Rico”, dijo Rosario Cortés.

Ahora la AEE contrató a General Electric por \$4.7 millones para “en lo que remediamos provisionalmente la generación en el norte, atendamos los problemas de infraestructura de Palo Seco que han impedido que muchas de sus unidades no estén en servicio en este periodo de emergencia”, afirmó Rosario.

Al día de hoy la generación de la AEE está en 17.70%, un poco más que ayer aunque hoy se quedó sin luz nuevamente el Cuartel General, Plaza Las Américas y la oficina del correo ubicadas en la avenida Roosevelt Roads en Hato Rey.

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## **HEALTH / DEATHS / ENVIRONMENTAL**

### **Floating hospital anchored off hurricane-ravaged Puerto Rico is mostly empty** (NY Daily News)

BY [Jessica Schladebeck](#)

Tuesday, October 17, 2017, 10:12 AM

[New York Daily News](#)

A floating state-of-the art hospital is anchored off the coast of hurricane-ravaged Puerto Rico to offer assistance to those unable to get treatment in the over-crowded hospitals there — but those in need are struggling to board the ship.

The USNS Comfort has 250 beds for patients on the island shut out by clinics without supplies and other facilities lacking electricity. Only 33 of those beds — about 13% — have been filled in the two weeks since the ship arrived, [CNN](#) reported.

“I know we have the capacity,” Comfort’s mission commander and Capt. Kevin Robinson told the news station. “I know that we have the capability to help. What the situation on the ground is... that’s not in my lane to make a decision.”

Puerto Rico Gov. Ricardo Rossello told CNN the problem is rooted in “the communication flow” between doctors and the Department of Health, which is tasked with referring patients to the ship. Hospitals said they were unaware what standards patients need to meet in order to board the medical facility.

“I asked for a complete revision of that so that we can start sending more patients over there,” Rossello said.

The hospital ship was deployed as part of the federal response to Hurricane Maria, which left the 3.4 million American citizens on the U.S. territory without power. They also face water and food shortages as well as communication outages and ongoing health risks.

Almost a month after the hurricane made landfall as a Category 4 storm, 86% of Puerto Rico is still without electricity and nearly 30% does not have access to drinking water. Most cell towers and antennas are also still down.

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### **Drug shortages likely after hurricanes** (Formulary Journal)

October 16, 2017

By [Christine Blank](#)

[Formulary Journal](#)

FDA Commissioner Scott Gottlieb, MD, said that the United States is likely to see shortages on certain drugs after Hurricanes Irma and Maria knocked out power to Puerto Rico.



At the same time, Gottlieb said the agency is working with Baxter and other manufacturers to mitigate the shortages.

Around 10% of drugs prescribed in the United States are manufactured in Puerto Rico, which faced a double whammy when Hurricane Irma knocked out power to much of the island in early September and then Hurricane Maira knocked out electricity across the island on September 20.

Only 16% of the power to the island has been restored, according to a Reuters [article](#).

“A lot of companies say they’re online, but they basically have one of five lines running at 20% or 80% or 50%,” Gottlieb told Reuters. “It’s unclear when they are going to be able to bring that up to full capacity.”

Related: [DEA slashes opioid drug production](#)

FDA warned that around 40 drugs manufactured in Puerto Rico could face shortages, including treatments for cancer, rheumatoid arthritis and HIV. Merck & Co, Johnson and Johnson, Amgen, Bristol-Myers Squibb, Eli Lilly and Co., and other major manufacturers have facilities in Puerto Rico.

However, FDA has been working closely with Baxter and other companies “to reduce the risk of shortages of critically important drugs and to minimize impact on any existing shortages,” Gottlieb said in a [statement](#).

For example, Baxter and FDA identified ways to prevent a significant shortfall of production of Baxter’s sodium chloride 0.9% injection bags from its Puerto Rico facility.

“While these products have been in shortage industry wide since 2014 and other manufacturers exist, the agency and Baxter recognized that further shortage of this product could potentially put US healthcare at risk. The FDA has worked closely with Baxter to find solutions to prevent additional shortages,” Gottlieb said.

FDA is helping manufacturers in Puerto Rico secure fuel and manufacturing supplies and is providing logistical support to move critical products onto and off the island.

“FDA is also expediting reviews and approvals of other dosage forms and generic versions of products as alternate sources of critical products,” Gottlieb said.

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## **Proponen que los hospitales tengan un sistema de comunicación satelital (El Nuevo Día)**

Bárbara J. Figueroa Rosa

10/17/2017 | 00:00 a.m.

[El Nuevo Día](#)

**The Commission of Health will seek a law proposal to facilitate satellite communication to every hospital and medical service in case of a natural disaster**

Ante los problemas de comunicaciones que enfrenta la isla tras el paso del huracán María, el presidente de la Comisión senatorial de Salud, Ángel ‘Chayanne’ Martínez, se dispone a radicar un proyecto de ley para fijar como requisito que toda facilidad hospitalaria en la isla cuente con un sistema de comunicaciones satelital para poder operar en caso de que se pierda la comunicación a causa de un fenómeno natural.

La medida legislativa será radicada en la Cámara Alta en los próximos días, ya que la Asamblea Legislativa retomará sus labores esta semana luego casi un mes de receso por el huracán.

“Uno de los grandes problemas que tuvo Puerto Rico, y que en muchas áreas todavía está teniendo, es la falta de comunicación. El impacto del huracán María dejó claramente establecido la vulnerabilidad del sistema de comunicaciones vigente. Los hospitales necesitan tener una fuente para comunicarse con el gobierno y entre sus departamentos o facilidades fuera de la zona para así poder asistir mejor a los pacientes que están hospitalizados y facilitar la comunicación con el gobierno para



cualquier emergencia o necesidad apremiante”, señaló el senador por el Distrito de Arecibo en declaraciones escritas.

A poco más de tres semanas del embate del potente ciclón, solo un 59% de la isla cuenta con servicio de telefonía móvil según la página cibernética status.pr, donde el gobierno local actualiza los datos sobre el estado de situación del país.

De hecho, un 25% de las antenas de teléfonos celulares, o sea 672 antenas de las 2,680 que hay en la isla, están funcionando. También está operando un 42% de las torres de celulares (690 torres de 1,619).

Según el legislador, el gobierno tiene una red de teléfonos satelitales que fue clave en las primeras horas después del paso de María, por lo que considera que esa tecnología tiene que ser implementada en los hospitales, particularmente aquellos que operan en la zona rural del país.

“Estamos evaluando legislación para hacer compulsorio que hospitales cuenten con un sistema avanzado de comunicaciones. En esos términos, estaremos pidiendo el gobierno federal asistencia técnica para que provean los mejores sistemas de comunicación para estas facilidades médico-hospitalarias”, agregó el también portavoz alterno de la mayoría en la Cámara Alta, al destacar que enviará una carta a la comisionada residente en Washington, Jenniffer González, para que ayude en el esfuerzo de dotar como equipos de primer orden a los hospitales públicos y privados.

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## **Usan el Pachín Vicéns como instalación médica (Primera Hora)**

Michelle Estrada Torres

10/17/2017 |12:18 p.m.

### **Primera Hora**

The Juan “Pachín” Vicéns Auditorium is currently operated by the federal and state Department of Health and nongovernmental organizations such as DMAT and the Syrian American Medical Society and is intended to serve people who are bedridden, ventilated or require oxygen to live.

Ponce. La Estación Médica Federal (FMS, en inglés) contaba este lunes con 12 pacientes provenientes de los refugios y hospitales de la ciudad, en su mayoría adultos mayores que requieren equipo de soporte vital.

La instalación, ubicada en el Auditorio Juan “Pachín” Vicéns, es operada por el Departamento de Salud federal y estatal, y organizaciones no gubernamentales como DMAT y Syrian American Medical Society. Aunque su apertura estaba prevista para el pasado viernes, no fue hasta este domingo en la mañana que recibió los primeros pacientes.

Esta instalación está destinada, principalmente, a atender personas encamadas, que están conectadas a ventiladores o que requieren oxígeno para vivir.

Joyce Oberly, oficial de asuntos públicos del Departamento de Salud federal destacada en el FMS, informó que las personas encamadas que estaban en las escuelas-refugios Lila Mayoral y Aurea Rivera Collazo fueron trasladadas al FMS, y otras fueron referidas por hospitales de la ciudad. Al momento de la entrevista, ninguno de los pacientes era pediátrico y ninguno estaba conectado a un ventilador.

**El FMS tiene capacidad para 160 adultos y 15 menores de edad, según el Municipio de Ponce.**

Las camas están en el centro del auditorio, donde ubica el tablero de baloncesto. En la entrada hay una mesa de registro donde se toman los datos demográficos de la persona.

También hay un área de cernimiento, donde se toman los vitales del paciente y se determina si requiere hospitalización, indicó Oberly. Esto, porque además de los referidos hay personas que han llegado por su cuenta al FMS.



La instalación cuenta con médicos, enfermeras, nutricionista, farmacéutico, ingenieros, especialista en conducta y oficial de seguridad. En total, son 42 empleados y voluntarios que durante sus horas libres pernoctan en el segundo piso del auditorio.

A los pacientes admitidos se les proveen medicamentos como la insulina y también se dan recetas, dijo la oficial de prensa.

Oberly señaló que se permite un familiar con cada paciente, que se ubica en una cama contigua. Estas personas tienen que proveerse sus alimentos y artículos para pernoctar.

El médico generalista ponceño Juan Camacho es el único galeno del grupo y funge como director médico. Mientras, Sally del Toro, directora del Departamento de Salud en la región de Ponce, es el enlace estatal.

La alcaldesa de Ponce, María Meléndez Altieri, indicó en la emisora radial Notiuno 1260 que el FMS operará durante 30 días.

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## **Discuten acciones para la recuperación de la Isla (El Vocero )**

Redacción El Vocero

17 de octubre de 2017

[El Vocero](#)

**In order to discuss the EPA's action to mitigate the damages caused by the passage of Hurricane Maria, a meeting was held with the President of the House of Representatives and the regional administrator of EPA**

El presidente de la Cámara de Representante, Carlos 'Johnny' Méndez Núñez, sostuvo esta tarde una reunión con el administrador regional de la Agencia de Protección Ambiental (EPA, por sus siglas en inglés), Peter López, con el objetivo de discutir las acciones que está tomando esa dependencia para mitigar los daños causados por el paso del huracán María.

“Fue una discusión abierta, franca y transparente sobre los esfuerzos que está haciendo la EPA para ayudar en la recuperación de Puerto Rico tras el impacto del poderoso huracán María. Dialogamos de varios temas importantes para nuestra isla, particularmente que reglamentación está utilizando la EPA para delinear la recolección, manejo y eventual disposición de las miles de toneladas de escombros. Esto es algo bien importante porque no queremos añadir un problema ambiental a la situación que ya tenemos con los trabajos de recuperación. Tiene que haber una intervención federal para la disposición de estos escombros. Otro aspecto que nos preocupa es como se va a trabajar los residuos sólidos y eso también lo dialogamos”, indicó el líder cameral.

Por su parte López, quien es el administrador para la Región 2 de la EPA, la cual incluye los estados de Nueva York y Nueva Jersey, así como las Islas Vírgenes estadounidenses y Puerto Rico, agradeció al presidente de la Cámara por escuchar sobre las acciones que está tomando dicha dependencia como consecuencia directa del paso de María.

“Fue un honor reunirnos con el ‘speaker’ de la Cámara de Representantes sobre las labores que estamos haciendo en la EPA para ayudar a levantar a Puerto Rico. Coincidimos con su (Méndez Núñez) visión de lo que tenemos que hacer, en el área de manejo de escombros, al igual que sobre los residuos sólidos, para asistir a la Legislatura y al gobierno de Puerto Rico en estos momentos. La Legislatura cuenta con el apoyo de la EPA”, señaló el funcionario federal.

Durante la reunión, que se extendió por más de una hora, se tocó también el tema de la limpieza de los terrenos utilizados por la Marina de los Estados Unidos en la isla municipio de Vieques.

“Para mí esto es algo bien importante y el Administrador de la EPA para nuestra región esta consiente de esto. Nos complace su deseo de ayudar a que finalmente se empiece a limpiar todos los terrenos, sin ninguna otra excusa”, dijo Méndez Núñez.



Hace poco más de un año, la EPA concluyó en un informe que se necesitarían alrededor de \$500 millones y 15 años más para completar los trabajos de limpieza de las más de 14,560 cuerdas de terreno utilizadas por décadas como polígono de tiro, tanto en Vieques como Culebra.

“Estos terrenos están bajo el control de la Marina, entidad que actúa como la parte primaria en este asunto, pero estamos trabajando con ellos para movernos en este frente también, mas ahora, después de la tormenta”, agregó López. En medio de la crisis humanitaria que se vive en Puerto Rico, el Departamento de Justicia y el Negociado

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## **BUSINESS / ARTS-HUMANITIES**

### **Miles las pérdidas económicas para los pequeños negocios (Primera Hora)**

Agencia EFE

10/17/2017 | 02:19 p.m.

[Primera Hora](#)

**Economic losses of between 25,000 and 50,000 dollars, countless people moving to the United States and businesses operating at half capacity, are some of the limitations of all small businesses in Puerto Rico affected by the passage of Hurricane Maria almost a month ago from now**

Pérdidas económicas de entre 25,000 y 50,000 dólares, un sinnúmero de personas mudándose a Estados Unidos y negocios operando a media capacidad, son algunas de las vivencias de pequeñas empresas en Puerto Rico afectadas por el paso del huracán María hace ya casi un mes.

Jeriell Coreano Morales, administrador de la empresa "Sofrito Moralito" -dedicada a la fabricación de sofritos puertorriqueños, preparado con pimientos verdes, cebollas, ajo, ajíes dulces, hojas de cilantro fresco, recaó (cilantro))- dijo hoy a Efe que su empresa ha tenido pérdidas en ventas directas de entre 40,000 y 50,000 dólares desde el paso del ciclón.

Coreano contó que su fábrica, ubicada hace 15 años en Bayamón sufrió los efectos de María al caerle frente a su portón de entrada varios postes de electricidad que cortaban el acceso al negocio, hasta que tres semanas más tarde lograron reabrir el paso.

"Estamos en el negocio, pero no trabajando a capacidad. La planta (generador) que tenemos no nos corre todo el negocio, sino a 'medio pocillo'", sostuvo el empresario sobre las operaciones de la fábrica a mitad de capacidad.

De igual forma, varios de los productos que compran para elaborar el sofrito, entre ellos, los ajíes, pimientos y el cilantro, que se cosechan en fincas en los municipios de Santa Isabel, Corozal o Caguas, se perdieron.

Ante esto y sin perder las ganas de seguir produciendo, Coreano tuvo que decidir importar estos frutos desde la República Dominicana.

"La calidad no es la misma y es más caro. No es lo mismo traer frutos de afuera, porque siempre tratamos de usar los productos de aquí", admitió Coreano, cuya empresa le vende sus productos a supermercados y restaurantes.

"Vamos a seguir. Gracias a Dios los clientes han sido fieles. La gente nos escribe y nos llama y eso nos motiva a seguir", aseguró el empresario, quien vende sus productos en empaques de entre 16 y 128 onzas.

"Tenemos que levantarnos todos los días positivos, echar adelante, ayudar a nuestros hijos y con el mismo afán que nuestros abuelos nos enseñaron", afirmó.

Coreano Morales fue uno de más de 300 empresarios que acudieron hoy al encuentro "Impulso Empresarial", organizado por el Departamento de Desarrollo Económico y Comercio (DDEC), que



orientó y ofreció mecanismos que los ayuden en la reconstrucción de su empresa tras ser afectados por el huracán.

El encuentro se llevó a cabo en el Colegio de Ingenieros y Agrimensores de Puerto Rico en San Juan, donde se ubica el Restaurante Booby's, administrado por José Arturo Torres y que suministra comida a eventos, quien contó a Efe que tras el impacto de María, hasta el momento ha perdido 30,000 dólares en inventario.

"No sufrimos daños, pero sí obviamente muchas de las actividades se cancelaron y esto traerá recorte de horas en los trabajadores. Estamos trabajando a todo vapor y haciendo platos a precios módicos para el cliente", indicó Torres.

"Nadie estuvo preparado para esto y esto nos enseñará a cambiar la actitud. Ahora vienen meses más difíciles y las ventas irán bajando", reflexionó el empresario, quien no obstante, a pesar de las pérdidas económicas, continuará -dijo- trabajando a todo tren.

"Nosotros no nos quitamos. Aunque vendamos alcapurrias (plato típico hecho a base de plátano verde relleno de carne de res), al menos vendemos. Si vendíamos antes langostas, pues ahora venderemos biftec (bistec) y no aplicaremos al momento que se vive", afirmó Torres.

Asimismo, Edgardo Román, propietarios de los laboratorios clínicos Lagos de Plata en Guaynabo y en Levittown (Toa Baja) uno de los barrios de la isla más afectados por María, dijo a Efe que sus pérdidas han llegado a los 25,000 dólares.

Este déficit, según Román, ha sido por cerrar el laboratorio de Guaynabo, mientras que el de Toa Baja está "trabajando medio día" y sin electricidad, por lo que están refiriendo algunas de sus pruebas, como las de mayor urgencia, a otros laboratorios u hospitales.

"No puedo cerrar. Tengo muchos pacientes, y estoy buscando la forma de seguir trabajando. Tengo que prender mis máquinas para dar el servicio. Y ahora tenemos que trabajar con muchos laboratorios por gente que contrae dengue o zika", sostuvo Torres, quien ya cuenta con la renuncia de una persona que "no aguantó" el empuje del caos.

Todos estos empresarios podrán recibir ayuda, según expresó durante su ponencia el secretario del DDEC, Manuel A. Laboy Rivera, en el encuentro "Impulso Empresarial".

Según el funcionario, todos estos empresarios recibirán información sobre los diversos recursos existentes para reactivar sus negocios, entre ellos, préstamos especiales, reclamación de seguros, manejo de compras con el gobierno federal bajo condiciones de emergencia e información de ayudas a sus empleados.

Explicó que esos contratos federales son para la reconstrucción de sus negocios, mientras que otros empresarios necesitarán acceso a capital para seguir operando, "cada cual con su interés".

"Estos son empresarios que me demuestran el interés de que quieren echar pa' lante (para adelante) y buscando las herramientas", expresó Laboy Rivera.

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## **Puerto Rico's MMJ Industry Struggles to Recover from Hurricane (High Times)**

**Although still in its infancy, Puerto Rico's MMJ industry struggles to recover from Hurricane Maria.**

October 16, 2017

By [Mike Adams](#)

[High Times](#)

Maria vs Mary Jane

On September 20, Hurricane Maria ripped through the island of Puerto Rico. The storm tore down homes, ruined supplies and killed at least 48 people. According to the [latest data](#), it also hurt



the U.S. territory's medical marijuana industry by destroying equipment and facilities crucial to the survival of the cannabis plants.

[According to Goodwin Aldarondo](#), the president and CEO of Puerto Rico Legal Marijuana, "big manufacturing and grow facilities have had their roof blown off, there is water in their manufacturing rooms, equipment damaged, no light for plants and most are dead."

"You're talking about millions of dollars of damage, and we just started as an industry," he added.

Last year, Puerto Rico officials passed regulations designed to establish [a medical marijuana program](#).

Some reports suggest that the medical marijuana industry could help pull the island out of its \$74 billion debt. This prediction did not figure in the possibility of damages as a result of high winds and massive flooding.

The Puerto Rico Medical Cannabis Association doesn't know the extent of the damage yet.

They say they are working to assemble those figures. The most these disheveled operations can hope for, however, is that the insurance companies are able to pay the claims. The federal government does not recognize medical marijuana as a legitimate business. Thus, none of the owners or investors connected to the industry qualify for federal assistance to help their businesses recover.

"The longer the industry is out of commission, the more the entire island will suffer," said Ingrid Schmidt, the president of the Puerto Rico Medical Cannabis Association.

"We were expecting a lot from this industry," she [said](#). "It's the only industry that was creating jobs, and a lot of hope was put into this industry because it was critical to the financial circumstance that our island is going through."

There is a bit of good news, though.

Most of the medical marijuana operations have reopened to some degree. But only a small handful of these operations are able to dispense cannabis to patients.

It is for this reason that some of the rules have changed regarding dispensary designation, which, as of the beginning of October, has given registered patients the ability to secure cannabis products from any dispensary with product to sell.

As for now, all of the medical marijuana facilities are still reliant on generators for power. And the people desperately need all the clean water on the island to stay hydrated. This has made it difficult to irrigate plants.

But, despite the island's lack of electricity and clean water, there are plenty of [paper towels](#) thanks to a recent visit by President Donald Trump. As Puerto Rico's medical marijuana industry struggles to recover from Hurricane Maria, we can't underestimate the power of paper towels.

Sadly, while the president recently promised to help the U.S. territory through the crisis for as long as it takes, he has since said that the federal government cannot help "forever."

Trump also discussed the possibility of completely eliminating Puerto Rico's multi-billion dollar debt. But now, that too seems highly unlikely.

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## **A oscuras Bellas Artes (Primera Hora)**

Camile Roldán Soto

10/17/2017 | 00:00 a.m.

### [Primera Hora](#)

Artistic cancellations and cultural activities rare suspended due to the collapse of the power generator that transmits electrical energy to the Fine Arts Center in Santurce.



El transformador que transmite energía eléctrica al Centro de Bellas Artes en Santurce colapsó tras el embate de los huracanes Irma y María, y es por esta razón que la actividad en este importante espacio cultural se mantiene detenida.

Jetppeth Pérez, gerente general de la institución, indicó que hoy se realizarán varias pruebas y un cambio de aceite al equipo dañado para determinar si es posible volver a instalarlo y ponerlo a funcionar. Si el plan tiene éxito, continuaría la limpieza y acondicionamiento de ciertas áreas adentro de la estructura que debido a la falta de luz no han podido examinarse detalladamente.

Hasta la fecha, sin contar los daños que puedan enumerarse después de esta revisión, las pérdidas en el centro suman aproximadamente medio millón de dólares.

“Los escenarios se humedecieron, entró agua a varios lugares y también se afectó el área de la fuente y las zonas verdes. Algunos cristales de la Sala Sinfónica se rompieron, pero ya los reparamos”, explicó Pérez.

### **Efecto dominó**

Como en tantas otras empresas del País, el efecto dominó creado por los daños de María mantiene sin trabajo a cerca de la mitad de los 150 empleados de la institución. Al momento, solo han sido convocados a trabajar cerca de la mitad. Seis de ellos fueron trasladados a agencias en los municipios de Carolina y Guaynabo que necesitaban refuerzo en estos momentos.

“Todo esto tiene un impacto. El Centro de Bellas Artes es fuente de ingreso para empleados que trabajan en la taquilla, los artistas, productores y gente que se encarga de todo el andamiaje de los espectáculos”, lamentó.

Además, Pérez indicó que debido al paso de los huracanes hubo una ola de cancelaciones en la programación para el mes de octubre y principios de noviembre. Por ejemplo, la Orquesta Sinfónica suspendió su temporada de conciertos y solamente realizará un evento el 17 de noviembre.

Así las cosas, el único ingreso que está teniendo el Centro en estos momentos es por concepto de alquiler de la Sala Sinfónica, que tiene energía eléctrica apenas 4 o 5 horas al día a través de un generador.

Pérez dijo que en noviembre y diciembre (que junto a octubre son los meses más activos en el centro) todavía hay muchos eventos programados.

“Esperamos que podamos retomar pronto nuestra agenda”, precisó.

Para información actualizada acerca del funcionamiento del Centro de Bellas Artes, el público puede visitar sus redes sociales o la página oficial [www.cba.pr.gov](http://www.cba.pr.gov).

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## **Cientos de comerciantes afectados por el huracán asisten a orientación de ayudas (Metro PR)**

Miladys Soto

martes 17, octubre 2017 12:01

[Metro PR](#)

### **Economic officials seek incentives to merchants and industrialists who were affected by Hurricane Maria.**

El secretario del Departamento de Desarrollo Económico y Comercio (DDEC), Manuel Laboy, llevó a cabo una orientación de ayudas a comerciantes e industriales que se vieron afectados por el huracán María.

Manufactura, tecnología y exportación de servicios son algunas de las áreas que pueden beneficiarse por la Ley 73 y pueden solicitar incentivos. La actividad, que se llevó a cabo en el Colegio de Ingenieros y Agrimensores, contó con diversas orientaciones para los más de 300 comerciantes que de dieron cita en el lugar.



Laboy dijo que iban a evaluar solicitudes de empresarios por las leyes 73 y 20. Asimismo, expuso que hay otras ayudas existentes que los comerciantes podrán solicitar. Los comerciantes pidieron incentivos para restablecer las telecomunicaciones ya que es uno de los problemas que más han enfrentado. En evento fue dirigido a comerciantes, industriales, dueños de Pymes, entre otros.

El titular del DDEC expuso que cuentan con aproximadamente dos millones de dólares en ayudas. Sin embargo, agregó que Small Business Administration (SBA) y otras organizaciones cuentan con ayuda como préstamos.

#### **Evalúan daños en industrias**

Laboy expuso de diversas empresas bajo la Compañía de Fomento Industrial (PRIDCO) se vieron afectadas con el paso de ciclón categoría 4. El funcionario contó que hay 224 parques industriales, que ya fueron inspeccionados.

"El mayor de los impactos, más allá de la parte eléctrica y la parte de las inundaciones son los techos, sufrieron muchísimo. Parte de la estructura vial, lo que es la carretera tuvo mucho daño. Nosotros estamos implementando un proceso donde número uno si tiene un seguro privado tiene que empezar a reclamar al seguro, por eso es que tenemos una orientación para reclamos de seguro", precisó Laboy.

El funcionario agregó que algunas de las ayudas disponibles para comerciantes e industriales son reclamos a seguros, incentivos, FEMA y préstamos.

Por su parte, Luis Curdiel, presidente del Banco de Desarrollo Económico expuso una orientación sobre préstamos de emergencia. "Puerto Rico ha pasado por un desastre histórico y ahora viene un periodo de reconstrucción", expuso el funcionario, quien agregó que los comerciantes deberán tener calma en ese proceso.

"Yo he visitado muchos negocios y con probablemente \$20,000 pueden iniciar operaciones", expuso Curdiel.

#### **Preocupación por la migración**

Laboy destacó que al momento ninguna compañía ha mostrado su interés de mover sus operaciones fuera de la isla, aunque no deja de ser un factor preocupante.

"Puerto Rico es un lugar que tiene alta concentración de estas empresas. La manufactura representa la mitad de la economía, el 50 % de la economía de Puerto Rico. Representa casi un tercio de los recaudos de Hacienda para el fondo general", destacó.

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### **“Pocas vitrinas abiertas en el Viejo San Juan (El Vocero)**

Carlos Antonio Otero,

17 de octubre de 2017 10/17/2017 |00:00 a.m.

#### **El Vocero**

**The failures and collapse of energy throughout the island hit hundreds of merchants and restaurant owners who want to reopen their businesses in Old San Juan which is the emblematic postcard of tourism in Puerto Rico.**

El Viejo San Juan, la postal emblemática del turismo en Puerto Rico, se acerca a cumplir un mes en sombras y sin la actividad vibrante de miles de visitantes que en tiempos normales transitaban sus calles adoquinadas, mientras el devenir comercial intenta asomarse lentamente a ofrecer sus productos y servicios, en la aspiración de recobrar la cotidianidad interrumpida por los huracanes Irma y María.

Las fallas iniciales y el colapso en la transmisión de energía en toda la Isla no han permitido que un centenar de comerciantes y dueños de restaurantes abran puertas, salvo contadas excepciones, que independientemente de si no generan ventas en sus primeros días de reapertura, prefieren enviar el mensaje de que se comienzan a levantar.



Herminio Morales, gerente de la ferretería True Value en la calle Fortaleza, fue de los primeros en abrir a los pocos días del paso del huracán María el pasado 20 de septiembre. Lo ha hecho en un horario de 10:00 a.m. a 3:00 p.m. y la clientela ha agotado los imprescindibles por estos días, que incluyen estufas de gas, gas, baterías y linternas, principalmente.

Morales indicó que los artículos olvidados, como las antiguas tablas de lavar, han resurgido y han tenido que hacer órdenes a sus suplidores de estos productos que hace mucho no se incluían en los pedidos. En su caso, sirve casi en exclusiva a los residentes y no tienen una dependencia del turismo, pero la falta de estos impide otras actividades que de manera indirecta le generan ventas.

Contó Morales que el Viejo San Juan es particular, por su arquitectura y su condición de lugar histórico, lo cual imposibilita la colocación de generadores eléctricos en la mayoría de los establecimientos y eso ha hecho que sean pocos los que puedan abrir puertas.

De los escasos comercios con generadores se cuenta el restaurante Pan y Agua, localizado frente a la Plaza de Armas, cuyo propietario Kumar precisó de un permiso del ayuntamiento para poder ubicarlo justo en medio de la plaza. “Apenas tuvimos la tormenta Irma, nos llegó María y desde antes muchos comercios no pudieron abrir. Va a haber muchos negocios que a lo mejor no van a poder aguantarlo (el golpe económico de permanecer cerrados)”, señaló Kumar, quien además cuenta con otros dos establecimientos en la ciudad, pero esos otros han continuado cerrados.

En Pan y Agua la mayor parte de los comensales son locales, empleados de la Casa Alcaldía y del Departamento de Estado, y en menor cantidad los turistas. Los otros dos negocios de Kumar, como están dirigidos al turismo, se han quedado sin clientes por estos días, debido a la falta de cruceros en el puerto de San Juan y a la ausencia en la llegada de turistas en general a la Isla.

“Ojalá y Dios quiera que la velocidad del gobierno si ahora mismo está en 3, que se ponga en 8 y 9. Esto mismo, de tener los negocios cerrados, desanima a los ciudadanos”, expresó Kumar, y dijo que les comunicó a todos sus empleados que su apuesta es a mantener los negocios y no irse de la Isla. “Cuando en las buenas el comercio te lo ha dado todo, en las malas entonces tenemos que dar el hombro”.

En la Librería Laberinto, en la calle Cruz, su propietario Javier Ortiz, dijo que su manera de contribuir a levantar la ciudad es con la apertura del negocio “aunque no venda ni un solo libro”.

“Las primeras dos semanas esto era un pueblo fantasma. No hay luz y en algunos momentos hay agua. Hace una semana que abrí porque uno hace el esfuerzo aunque no haya venta, que la gente vea que vamos recuperando”, expresó Ortiz.

En la Librería Laberinto dependen del consumidor local, pero Ortiz reconoce que la gente está en otros asuntos para atender sus necesidades apremiantes, aunque siente el compromiso de tener las puertas abiertas. Mientras era entrevistado por EL VOCERO, una asidua clienta llegó para pedir un libro que aún no lo reciben, y esta comentó que aunque hay necesidad de muchas cosas, es importante que los comercios de todo tipo empiecen a abrir.

Para Paola Romo, dueña del restaurante St. Germain Bistro & Café en la calle Sol, es un momento complicado donde los ciudadanos y el sector privado tienen que unirse para levantar a la Isla y la actividad económica. En St. Germain, que suelen recibir a muchos turistas en sus dos conceptos de negocio (operan The Mezzanine at St. Germaine), han revisado sus ofrecimientos para suplir lo que busca el cliente local en este momento.

Romo explicó que han comenzado a utilizar de manera limitada un generador de energía para poder ofrecer almuerzos y café, de 11:30 a.m. a 3:30 p.m. y ver que alimentos dentro de sus propuestas saludables son más viables para los clientes.

El VOCERO visitó un negocio de recordatorios en la calle Cristo, el cual espera por visitantes, y una lavandería que recibía órdenes para poder lavar en otro lugar y luego hacer la entrega a los clientes.

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## CHARITY / HUMAN INTEREST / VOLUNTEER EFFORTS

### **With food, water and hugs, Molina delivers help to Puerto Rico (St. Louis Dispatch)**

By Derrick Goold, Birdland column

10/17/17

#### [St. Louis Post-Dispatch](#)

ST. LOUIS • A short drive from where Yadier Molina grew up in Vega Alta, Puerto Rico, and into the Mavilla neighborhood, the Cardinals catcher stood atop a blacktop road surrounded by stripped-clean and snapped trees and covered with a message that gave words to the reason he came home.

“AYUDA,” it listed. “AGUA. ALIMENTO.”

Translated it asked for “help,” “water,” and “food.”

Written atop, “SOS.”

No translation needed.

The road and the request scrawled along it are clear in a photo that Molina posted last week on his Instagram page. In it, Molina, wearing a St. Louis Blues T-shirt, stands beside residents as part of his visit to Puerto Rico to do exactly what was asked – bring food, water, and help to an area still recovering from the damage of Hurricane Maria.

Molina, along with his older brother Jose and wife Wanda, visited the area around Vega Alta in the past week and went door to door with supplies, according to a description provided by Evelyn Guadalupe, a spokesman for Molina’s Fundacion 4.

Molina traveled the area without journalists so he could knock on the doors and spend time with neighbors, many of whom are still without power and some of whom were already in what he has described as an “underprivileged” area.

He chronicled the visits on Instagram and in photos provided by his foundation. In them, Molina is delivering water, dry goods, and many embraces. In one photo, Molina is clutching hands with a neighbor and in the background stands statues of him and his two brothers, all three of whom played catcher in the major leagues. Molina’s foundation delivered trucks loaded with ice as well as water and other provisions. In one video Molina shared, palletes were stacked with water bottles 12 deep and six bottles high.

A month after Hurricane Maria tore through Puerto Rico, many of the 3.4 million U.S. citizens living there still lack power, clean water, and basic supplies. Communication is limited or nonexistent across the island. Reports from this past weekend said 1.2 million residents do not have potable water, and Puerto Rico’s electric power authority said 85 percent of the island does not have power. Scores of Americans remain unaccounted for and this past weekend the death toll rose, nearing 50.

The island, its crippled infrastructure, and its recovery has become a quagmire for President Trump, who has used Twitter to engage in spats with officials or question the extent of help the federal government can provide. He wrote on Twitter that the grid and infrastructure was a “disaster” before the hurricane and that federal relief could not go on “forever.” This past week, Congress passed relief funding.

In the closing days of the Cardinals’ season, as he recovered from post-concussion symptoms, Molina declined to wade into the politics of Puerto Rico’s recovery.

He stressed that his role should be “helping as many people as possible.”

“I am going to go to help,” he said.

Two days after the Cardinals’ season ended, Molina did that. After stopping in Florida to help organize goods, Molina and his wife traveled to Puerto Rico to handle the deliveries in person.



According to Guadalupe's description, the foundation had five trucks "loaded with provisions." Shortly after Hurricane Maria and its eye wall passed near Molina's hometown of Vega Alta, the catcher started a GoFundMe account that raised more than \$155,000. Molina said that money would go to purchase the supplies brought to the towns and neighborhoods around Vega Alta.

Before leaving St. Louis, Molina said he would add to the fund with a personal donation. He did not disclose how much. Several teammates, including Kolten Wong and Tommy Pham, also provided financial support for Molina's efforts.

Molina's group visited at least four towns during the humanitarian trip, which ended Sunday.

Two of the towns have welcomed Molina before as he makes annual trips in with turkeys that he gives families for Thanksgiving dinner as part of Fundacion 4's work. Yadier and Wanda Molina founded their charitable organization in 2010.

He has also hosted Christmas parties in the neighborhoods.

In December, Molina will return to Puerto Rico to host the second annual Yadier Molina Home Run Derby & Celebrity Softball Game. The event will be at San Juan, Puerto Rico's Hiram Bithorn Stadium, and Molina's foundation announced this week that proceeds will benefit organizations that are helping residents recover from Hurricane Maria damage.

In the "SOS" photo, which Molina shared on Instagram on Thursday, the Cardinals catcher shares the frame with as many nine children and friends who traveled with him from home to home to deliver items. The popular social media site allows people to tap a heart icon if they "like" the photo, and as of Tuesday morning more than 9,950 people had.

One was Carlos Beltran.

"I have friends and family over there and things are not getting better," Beltran told the New York Post. The former Cardinals outfielder is currently playing for Houston in the American League championship series while also watching and helping his homeland's recovery. "For the first week and a half, I couldn't sleep. I was going crazy. I didn't hear from my family for a week. Everyone is in the same boat, all different classes. You can have money, but if you don't have food to buy, then you don't have anything. The situation is critical.

"If they want it to disappear," Beltran told the paper, "then Puerto Rico is going to disappear."

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## **Jewish Philanthropists Launch Online Campaign to Aid Puerto Rico (Chabad Lubavitch News)**

**George and Pamela Rohr, and an anonymous donor, join Chabad's efforts on the ground**

By [Eric Berger](#)

October 16, 2017 2:41 PM

[Chabad Lubavitch News](#)

A group of donors have agreed to match contributions to Chabad Lubavitch of Puerto Rico totaling \$125,000 as part of a 30-hour campaign to help the Jewish center in its relief efforts following Hurricane Maria.

Longtime Jewish philanthropists George and Pamela Rohr have offered \$100,000—and an anonymous donor has offered \$25,000—to jump-start a campaign that begins Monday at 3 p.m., Eastern Standard Time.

The Chabad center, co-directed by Rabbi Mendel and Rachel Zarchi, is doing all it can to assist in recovery efforts on the island, where the majority of residents still do not have power—and many lack potable water—following the devastating Sept. 20 storm.

"We recognize that we can't help everyone, but we all need to do our part, our share. Our model is to help one person, one family, at a time, and if we all make that concerted effort, the difference will be great," Rabbi Zarchi [tells Chabad.org](https://www.chabad.org).



Most of the buildings on the island have suffered some physical damage, and water has seeped or flooded into homes, businesses and properties, reports Zarchi. Looting has also resulted, particularly of cars and other vehicles.

The rabbi estimates that more than half of the 2,500 Jewish residents have left Puerto Rico, though he describes their exit as temporary. Other residents have not been able to leave and are often in worse shape, he says. Doctors have warned of the potential for disease outbreaks because of contaminated water being used for drinking, cooking, cleaning and washing.

“It inspires and obligates us to help those who are less fortunate,” says Zarchi, who is one of seven Chabad staff members now offering assistance on the island.

The rabbi hands out cleaning supplies to a line of waiting people.

The funds will go towards items such as baby formula, diapers, nonperishable food products, first-aid supplies, clothing and blankets. Despite the fact that recovery will likely happen slowly—analysts have estimated that it could cost as much as \$95 billion—Zarchi insists that he and other Chabad representatives are “here to see it through to the end.”

Last month, [two planes chartered by Chabad donors](#) delivered essentials to the island.

“Puerto Rico will flourish again,” says the rabbi, “with the Jewish community being a very big part of that renewal.”

[Click here to donate to relief efforts in Puerto Rico.](#)

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## **José Andrés Is Serving More Than 100,000 Meals Daily in Puerto Rico (Eater)**

### **He’s cooking in the region to help Hurricane Maria victims**

By [Monica Burton](#) Oct 16, 2017, 11:31am EDT

#### **[Eater](#)**

José Andrés now serves “[well above](#)” 100,000 meals per day in Puerto Rico. The Washington, DC-based chef arrived on the island nearly three weeks ago with his disaster-relief nonprofit World Central Kitchen to help feed those affected by Hurricane Maria.

After arriving just days after the hurricane made landfall, Andrés mobilized volunteers, activated food trucks, and called on [#ChefsForPuertoRico](#) to establish kitchens all over the island. Recently, Andrés switched focus to serve the people in Puerto Rico’s hardest hit areas and those that have been neglected by other forms of aid.

Over the weekend, the chef established one of his [kitchens in Aguadilla](#), a town on Puerto Rico’s northwest coast left without water, cell phone service, or electricity in the wake of the hurricane. The Aguadilla kitchen joins kitchens in Ponce, Farjado, and more than one operation in San Juan, including the World Central Kitchen headquarters at the Coliseo de Puerto Rico, which Andrés described as “the largest restaurant in the world.”

World Central Kitchen serves the areas without activated kitchens in other ways, and recently, the operation spread out. Starting Friday, the nonprofit delivered food [door-to-door in Loíza](#), sent [food trucks to Vega Alta](#), and set up a [paella popup in Humacao](#) to serve 5,000 people.

Puerto Rico still mostly lacks electricity, and water and other supplies are hard to come by, even for World Central Kitchen. But, Andrés’s team of hero chefs and volunteers remain dedicated to getting food to those who need it, even delivering meals by rope to people stranded in a high-rise apartment building.

How does [#ChefsForPuertoRico @WCKitchen](#) deliver food to people who live many floors up with no electricity for an elevator? Watch! [pic.twitter.com/NPySIFTO13](#)

— José Andrés (@chefjoseandres) [October 15, 2017](#)

However, Andrés is adamant that he can’t single-handedly repair the devastation Hurricane Maria left behind. **The chef consistently calls out FEMA for its lack of support, and during his weeks**



in Puerto Rico, he uses his Twitter platform to publicly ask for their help, as well as to request help from other organizations, [like AARP](#).

Still, Andrés is clearly an expert in matters of disaster relief, and yesterday, the chef took a pause from Puerto Rico updates to [dole out advice](#) to people in Ireland, who were expecting their own hurricane, tweeting “We need to start having food feeding plans yesterday!”

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## **Panamei steps up to help Puerto Rico (Seafood Source)**

By Christine Blank

Published on

October 17, 2017

[Seafood Source News](#)

With a significant presence in hurricane-ravaged Puerto Rico, Miami, Florida-based supplier and distributor Quirch Foods is stepping up its efforts to help the island’s residents and get its business back up and running.

Hurricane Maria, which made landfall on Puerto Rico on 20 September, destroyed hundreds of homes and businesses and knocked out power throughout the island. Maria followed on the heels of Hurricane Irma, which hit Puerto Rico on 7 September. Like most other residents, Quirch’s more than 70 employees on the island have since been suffering power outages, food shortages and a lack of clean water.

“It is a huge strain on employees’ lives,” Jorge Roza, marketing director for Quirch, a meat and seafood distributor that markets the Panamei brand of frozen fish portions and shellfish to retailers, told SeafoodSource.

Quirch Foods, which operates five distribution centers in the U.S. encompassing nearly 600,000 square feet of refrigeration and freezer space, including a 85,000-square-foot distribution center in San Juan, Puerto Rico, moved quickly-delivered food, potable water, and generators to employees to help them get back on their feet.

“Our first priority was to get on that island, and the second was to drop off supplies to employees,” Roza said. “We are working with the governor of Puerto Rico to provide canned chicken, water, and other supplies.”

The company itself was fortunate, as its San Juan facility suffered only cosmetic damage from the storm, and generators were able to keep its frozen seafood inventory safe.

While Roza expects it will be months before power is fully restored to Puerto Rico, “We are starting to see the island come back to life a bit, with the National Guard getting more involved and President Trump’s visit.”

As a result, some of the island’s supermarkets were able to open in early October and Quirch resumed seafood deliveries to them.

Puerto Rico is an essential part of Quirch’s strategy to expand its presence across the Americas, Roza said. In the United States, the Panamei brand is sold at Walmart, Kroger, and other national supermarket chains. Quirch, which is celebrating 50 years in business this year, is now focusing on international expansion in Mexico, Central America, and other areas.

“Our export and international market is growing every day. We are starting to establish trade partnerships in Columbia and Mexico, so now we have got our product in those markets, and have good relationships with the major retailers there,” Roza said. “We have introduced Panamei to a much broader audience, including Honduras and Nicaragua.”

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## WHITE HOUSE / CONGRESS / POLITICS

### Melania Trump urges Americans to donate, volunteer for hurricane relief (Palm Beach Post, MSN, Washington Examiner, The Hill, Washington Times, Daily Caller)

[George Bennett](#)

October 17, 2017

[Palm Beach Post](#)

- **See the video on [MSN](#)**
- **Similar coverage, [Washington Examiner](#) [The Hill](#) [Washington Times](#) [CNN](#) [Daily Caller](#)**
- The White House has [released a public service ad today](#) featuring First Lady and part-time Palm Beach resident Melania Trump urging Americans to donate and volunteer to help victims of hurricanes in Texas, Florida and Puerto Rico.

First lady Melania Trump in April talking to girls from HomeSafe in Lake Worth. (photo provided by HomeSafe)

President Donald Trump on Monday praised his administration's efforts in Puerto Rico, pointing out at a news conference that former Clinton Administration FEMA Director James Lee Witt told The Washington Post [that the Trump Administration deserves an A+ grade](#) for its response.

But more help is needed, Melania Trump says in the new 30-second PSA.

"The president and I have witnessed firsthand the compassion and commitment of Americans as friends and neighbors and strangers continue to volunteer time and money to help one another following the recent hurricanes," the first lady says.

"Your help is still needed," she continues. "Donate to an organization of your choice and volunteer to help your fellow Americans. Visit [nvoad.org](#) and [ready.gov](#) to learn more."

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### Crisis in Puerto Rico Reveals Deeper US Political Fissures (Nonprofit Quarterly)

By [Cyndi Suarez](#) | 2 hours ago

October 16, 2017

[Nonprofit Quarterly](#)

It's less than a month since Hurricane Maria hit Puerto Rico, but Puerto Ricans are already adapting and doing all they can to take care of each other. Adaptation has been hard, and has included making do with substandard or nonexistent basics like food, water, and power; moving stateside; or sending children away to attend school.

One of the many disturbing realities: CNN [reported](#) yesterday that people are drinking water from the Dorado Groundwater Contamination Site, a Superfund site that the EPA designated as contaminated with industrial chemicals that can cause damage to the liver and increase the risk of cancer. [According to](#) the Associated Press, "Even the island's own water authority has distributed water from some wells at the Dorado Superfund site." Puerto Rico, an island 100 miles across and 40 miles north to south, contains 18 Superfund sites, likely the result of the US pharmaceuticals companies that took advantage of tax-free policies and [US Navy bombings](#).

The EPA is asking residents to avoid using the wells in the western portion of the site. Erik Olson, the Health Program Director for the Natural Resources Defense Council in an email to CNN wrote, "It is irresponsible to not make every effort humanly possible to find and provide safe drinking water as soon as possible." Academi, the private security firm headed by Betsy DeVos's brother—you may remember it as Blackwater, from when four guards were found guilty in 2007 of



the shooting of over 30 Iraqis—has received requests to send employees to the island to protect fuel and water distribution. The New York Post [writes](#) that armed mercenaries now roam the streets and local leaders seek to regulate their presence and behavior.

[According to](#) The Hill, unemployment is close to 100 percent. Since October 4th, less than two weeks ago, 30,000 have left the island. Of 1,113 schools in Puerto Rico, NPR [reports](#) that only 200 have reopened. Students have already lost 35 to 40 days of school, according to Julia Keleher, the island's secretary of education. In many cases, students are traveling stateside, often on their own, and staying with relatives to attend school. In the case of the children covered in this report, it wasn't the federal government that helped, but the company of the husband of the family taking them in.

[US politicians, particularly Democrats, are trying to mobilize those coming to the mainland as potential voters.](#) Meanwhile, Trump begrudgingly provides as little rebuilding support as possible while complaining that he should not have to and blaming Puerto Ricans for being the cause of their own problems, debt, and failing infrastructure. It's as if the fact that US companies have benefitted from the tax haven and market that is Puerto Rico—if the island were an independent country, it would be the United States' fifth-largest market—does not figure into the account.

But this is how domination works: a removal from history and a reversal of facts. In spite of high poverty, Puerto Rico has a literacy rate of 94 percent; an island of just over three million awards 50,000 college degrees a year. With 97 percent of these graduates currently unable to find employment on the island, The Hill concludes that what Puerto Rico needs is a business plan that starts at zero—that is, with no debt, from scratch (right now, Puerto Rico's debt totals \$74 billion). By now, we can conclude that this isn't something that the US federal government or its agencies will support.

In this political leadership vacuum, nonprofits, private companies and individuals are taking the lead. We saw this script play out before with Katrina. At the time, we thought this was an exception to the rule. Now it is beginning to look like the new normal, only this time, unlike with Katrina, the scenario of an absent federal response is playing out without 24-hour coverage. In short, it seems it's not just Puerto Rico's infrastructure that is collapsing, but the legitimacy of the US government. We may want to pay attention and learn; one day, this may hit even closer to home...your home.—Cyndi Suarez

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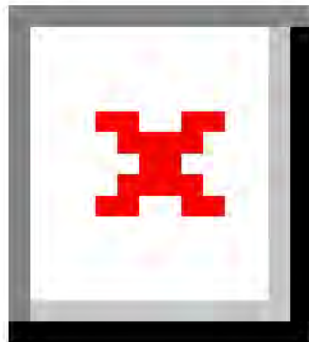
## **Trump's second-class response to Hurricane Maria deepens the divide with Puerto Rico (Think Progress)**

**It's not just a geographical gap.**

[Mark Hand](#) Oct 17, 2017, 9:45 am

[Think Progress](#)





Almost a month after Hurricane Maria made landfall in Puerto Rico, the situation for the U.S. island territory remains bleak. Residents have [expressed](#) disappointment with the federal response as much of the island is still enduring a massive humanitarian crisis.

For the island's 3.4 million residents, basic needs of daily life are still in limbo. Less than [15 percent](#) of the island has electricity service. And [nearly a third](#) of the island still doesn't have any running water.

President Donald Trump and Vice President Mike Pence visited Puerto Rico to observe relief efforts. But Trump's comments upon his return to the mainland [generated](#) anger. The president tweeted that **FEMA** and first-responders can't remain in Puerto Rico "[forever](#)" and [commented](#) that the island's economy and electric power system were a disaster even before the hurricane.

Partly in response to the president's comments that local officials aren't doing enough and his threats to withdraw assistance from Puerto Rico, Trump's approval rating for handling the federal government's response to recent hurricanes has [dropped](#) 20 points in the aftermath of Hurricane Maria.

Despite Trump's [controversial](#) remarks, a [recent poll](#) found that support for aid to Puerto Rico increased the most among Republicans and Trump voters who were previously unaware that Puerto Ricans are, in fact, fellow American citizens.

While many television news crews have left the island, other reporters are still [working hard](#) to get the word out about post-hurricane conditions in Puerto Rico. As more and more stories come out about the Trump administration's [botched efforts](#) to bring aid to Puerto Rico, it's worth considering where the island stood even before Hurricane Maria made landfall.

Situated in the Caribbean Sea about 1,000 miles southeast of Miami, Puerto Rico is a 3,500-square-mile island with 3.4 million residents. Despite its distance from Florida, it is closer to the U.S. mainland than either Alaska and Hawaii, which are both about 2,300 miles from the next nearest state.

Puerto Rico is one of the more highly developed islands in the Caribbean, but the standard of living there still trails far behind life in the U.S. states. The poverty rate in Puerto Rico is 46 percent, compared to a U.S. national rate of less than 15 percent. The median household income in Puerto



Rico is \$19,350, well behind the U.S. median of \$55,775 and more than \$20,000 lower than that of Mississippi, the state with the lowest household income.

Even though they're U.S. citizens, Puerto Ricans don't have the same rights as residents of the 50 U.S. states. They don't have federal representation in Washington. They can't vote for president. There's even [legal confusion](#) over whether a U.S. citizen in Puerto Rico could become president of the United States. Because of all this, it's harder for Puerto Ricans to get their voices heard. Today, it is pleas for disaster relief. During the previous 10 years, it was appeals for debt relief.

"Historically, we've seen that the United States has left Puerto Rico on their backside on a lot of issues. Because of the hurricane, we're now receiving more attention," Adriana Gonzalez, environmental justice organizer for the Sierra Club in Puerto Rico, told ThinkProgress.

Even before the storm, Puerto Rico suffered from a potable water problem. In 2015, 69.4 percent of the population in Puerto Rico, or more than 2.4 million people, got their water from community water systems that [violated](#) the federal health-based standards. For context, 100,000 people were potentially exposed to high levels of lead contamination in their water during the Flint, Michigan, drinking water crisis.

If Puerto Rico were a state, it would rank as the third-smallest in area, ahead of only Delaware and Rhode Island. Despite its small area, if granted statehood, Puerto Rico — which approved a resolution in June to become a state — would be the 30th most populous state in the union.

But Puerto Rico's estimated population of 3.4 million is down more than 10 percent from its peak in 2004 of 3.8 million. By 2025, the island's population is [projected](#) to fall below 3 million — a projection made prior to Hurricane Maria.

Puerto Rico has been undergoing a decade-long recession that led to [high unemployment](#) and eventually forced the commonwealth into [bankruptcy](#) earlier this year. Puerto Rico began defaulting on its debts two years ago, seeking to avoid budget cuts that officials said would deal another blow to an already shrinking economy. In the wake of the storm, Puerto Rico bondholders are already [expecting](#) to get reduced repayments.

For the time being, though, addressing Puerto Rico's debt problems is taking a backseat to getting residents access to basic services.

Puerto Rico's governor has [set a goal](#) of restoring electric service to 30 percent of the island by the end October. The government hopes to have 95 percent of customers with electricity by December 15.

Maria slammed into Puerto Rico on Sept. 20 as a Category 4 storm with winds of 155 mph that devastated the U.S. territory. The international airport in San Juan, Puerto Rico's capital, has reopened, [packed with people](#) who want to leave the island. Puerto Rico schools likely [won't open](#) for weeks. Obtaining water, food, and fuel for cars turns into a [daylong mission](#) for each item. Cell phone service is slowly returning, but it's still extremely [spotty](#).

Unlike most residents on the mainland United States, Puerto Ricans are used to regular power outages. "We jokingly say, 'I'm already accustomed to not having power because this has happened so much in recent years,'" said Gonzalez, who said electric poles and debris littered her street in San Juan for weeks after the hurricane.

As Puerto Rican playwright José Rivera wrote in an [op-ed](#) earlier this month, "Waiting is what Puerto Rico does best." The island's people waited 500 years for the Spanish to end their rule. But at the end of the 19th century, the Spanish empire was replaced by U.S. rule, which is nearing its 120th year.

Many of Puerto Rico's residents share similar hardships to low-income residents across the mainland. They face heightened health hazards and vulnerabilities like residents of New Orleans' Lower Ninth Ward and Houston's Manchester neighborhood, which have also experienced devastation from natural disasters in recent years.



“If you also look at a place like New Orleans and what has happened after Katrina, we know already that in other disaster situations, the preexisting inequalities just get exacerbated. And so the folks who were already suffering the most in these places are the ones who will benefit the least from the reconstruction,” Yarimar Bonilla, a noted social anthropologist, said in an [interview](#) with journalist Bill Moyers.

In Texas, wide-scale flooding from Hurricane Harvey led to the greatest misery for residents. Power outages were minimal as the winds died down by the time the storm came ashore. In Florida, Hurricane Irma’s high winds caused one of the largest natural disaster power outages in U.S. history. The day after the storm hit, 62 percent of Florida’s 10.5 million households were without power.

Power restoration efforts were swift in most parts of Florida, although some regions faced days-long outages. For the people of Puerto Rico, most are still sweltering in the dark in the wake of Maria, as the Puerto Rico Electric Power Authority (PREPA), the government-owned electric utility, struggles to find its footing. Despite the shoddy service, customers of the bankrupt electric utility, which has \$9 billion in debt, [pay more](#) for electricity than any other state but Hawaii.

PREPA delivers electricity to about 900,000 homes through 31,000 miles of distribution lines. The utility also owns and operates about 2,400 miles of major electric transmission lines. It is [estimated](#) that 80 percent of this electric infrastructure was “wiped out.”

[Tired of waiting for assistance, residents are banding together to try and solve the crisis on their own.](#)

Puerto Rico has traditionally relied on highly-polluting petroleum products to produce about two-thirds of its electricity. On the U.S. mainland, petroleum products fuel less than 1 percent of electricity generation.

Over the past two decades, though, the commonwealth has tried to diversify its power generation fuel sources. With the addition of natural gas at the Costa Sur generating facility in southern Puerto Rico, petroleum now serves as the fuel for about 49 percent of the island’s electricity, while natural gas supplies 32 percent, coal about 17 percent, and renewables about 2 percent.

Puerto Ricans deal with many of the same environmental issues as mainland residents. Opposition to the disposal of toxic coal ash in landfills has grown into a powerful movement over the past few years. Regulators granted AES Corp., the owners of the island’s only coal-fired power plant, permission to deposit coal ash in local landfills, reversing its promise from the 1990s that the coal ash would be transported off the island.

After Maria lashed the island, Puerto Rican officials released an official statement saying that coal ash at a landfill in Guayama was not flooded and that high winds had not blown away the coal ash. Local residents, however, are skeptical and are [waiting for confirmation](#) from people who have been able to visit the site. At another dump site, near the southern town of Peñuelas, the town’s residents have been blockading trucks carrying coal ash into their community.

Renewable energy advocates are pushing to move the island away from relying on centralized fossil fuel-fired plants, for both environmental and resiliency reasons. Solar companies are offering aid to the island while also promoting a more sustainable future and resilient energy system. Empowered by Light, a nonprofit group, and solar company Sunrun are working with nonprofit GivePower to provide Puerto Rico’s remote communities with solar-powered water desalination systems, water production systems, and portable solar-powered units, Common Dreams [reported](#).

Some experts also suggest that segmenting Puerto Rico’s electric grid may be a much faster and more reliable rebuilding approach to repowering the island. A microgrid system could help the island have more reliable electricity and prevent such long and widespread outages the next time a storm hits, they say.

Gonzalez doesn’t believe it’s too soon to begin thinking about Puerto Rico’s future as an island less reliant on fossil fuels. Government agencies, as well as nonprofit, and business groups, can



continue with the hard work of making sure people have enough food and clean water in the coming weeks and months. At the same time, Puerto Ricans also can begin the conversation of how they want to redevelop their island so that they can have a sustainable and prosperous future, she said.

“Hopefully we can continue capture the attention of the United States and move to not only rebuild the island but do a transformation of the electric and economic system. That’s what we need — not just to pay the bondholders but to have a booming island and economy,” Gonzalez said.

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## **Puerto Rico resident commissioner: We would have more help if we were a state (The Hill)**

By [Rebecca Savransky](#)

10/17/17 11:57 AM EDT 92

### **[The Hill](#)**

Puerto Rico resident commissioner Jenniffer González-Colón said if Puerto Rico were a state, it would likely have more aid in the wake of hurricanes Irma and Maria.

“Saying that Puerto Rico is in bankruptcy as a way or excuse just to not to help is not wise. It’s not American, and it’s not rightful,” González, a lifelong Republican, [told Politico's "Off Message" podcast](#).

“If we were a state, we already would have a lot of the help that Florida did.”

During the interview, she also said this isn't the time to be "talking about withdrawing the help."

“This is not the time to talk about how much it’s costing the U.S., because we are American citizens,” she told Politico.

She called Trump's statements and attempts to put blame on Puerto Rico "shocking."

She said everyone on the island is "frustrated," because they didn't expect to be "hit by this kind of hurricane" and to be without power for so long.

González's comments come after Trump has faced backlash for the federal response to the devastation in Puerto Rico. Trump sparked controversy after blasting local Puerto Rican officials and suggesting the island do more to take on the burden of recovery.

Last week, Trump [warned his administration's](#) response to the hurricane-ravaged territory can't last forever.

On Monday, during a press conference in the Rose Garden, Trump defended the federal response to Puerto Rico and said many problems with distributing aid supplies on the ground were because of local issues.

A poll [released Monday found](#) that Trump's approval rating on his response to hurricanes has dropped 20 points since the storm hit Puerto Rico.

Much of the island is still without power and many residents don't have access to clean drinking water.

A report this past weekend said some Puerto Rico residents desperate for drinking water [are turning to](#) a hazardous waste site.

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## OPINION

### **Melania Trump Wants Americans to Help Puerto Rico, Maybe She Should Tell her Husband** (Newsweek, MSN, Washington Examiner, The Hill, CNN, Palm Beach Post)

By [Beatrice Dupuy](#) On 10/17/17 at 11:53 AM

[Newsweek](#)

First lady Melania Trump is calling on Americans to help hurricane victims, despite her husband's much-criticized delayed response to helping devastated Puerto Rico after Hurricane Maria.

In the [PSA](#) posted to the White House YouTube channel on Tuesday, Melania Trump says she and her husband have been affected by the recent hurricanes Harvey, Irma and Maria, and all Americans need to do more.

"Your help is still needed," she says. "Donate to an organization of your choice, and volunteer to help your fellow Americans."

She also gave the web address of [National Voluntary Organizations Active in Disaster, an aid group](#).

The video represents the first live comments by the first lady on the natural disasters since she and the president traveled to Puerto Rico on Oct. 3 to survey relief efforts. In that much-mocked appearance, President Trump complained that the Caribbean island had "thrown our budget a little of whack" and said Hurricane Maria wasn't a "real catastrophe" like Hurricane Katrina in 2005 because there were only 16 deaths on the island at the time.

He landed in more hot water when he threw rolls of paper towels into a crowd waiting for relief. Melania Trump's choice of [footwear](#) also earned criticism after she boarded presidential planes in stilettos before changing into sneakers.

America is noticing. A new [CNN poll](#) shows that 47 percent of respondents disapproved of the way the president has handled efforts to aid the island of 3.4 million Americans. Trump had a 25 percent disapproval rating after Hurricanes Harvey and Irma hit the mainland.

Some respondents were no doubt influenced by Trump attack on the San Juan Mayor Carmen Yulín Cruz, whom he called a "[nasty woman](#)" in a tweet after she called out the president for his lack of support.

"Such poor leadership ability by the mayor of San Juan, and others in Puerto Rico, who are not able to get their workers to help," he tweeted. "They want everything to be done for them when it should be a community effort."

Virtually the entire island remains without power.

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### **Opinion: Puerto Rico's Crisis, by the Numbers** (NY Times)

David Leonhardt

OCT. 17, 2017

[NY Times](#)

The humanitarian crisis in Puerto Rico, by the numbers:

More than 80 percent: The portion of the island's electric grid that is not functioning.

28 percent: The share of Puerto Rican residents who lack running water.

72 percent: The share of residents who have running water and thus are subject to the health department recommendation that people boil or disinfect their water before drinking it.

100 percent: The share who are in one of the two previous categories.



40 percent: The share of residents who lack a cellphone signal.

20, out of 51: The number of sewage-treatment plants not functioning.

5, out of 18: The number of toxic-waste sites that have not been inspected by the Environmental Protection Agency since the hurricane.

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Close to half: The portion of hospitals without electricity.

48: The official death toll, although health experts believe — and media reports suggest — the real number to be higher.

(Sources: CNN, NBC, Stat, The Washington Post.)

Where, oh where, is the urgency from Washington about this crisis?

The “message out of Washington amounts to a doctrine of personal responsibility and culpability applied only to Puerto Rico and its people,” writes The Atlantic’s Vann Newkirk II, “not the other areas of the United States affected by recent storms.”]

*[Story trimmed for space and relevancy*

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## SOCIAL LISTENING

### Hurricane Maria DR-4339-PR – Social Listening Report

Tuesday, October 17, 2017 1400

*Compiled by: Savannah Brehmer, Virginia Case and Bree-Constance Huffin*

**Summary:** Frustration and tensions are high today with many looking for someone to blame for slow progress. Recent videos include the wasted supplies, footage from the Sheraton in San Juan, and reports of **FEMA** employees leaving the agency to volunteer. There is hope in reports that cell service and power is gradually coming back. Recent rains continue have caused more flash flooding and landslides. People continue to express gratitude for the efforts from the National Guard, lineman and volunteers providing needed resources. The USNS Comfort continues to be of great interest to locals.

#### Public Perception

#### **FEMA Conversation:**

- The video showing the first floor of the Sheraton across from the Convention Center from Sunday now has over 200k views as it continues to circulate stating that [FEMA, the military and others are partying](#). On one Facebook group, [many do not see this as a problem](#), just people who work hard and need to unwind.
- Individuals are angry with **FEMA** about supplies and goods not being distributed around the island in timely manner. Some have specified that it’s [not the fault](#) of the local governments but that the Federal government is wholly responsible.
- A person from outside the affected area shared information on a popular community page stating that **FEMA** offers Transitional Sheltering Assistance, and that it may not be advertised but that [it is available](#) to survivors in Puerto Rico. The post has received a small amount of attention so far but an individual has [commented on it confirming](#) that others are currently receiving this assistance.
- Those inside and outside the impacted area are heavily discussing **FEMA**’s process of helping survivors recover.



- A [video](#) receiving a lot of attention on Instagram is stating that **FEMA** employees are leaving the agency to help the survivors recover.
- Many commenting from inside and outside the impacted area are very upset to hear that a person is leaving an agency that is supposed to help to find ways to help more.
- A [video](#) of a group giving back to survivors is receiving many reactions from those inside and outside the impacted area.
  - A few criticized [FEMA's methods of helping communities](#) recover after a storm.
  - A few suggest survivors [apply for FEMA's](#) disaster assistance.

#### **Public Sentiment:**

- An article by CNN about the USNS comfort has received a lot of [attention on community pages](#) within Facebook. It shares that there are more than two hundred beds currently available for people in need of medical attention. Individuals who are replying, and sharing the post are angry because they feel the government is not doing enough to get patients in need onto the ship.
  - There is a slight trend with individuals in the affected areas discussing their travels to the USNS comfort [before realizing](#) that they are not able to get onto the ship even if they are in need of medical attention. Confusion about [how to qualify](#) for admittance onto the ship is [prominent](#) among survivors.
- Individuals from Caguas are posting their pictures from [yesterday's flooding](#), and sharing their feelings of hopelessness about the rain continuing to come.
- People are [thankful](#) for the linemen who are working to restore the power throughout the island.
- There is a general sentiment that [the government is not helping](#).
- Appreciation continues for the work the Army and National Guard has done in Puerto Rico after Maria. ([example 1](#) , [example 2](#))
- Many are expressing gratitude toward chefs who in addition to cooking hot meals for survivors are delivering tarps.
  - Many inside and outside the impacted area are proud of their work and sending praises. One comment challenges **FEMA** to do better. ([example 1](#) , [example 2](#))
- Friends and family who have loved ones on the island are asking what the most efficient way to get [supplies to Puerto Rico](#) is because of the delay in shipments when utilizing the post office.
- Evidence of donated food and water for Patillas in a possible waste container has people inside and outside the impacted area outraged. ([example 1](#) , [example 2](#) , [example 3](#) , [example 4](#) , [example 5](#) , [example 6](#))
  - A video circulating on Twitter and Facebook shows boxes of food and jugs of water wet and tossed into a giant container.
  - People are wondering why the food is placed here and not being distributed.
- The story written by the [Huffington Post](#) that was mentioned in yesterday's report has gained a considerable amount of attention within the local communities. Commentary on the post ranges from positive support for the mayor to individuals stating she's playing politics and does not care about what's truly happening within the island.



- [Politics continue to generate lengthy conversations](#) over how things are being managed and who to blame. It's a way for some to blow off steam, others to grandstand, while others try to meter it saying that [the circumstances should bring everyone together](#).

## Operations

### Volunteer/Donations:

- There's a woman who is offering her experience [helping Puerto Ricans relocate to Florida](#).
- Volunteers are [continuing to donate](#) to their community.

### Communication:

- As cell service continues to improve throughout the island friends and family share stories of their loved ones [being located](#) or being able to [communicate](#) that they are [alive and well](#).
- It is worth noting that people are posting screen shots of texts on social media, indicating that information flow may move from those who have cell voice and text service to social for those who don't have internet access. ([example 1](#), [example 2](#))

### Mass Care:

- As of 2100 EST- The Humane Society of Puerto Rico faced flooding yesterday, and was required to [evacuate the animals](#).
- As of 1900 EST- A post that asks for more [doctors to be made available](#) for the survivors in Florida, Puerto Rico has received a lot of attention on Facebook. It describes the patients, conditions they are suffering from, and the desperate need they are in for more medical staff.

### School:

- Schools are reopening: [Juan Morell Music Institute in Ponce](#), [Head Start in Ponce on Wednesday](#)
- As of 1030 ET, today some residents are [still without water](#) in certain metropolitan areas in Puerto Rico.
  - Survivors are confirming this statement as well as providing their location for help.

### Critical Infrastructure/Public Works:

- Some residents are [still without water](#) in certain metropolitan areas in Puerto Rico.
  - Survivors are confirming this statement as well as providing their location for help.

### Energy:

- [News that the Tesla energy company is having trouble](#) completing their restoration project has many people reacting negatively.
  - Some people inside and outside the impacted area do not understand why they are running into issues restoring while some survivors just want their power restored because they have been without power for over a month.
- People are happy to learn about a contract awarded to a company in Texas to [restore power](#).

### Life Safety:

- Friends and family are [continuing to look](#) for their loved ones who have been missing since the hurricane.
- Photos are being shared by many of a [missing man from Yabucoa](#) village.

### Public Safety:



- Individuals are sharing [warnings for flash floods](#) that are due to take place [throughout](#) the week.
- There's an order to freeze prices in order to avoid price gouging from the [Secretary of the Department of Affairs](#).
- Cabo Rojo recommended [how to avoid spreading diseases](#), and while mostly was well received, some point out that [they may not have water to be able to do so](#).

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<b>Sender:</b>	Arroyo, Maria </O=EXCHANGELABS/OU=EXCHANGE ADMINISTRATIVE GROUP (FYDIBOHF23SPDLT)/CN=RECIPIENTS/CN=1457D7C92C7E4172B0C5687D08BF339A-ARROYO, MAR>
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<b>Sent Date:</b>	2017/10/17 17:55:57
<b>Delivered Date:</b>	2017/10/17 17:56:08





**FEMA**

*Media Analysis Report*  
**Puerto Rico - Hurricanes Irma/Maria**  
**DR-4336/4339-PR**

*Tuesday, October 17, 2017, Evening Edition*

**News Clips Analysis / Trends:**

- English and Spanish language coverage of the tainted water issue continues, with most emphasis on the EPA; rage
- Power restoration developments in both English and Spanish generated several stories; neutral coverage except for one Weather Channel story that questions hiring of Montana firm
- Also significant coverage today of medical and business recovery issues, Spanish and English stories; neutral treatment

**News Clips Highlights/Summary:**

- TV station in western NY state interviews EPA chief Pruitt about unsafe drinking water in Puerto Rico; he says **FEMA**, DoD working on it.
- Other local and press coverage of the Dorado water continues
- Spanish - El Nuevo Herald reports: For the victims of Hurricane Maria, the water obtained from aquifers contaminated with toxic substances adds to the risk already represented by water contaminated with sanitary discharges and bacteria transmitted by rat urine.
- Laid-up ship from Hawaii carrier to be reactivated to haul bottled water to Puerto Rico. Horizon Sprit's owner is partnering with Lipsey Mountain Spring Water, **FEMA**'s prime contractor of bottled water, to deliver more than 15 million bottles of water to the island. Jones Act mentioned
- The New York Foundling organization in Puerto Rico reports to Catholic Charities that it is trying to keep its day care centers open and the greatest need is water.
- Spanish - The Legislature will hand over its power to Governor Ricardo Rosselló Nevares to do, as he sees fit, the promise of consolidation and reduction of agencies.
- Spanish - Price controls remain, DACO announces
- Travel + Leisure magazine examines the extent of damage and struggle to recover
- Corps of Engineers hopes to have in place by next week — more than a month after Hurricane Maria made landfall in Puerto Rico — two 25-megawatt generators at a plant in San Juan, Puerto Rico, to help stabilize electricity there. The turbines were received Oct. 13
- Spanish - General Electric Co., which built the Palo Seco Thermoelectric Plant, hired to implement an infrastructure repair plan for the cost of \$ 4.7 million in order to normalize the power the energy in the northern area.

Compiled by Janell Cole, [Janell.Cole@FEMA.dhs.gov](mailto:Janell.Cole@FEMA.dhs.gov) and Rosyveth Rey, [Rosyveth.Ray@FEMA.dhs.gov](mailto:Rosyveth.Ray@FEMA.dhs.gov)



- Weather Channel story looks at hiring of unknown Montana company for power restoration work; **FEMA** and Army Corps of Engineers have distanced themselves from PREPA's contract with the company
- Spanish - Trump said during a press conference that Puerto Rico will need to improvement on Palo Seco's infrastructure and all its electrical system to restore hurricane damage
- NY Daily News reports on the mostly empty beds on the USNS Comfort
- FDA commissioner says US is likely to see shortages on certain drugs after Hurricanes Irma and Maria knocked out power to Puerto Rico, as about 10% of drugs prescribed in the United States are manufactured here
- The Commission of Health seeks a law to facilitate satellite communication to every hospital and medical service in case of a natural disaster
- Spanish - Economic losses of between 25.000 and 50.000 dollars, countless people moving to the United States and businesses operating at half capacity, are some of the limitations of all small businesses in Puerto Rico after the hurricanes
- Medical marijuana industry here will struggle to get back on its feet
- Spanish - Artistic cancellations and cultural activities rare suspended due to the collapse of the power generator that transmits electrical energy to the Fine Arts Center in Santurce.
- Spanish - Economic officials seek incentives to merchants and industrialists who were affected by Hurricane Maria. Businesses in Old San Juan, heart of tourism industry, were hit hard
- Spanish - Meeting was held with the President of the House of Representatives and the regional administrator of EPA
- St. Louis Cardinals' catcher Yadier Molina returns to native Puerto Rico to bring relief supplies
- Jewish philanthropists organize online relief effort
- Eater magazine features Chef Andres' meal provision work; story contains a **FEMA** criticism from the celebrity chef
- In White House PSA, Melania Trump asks for aid to Puerto Rico
- Florida food distributor steps up to help Puerto Rico
- Two analyses make the case for Puerto Rico crisis exposing or worsening divide between the territory and US mainland
- The Hill has an article with comments from Jenniffer Gonzalez, based on her interview with Politico (see Page 11 today's morning edition of this report)
- Responding to White House PSA in which Melania Trump asks for aid to Puerto Rico. Newsweek writer suggests "Maybe she should tell her husband"
- **Social Media Summary:** Frustration and tensions are high today with many looking for someone to blame for slow progress. Recent videos include the wasted supplies, footage from the Sheraton in San Juan, and reports of **FEMA** employees leaving the agency to volunteer. There is hope in reports that cell service and power is gradually coming back. Recent rains continue have caused more flash flooding and landslides. People continue to express gratitude for the efforts from the National Guard, lineman and volunteers providing needed resources. The USNS Comfort continues to be of great interest to locals

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## WATER

### Running out of options: Puerto Rican residents tap into known contaminated water sources (WENY)

By Isabel Garcia, Anchor/Reporter

Oct 16, 2017 11:58 PM

[WENY, CBS-ABC, Horseheads, NY](#)

WASHINGTON, D.C. (WENY) -- Hundreds of people in Puerto Rico continue to tap into a water source which has been federally designated as contaminated.

"It looks like you guys are sending help, but we're buying it, we're not getting it, at all," Lucia Irrizary from Dorado, Puerto Rico says.

With no other water source to turn to, Puerto Ricans in the town of Dorado are left with one option.

They are taking water from a federally designated Superfund site. That's an area that has been designated by the Environmental Protection Agency as hazardous. But people in Dorado said the bottles of water being shipped to the Island aren't getting to them.

"All we've seen is helicopters, no bodies passed by, this is the second time in a week that truck has come by. In other places in other sections they have water we still haven't had water. We had water once. They said it was going to be one-day yes, one-day no. We still haven't had anybody. We've been here more than 6 hours, there is a lady there that fainted, a little boy fainted, we're not animals," Irrizary added.

There are several potentially contaminated wells in the area and, although the EPA spent the weekend testing them, concern from residents and officials grow around the long-term effects of drinking from it.

At EPA Headquarters in Washington D.C., Administrator Scott Pruitt is urging Puerto Ricans to drink bottled water, but it's hard to find.

"It's a very, very difficult situation," Pruitt said Monday.

Pruitt said Puerto Rico's water infrastructure wasn't in a good place prior to Hurricane Maria. When the storm hit, he said, it made it even worse. But Pruitt said he's going to continue to work with government officials on the ground to make sure residents have access to safe drinking water.

"If you're drinking from an area that is impacted or near a Superfund site that shouldn't continue. What should be the focus is making sure they have the access whether its' bottled water or otherwise we need to make sure as an agency working with DOD, working with FEMA, working with these other agencies that are responding to the situation there that they have access to safe drinking water," Pruitt added.

Over the weekend the EPA re-installed fences to re-secure the hazardous wells.

They said they're working with FEMA and local officials to ensure clean water are available to residents in the Dorado community.

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## **Pozos contaminados con sustancias químicas, otro peligro en Puerto Rico (El Nuevo Herald)**

por Eliván Martínez Mercado  
Centro de Periodismo Investigativo  
16 de octubre de 2017 12:01 PM

[El Nuevo Herald](#)

### **For the victims of Hurricane Maria, the water obtained from aquifers contaminated with toxic substances adds to the risk already represented by water contaminated with sanitary discharges and bacteria transmitted by rat urine.**

Para los damnificados del huracán María, el agua que se obtiene de los acuíferos contaminados con sustancias tóxicas se suma al riesgo que ya representan el agua contaminada con descargas sanitarias y las bacterias transmitidas por el orín de rata.

“Con el desespero de que no había agua después del huracán, la gente empezó a abrir los pozos cerrados. Ante la necesidad, la gente hace lo que puede”, contó Carlos Pagán, quien vive frente a Maguayo #5, uno de los 11 pozos de esta zona cerrados porque están en un área contaminada. Para cargar sus contenedores por medio de mangueras de jardinería que han conectado al sistema, la gente entra por detrás de estas instalaciones de la Autoridad de Acueductos y Alcantarillados (AAA), por el hueco de una verja rota. No hay ningún letrero de ninguna agencia local o federal que disuada la extracción de agua en el lugar.

Desde 2016, el Dorado Groundwater Contamination Site es parte de la Lista de Prioridad Nacional, un programa de descontaminación a largo plazo financiado por el gobierno de EEUU mediante el programa conocido como superfondos. La EPA reconoce que el líquido que se extrae de este sistema de acuíferos puede representar un riesgo para la salud y el medioambiente. Ha encontrado en el agua solventes clorinados, como tetracloroetileno y tricloroetileno, usados principalmente para limpieza industrial, y que pueden causar cáncer y daños al hígado.

En una conferencia de prensa llevada a cabo este sábado en el Centro de Convenciones, el gobernador Ricardo Rosselló dijo que hubo cuestionamientos sobre la calidad de las aguas de pozos de Dorado.

“La información no es correcta. El agua sí es potable”, dijo.

Pero se refería a los puntos de extracción Santa Rosa y Nevárez, que se encuentran frente a un centro comercial de Dorado y que, según el Departamento de Salud (DS), están en cumplimiento. El DS dijo al Centro de Periodismo Investigativo (CPI) que no tenía disponibles las pruebas de calidad de agua para mostrarlas. Las declaraciones del gobernador no abordan el hecho de que hay personas usando aguas de otros cuatro pozos del Dorado Groundwater Contamination Site, un ‘superfund site’, que habían sido cerrados. El CPI comprobó que estaban en uso por vecinos de la zona.

La oficina local de la EPA indicó a este medio que estos pozos son los únicos de los 18 ‘superfund sites’ alrededor de todo Puerto Rico donde han detectado consumo de agua. “Hemos visitado todos los lugares de superfondo para asegurar sus condiciones luego del huracán. En algunos había verjas y letreros que se llevaron los vientos. No todos estos pozos tienen verjas”, explicó Carmen Guerrero, directora de la EPA en Puerto Rico.

“Estamos trabajando para orientar a las comunidades, y no solo tiene que ver con los lugares de superfondos, sino que se aseguren de que el agua que toman incluso de la AAA cumpla con estándares de calidad. Y que al igual que se ha observado en ocasiones anteriores, como en la sequía de 2015, los poceros no estén expandiendo los pozos sin permiso de Departamento de Recursos Naturales”.

La oficina local de la EPA aclara así una noticia de los cuarteles generales de la agencia federal en Washington DC, que emitió un comunicado el 11 de octubre, indicando que los damnificados en Puerto Rico estaban llevando a cabo esta práctica, sin indicar en cuáles de las 18 zonas contaminadas. “La EPA hace una advertencia contra la manipulación de los pozos sellados y con candado, o beber de esos pozos, pues puede ser peligroso para la salud de las personas”, indica la comunicación.

“Como esto es un pozo de acueductos, el agua se ve más clarita”, opinó Jorge Vázquez, quien había llegado desde el vecino municipio de Toa Alta a llenar contenedores plásticos de cinco galones, sin saber que estaba



tomando del Maguayo #2, uno de los pozos del 'superfund site' de Dorado. Después del huracán, se había abastecido de aguas de manantial en su pueblo. Ante la alerta de posibles brotes de leptospirosis, la bacteria que transmiten animales como la rata, y de que el agua podía estar contaminada con coliformes fecales, acudió a este lugar.

“Como no hay agua en otro lado, esto es ‘tómalo o déjalo’. La estoy usando para el fregado y para cocinar”. Vázquez era uno de los muchos vecinos que hacían fila para entrar al lugar mientras había tres funcionarios de la AAA en las inmediaciones. Durante la visita, estos no impidieron el paso a los damnificados ni les informaron que se encontraban un 'superfund site'.

Los pozos de la AAA se conectan a acuíferos, reservas subterráneas de agua que ahora tienen secciones contaminadas por desperdicios industriales.

Tras el paso del huracán el pasado 20 de septiembre, la falta de acceso a agua ha exacerbado la crisis humanitaria. Este sábado 14 de octubre, el 40 por ciento de los clientes de la AAA no tenían acceso a agua potable, según el gobierno. Uno de los problemas de la agencia es la falta de electricidad para energizar su sistemas de bombas. La administración de Ricardo Rosselló ha advertido sobre la posibilidad de patógenos en el agua potable, y desalentó la práctica de que la ciudadanía beba agua de ríos y manantiales. Hasta el momento han muerto cuatro personas que se sospecha fueron afectados por leptospirosis, y hay otros seis casos en vigilancia.

En una esquina del parque de pelota del barrio de Maguayo, Carlos López indica que ya ha comenzado a llegar el agua al barrio. Durante los primeros cinco días tras el paso del huracán, cuando del grifo de su casa no salía ni gota, consiguió una guagua pick up, le puso una cisterna y empezó a llenarla en pozo Maguayo #6 para luego irse a repartir por el pueblo. Fue luego cuando se enteró de que podía estar contaminada. La verja del lugar estaba tumbada, en señal de que había sido forzada. “Eso está abierto. De ahí ha estado sacando el agua todo el mundo”.

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## **Llevar agua potable a Maguayo (Primera Hora)**

Por Melisa Ortega Marrero / 10/16/2017 | 07:18 p.m.

### **Primera Hora**

### **Bringing safe water to Dorado, where people were tapping into water from an EPA Superfund site**

Un contingente federal distribuiría 10 paletas con paquetes de botellas de agua y 30 toldos.

Dorado.- Aunque debía estar clausurado, en el pozo #2 del barrio Aguayo aún hay rastros de las personas que acudieron allí para coleccionar agua e, incluso, bañarse.

El problema descansa en que el agua de este pozo de la Autoridad de Acueductos y Alcantarillados (AAA) proviene de un acuífero del Dorado Groundwater Contamination Site, enumerado en la Lista de Prioridad Nacional de la Agencia federal de Protección Ambiental (EPA, por sus siglas en inglés).

Tras la destrucción provocada por el huracán María y la falta de servicio de agua potable en el País, ciudadanos vieron, en estas tomas clausuradas de la comunidad de Maguayo, una alternativa para suplirse del indispensable líquido. Muchos ajenos, tal vez, a la peligrosidad de su consumo.

“En esa zona que hay un acuífero, hay unos pozos de la AAA que se ha encontrado que algunos tienen altos niveles de compuestos orgánicos volátiles y eso puede ser muchas cosas: solventes, derivados de la gasolina, residuos de proceso industriales, por ejemplo”, explicó la directora de la EPA en Puerto Rico, Carmen Guerrero.

Luego de que trascendiera en medios periodísticos el acceso de damnificados al acuífero potencialmente contaminado, los pozos de esta comunidad fueron colocados hoy bajo vigilancia de una empresa privada, observó este diario. La verja que rodea el pozo #2 había sido forzada y, en el suelo, fueron abandonados pedazos de mangueras, envases plásticos, un jabón y una toalla.



En septiembre de 2016, el Dorado Groundwater Contamination Site fue colocado en la lista de atención prioritaria de la EPA. Previo a su inclusión, la agencia federal había informado que el muestreo realizado detectó niveles elevados de tetracloroetileno y tricloroetileno, solventes utilizados en procesos industriales.

Sin embargo, Guerrero aclaró que no todos los pozos de ese municipio suplen agua que incumple con los estándares de calidad, pero sí deben ser monitoreados con frecuencia a modo de prevención.

Por ejemplo, el pozo de Santa Rosa recibió el aval del Departamento de Salud, y los muestreos realizados allí por la AAA durante el fin de semana arrojaron resultados favorables, precisó Guerrero. La EPA realizó sus propios análisis, pero los resultados no estarán disponibles hasta el viernes, señaló.

“Los pozos que hoy día exceden los estándares de calidad, según los estudios de Salud, la EPA y la AAA están cerrados, y la gente no deberían estar accediendo a ellos. No debería haber ningún tipo de maquinaria para manejarlos”, puntualizó la directora de la EPA a nivel local, al advertir sobre los daños a la salud que puede provocar el consumo prologado de fluidos contaminados.

Advertencia federal

Hoy, funcionarios federales llegaron hasta el pozo #6 de Maguayo precisamente para distribuir agua embotellada.

Elizabeth Browditch, del Negociado federal de Investigaciones (FBI, por sus siglas en inglés), explicó que la misión del grupo era suplir agua a las personas que residen cerca de los pozos #2, #4 y #6 de Maguayo y “correr la voz de que el agua que sale de ellos está contaminada”.

El contingente federal distribuiría 10 paletas con paquetes de botellas de agua y 30 toldos, abundó Browditch.

Pese a las expresiones de la directora de la EPA en Puerto Rico y de la empleada del FBI, el secretario de Estado, Luis Rivera Marín, alegó que el agua que sale de los pozos clausurados en Maguayo provienen del Superacueducto.

“Estos pozos no están energizados. No están energizados y no están extrayendo agua de aquí. Aquí la presión que hay es del Superacueducto. Así que las muestras que se puedan estar cogiendo de aquí, lo que están cogiendo son muestras de agua del Superacueducto. Pero más allá de lo que me puedan decir, quise venir y ver las conexiones (de donde extraían el líquido)”, expresó al secretario, quien negó la información sobre agua contaminada en Maguayo.

El funcionario arribó, sin previo anuncio, a los predios del pozo #6 mientras las autoridades federales distribuían la asistencia.

“Nosotros no tenemos que ver nada con toda esa gente que acaba de llegar”, se le escuchó decir a uno de los integrantes del grupo federal.

Este medio realizó llamadas tanto al presidente de la AAA, Elí Díaz Atienza, como a su portavoz de prensa, Leticia Jover. Sin embargo, al cierre de esta edición no fue concedida la reacción solicitada.

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## **Pasha to use laid-up ship to deliver water to Puerto Rico (JOC.com)**

Joseph Bonney, Senior Editor

Oct 17, 2017 11:38AM EDT

[JOC.com \(Journal of Commerce\)](#)

Pasha Hawaii is pulling a 37-year-old ship out of layup to move 800 containers filled with bottled water for hurricane relief in Puerto Rico, where political arguments over Jones Act's US-flag shipping requirements have flared since Hurricane Maria.

The Horizon Spirit will be loaded at Long Beach and will transit the Panama Canal en route to Puerto Rico by the end of October. The vessel will be available for additional Puerto Rico relief service afterward, Pasha said.

The carrier said it is partnering with Lipsey Mountain Spring Water, the **Federal Emergency Management Agency's** prime contractor of bottled water, to deliver more than 15 million bottles of water to the island.



The Horizon Spirit is one of several old steam-powered vessels that Pasha acquired when it took over Horizon Lines' US West Coast-Hawaii service after Horizon was broken up at the end of 2015. Pasha is building two liquefied natural gas-powered ships to replace its older vessels.

Puerto Rico's humanitarian crisis after Maria sparked renewed criticism of the Jones Act, the 1920 cabotage law that requires US domestic shipments to move in US-flag vessels built, owned, and crewed by American citizens.

President Donald Trump granted a temporary waiver of the law, allowing non-US-flag ships to carry cargo between the US mainland and Puerto Rico, but the waiver was allowed to expire after 10 days. The Jones Act does not prohibit non-US-flag ships from serving US ports from other countries.

Jones Act critics claimed US-flag restrictions on domestic shipments were delaying delivery of aid. The act's supporters said Jones Act carriers Crowley Maritime, TOTE, and Trailer Bridge began funneling cargo to San Juan as soon as the port was reopened. They said delivery problems were due to disrupted inland distribution, not vessel supply, and that cargo delivered by Jones Act ships was piling up at the Port of San Juan.

Crowley has added six vessels, and Trailer Bridge has deployed an additional barge to its Jacksonville-San Juan service. Crowley said that through last week it had delivered more than 6,500 loads of FEMA and commercial cargo from 20 vessels, and that it expected nine vessels carrying 2,500 to 3,000 loads to arrive in Puerto Rico this week.

Republican Sens. John McCain of Arizona and Mike Lee of Utah have introduced a bill to repeal the Jones Act, but the effort faces long odds. Republicans and Democrats at a House Transportation and Infrastructure subcommittee hearing Oct. 3 expressed unanimous support of the law.

Industry representatives told the subcommittee that loosening the Jones Act would undermine US shipbuilders and would not help Puerto Rico because international carriers would likely serve the island's small trade by transshipment and would ignore the money-losing northbound backhaul that US-flag lines now serve.

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## **RESPONSE and RECOVERY**

### **Legislatura cede su poder para reducir las agencias de gobierno (Primera Hora)**

Bárbara J. Figueroa Rosa

10/17/2017 |00:00 a.m.

#### **Primera Hora**

**The Legislature will hand over its power to Governor Ricardo Rosselló Nevares to do, as he sees fit, the promise of consolidation and reduction of agencies.**

La Asamblea Legislativa le cederá su poder al gobernador Ricardo Rosselló Nevares para que haga, como mejor le parezca, la prometida consolidación y reducción de agencias.

El proyecto de administración a esos fines se presentaría hoy en ambos cuerpos cuando arranca la sesión legislativa interrumpida por el paso del huracán María.

El gobernador hizo el anuncio ayer en una mesa redonda con periodistas, pero pidió embargo hasta que se presentara la medida de la que no se le dio copia a la prensa.

Según detalló el mandatario, la idea de ceder la facultad de hacer cambios en las agencias provino del presidente senatorial Thomas Rivera Schatz como una medida para agilizar el proceso y no se negoció ni se pidió nada a cambio.

“Va a ser una ley que va a facultar al gobernador, que le hace una delegación de poderes al gobernador para que mediante orden ejecutiva haga los cambios a la rama ejecutiva... hasta tanto y en cuanto en algún momento en el futuro, cuando digamos que pase el tiempo en que esta ley tenga vigencia, se haga otro cambio o algún otro ejecutivo haga otro cambio”, dijo Rosselló Nevares.



De esta manera cumple con su plan de reducir el tamaño del gobierno de 131 agencias que existen actualmente a entre 35 a 40 como máximo. A su juicio lo que cambia es “el mecanismo para hacerlo de manera más eficiente dentro de la emergencia”.

“El objetivo siempre fue ir rompiendo (sic) lo que eran los programas del gobierno, de los distintos servicios que se daban y preguntarnos cuáles eran duplicados para integrarlos, cuáles de esos servicios se podían externalizar, cuáles no eran necesarios (e) incluir alguno que fuera necesario de cara al futuro”, declaró.

El proyecto dispondrá que un total de 15 agencias no se pueden modificar ya sea por disposición constitucional o porque cuentan con autonomía propia o son entes fiscalizadores.

Las agencias que están protegidas por la Constitución son los departamentos de Estado, Justicia, Hacienda, Educación, Trabajo, Transportación y Obras Públicas, Desarrollo Económico, Salud y Agricultura.

Las otras que no se cambiarán son el Panel del Fiscal Especial Independiente, la Oficina del Contralor, la Oficina de Ética Gubernamental, la Comisión Estatal de Elecciones, la Oficina del Contralor Electoral y la Universidad de Puerto Rico.

Adicional a esas, tampoco se harán cambios en las corporaciones públicas que ya tienen un Plan Fiscal aprobado o están acogidas al Capítulo III de Quiebras dentro de la Ley federal Promesa, ya que esas tienen encaminados sus procesos de reconstrucción, dijo el gobernador.

Todas las procuradurías estarán bajo evaluación y Rosselló Nevares no descartó que se consoliden sus respectivas funciones con las de otras agencias.

Mientras, los proyectos que estaban bajo consideración de la legislatura -como la consolidación del Departamento de la Familia y el de Seguridad Pública- se dejan sin efecto para que los cambios se hagan mediante orden ejecutiva. De hecho, el único estimado de ahorros con los ajustes en las agencias es el de unos \$50 millones que ya se había difundido con esos dos proyectos de ley.

Ramón Rosario, secretario de Asuntos Públicos de La Fortaleza, dijo que la idea es que se reduzcan gastos, se mantengan los servicios públicos, a la vez que se promueve la economía.

El funcionario aseguró, además, que no se afectarán programas que reciban fondos federales y que tampoco implica el despido de empleados públicos.

Mientras, Rosselló Nevares indicó que habrá programas que se deleguen a Alianzas Público Privadas, pero no adelantó cuáles serían más allá de lo que anunció en conferencia separada relacionado a la generación de energía eléctrica y de transportación marítima.

### **Proyecto de emergencia**

Por otro lado, Rosselló Nevares también presentará hoy otro proyecto de administración de respuesta en caso de emergencia

La medida incluirá muchas de las órdenes ejecutivas que el mandatario aprobó desde el paso del Huracán María para que se activen de forma inmediata en caso de que ocurra una nueva catástrofe incluyendo la activación de un comité de respuesta preestablecido con anticipación.

“La idea de todo esto... (es) coger todas las lecciones aprendidas, todas las órdenes ejecutivas y lo que habíamos visto sobre este proceso y aprender de estas mejores prácticas que se implementaron, como en Katrina, y hacer una ley de emergencia para que, en caso de que esto vuelva a ocurrir, tengamos una hoja de ruta para ejecutar”, declaró el gobernador.

Del mismo modo, la ley incluiría cancelación de convenios colectivos durante el periodo de emergencia, la flexibilización de compras gubernamentales y se extendería seis meses el periodo para poder tomar vacaciones.

“Algunas veces los convenios tienen horarios establecidos, tienen funciones establecidas y en la emergencia todo el mundo tiene que hacer de todo y esas regulaciones, incluso la paga adicional y el pago por hora o compensatorio, dejarlo sin efecto... sería en favor del trabajador y del servicio”, dijo Rosario.

La medida, cuyo texto tampoco se distribuyó, establecería un cuerpo de auditores que velen por la entrega adecuada de suministros.

También se le exigiría a los hospitales, égidas y otras instituciones que tengan un plan de contingencia listo que incluya por obligación equipos de generación de energía y sus respectivas reservas de combustible por hasta siete días para que no haya que hacerles entrega cada dos días, como sucede ahora.



En términos de contribuciones se autorizaría al secretario de Hacienda a establecer cambios temporeros en los códigos, tales como eliminar o reducir tasas de intereses o penalidades en el retiro de cuentas IRA “para fomentar la recuperación de los individuos”, según explicó el mandatario.

En el área de telecomunicaciones se dispondrá que un funcionario podrá entrar a cualquier lugar privado para reparar una línea que esté rota y se le releva la responsabilidad.

Rosselló Nevares dijo que se establecerá una reciprocidad en servicios de salud con quienes ayuden en la emergencia y se facilitará la entrada de cuerpos de paz, entre otras medidas.

El primer ejecutivo enfatizó que busca tener listas las medidas “de antemano”.

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## **DACO asegura que no eliminará órdenes de congelación de precios (Metro PR)**

lunes 16, octubre 2017 18:09

[Metro Puerto Rico](#)

**Because the island remains in a state of emergency, the DACO secretary assured that he maintains control of the prices of basic necessities that prohibit an increase in the profit margins**

El secretario del Departamento de Asuntos del Consumidor (DACO), Michael Pierluisi Rojo, aseguró hoy que no levantará las órdenes que congelan los precios de artículos de primera necesidad y las que prohíben un aumento en los márgenes de ganancia, ya que la isla continúa en emergencia.

Pierluisi explicó en una comunicación escrita que reconoce que los comercios se encuentran operando con más gastos operacionales como gasto de diésel, seguridad y mayor personal, entre otros elementos, que y se les hace más difícil operar. “Pero el comerciante no puede olvidar que muchos consumidores perdieron su trabajo, su carro y hasta su casa”, sentenció.

Además, aseguró que DACO es flexible con el cumplimiento de las reglas porque está comprometido con la reactivación de la economía, mientras no se trate de las órdenes de emergencia, como las de congelación de precios de artículos de primera necesidad y de márgenes de ganancias de gasolina, diésel y gas licuado.

“Hemos otorgado solicitudes de aumento de precio cuando el costo de adquisición aumenta para importar a Puerto Rico productos que escasean como agua y hielo, entre otras cosas. Eso ha estado claro desde un principio”, explicó Pierluisi.

“En todo momento he resaltado el compromiso del sector comercial que cumple con su deber. Pero les recuerdo que en este momento hay un deber social que va por encima de muchas cosas. He visto a muchos tener ese fin en su conciencia porque me lo han dicho los propios consumidores durante mis visitas a los comercios”, expresó Pierluisi.

Ayer el vicepresidente de la Cámara de Mercadeo, Industria y Distribución de Alimentos (MIDA), Manuel Reyes, declaró a Metro que los comerciantes han experimentado un alza en sus costos debido al diésel, piezas para las plantas eléctricas y personal de seguridad adicional.

Este exhortó a los comerciantes que respeten la congelación de precios de artículos de primera necesidad y agregó que el Gobierno deberá evaluar si se mantiene vigente por más tiempo.

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## **Latest in Puerto Rico Recovery: No Water, No Power & Trailers Stuck at the Port (Catholic Charities of New York)**

Posted on October 17, 2017

By Alice Kenny

[Catholic Charities of New York/New York Foundling](#)

**First-Hand from New York Foundling in Puerto Rico**



Check out this just-updated Puerto Rico hurricane recovery report from New York Foundling, a Catholic Charities affiliate that typically cares for nearly 1,500 children at more than 42 Head Start programs throughout island.

By Carmen Jirau-Rivera  
Chief Program Officer  
The New York Foundling

It's dire out there. Our island is still very much in need of assistance. Hurricane Maria blew off daycare center roofs, broke windows, and tore out air conditioners, leaving our sites surrounded by downed trees and power lines, water-sodden walls, branches inside classrooms and classroom equipment and supplies that need to be replaced.

We had to clean and decontaminate the premises in order to resume services in as many of our daycare centers as possible because children we serve are hungry and parents are in need of respite and need to return to work themselves.

We are literally operating without power, with little water and food supplies are limited. So far, we reopened 17 of our 42 daycare centers in the municipalities we serve.

We are so appreciative to Msgr. Sullivan at Catholic Charities for the \$25,000 check he gave us last week on behalf of Catholic Charities NY and to Caritas, Catholic Charities' sister agency in Puerto Rico, for the \$20,000 they gave us to provide vouchers for the families and to secure food for the centers.

Our center staff has initiated the cleanup necessary to resume services, and we relied on our local contractors to remove debris and ensure entrances and playground areas for the children are safe. Our staff, 37 of whom lost their own homes or sustained such damage that they had to vacate, have returned to work and engaged in the tasks necessary to clean and decontaminate centers to ensure the centers comply with and adhere to the health and safety regulations.

We open our centers between 7 and 8 a.m. and keep them open until noon to provide each child with breakfast and lunch, and a much needed sense of normalcy during this time of upheaval in the lives. We ask our parents to stay so we may provide them with a light meal as well and much needed respite.

Our nutritionists are running around the island to secure food supplies. This means they have to keep refueling and waiting on line. Thankfully, the lines for fuel have decreased.

But waiting for food can take a full day and not every vendor has an ample supply of food. Our nutritionists have to wait hours in their cars just to get into food distribution sites' parking lot. Then, for crowd control, they have to wait in lines to get into the stores. Inside, the food supply is limited.

There is almost no access to fresh fruit and meat, just carrots, peppers and some dried food. We cook everything we get and deliver it to our daycare sites. We know there are these huge trailers sitting at the port yet supplies are not getting into supermarkets fast enough.

Nowhere on the island do our daycare sites have power, not even at our main office. Some of our centers have gas and they are able to cook a simple hot meal.

We keep our daycare sites open until noon because by then it becomes unbearably hot and the children and staff can't stand it.

The most pressing need, however, is water. We have running water in our centers but supplies are so low we're running out. We use all the gallons of water we have to flush toilets. We met with businesses to see if we can get water and have it delivered straight to our central office so our staff can disseminate water to our daycare centers.

Without water we'll have to shut down.

Thanks to our partner and affiliate, New York Foundling, along with our sister agency, Caritas Puerto, Catholic Charities NY is on the ground, helping Puerto Rico rebuild and is serving as a conduit for donations for Puerto Rico Relief and Recovery efforts.

Help us help Puerto Rico recover.

Donate by Mail: Make checks payable to "Catholic Charities/Estoy Con Puerto Rico" and address to:  
Catholic Charities/Estoy Con Puerto Rico, 1011 First Avenue, 11th floor, New York, NY 10022



Donate Online: Visit [Catholiccharitiesny.org/helppuertorico](http://Catholiccharitiesny.org/helppuertorico)

On the web form, type "Estoy con Puerto Rico" in the text field below "Optional: Designate Your Contribution"

Learn more about our recent disaster relief efforts: [Catholiccharitiesny.org/disasterrelief](http://Catholiccharitiesny.org/disasterrelief)

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## **Puerto Ricans Are Still Without Food, Water, and Power One Month After Hurricane Maria (Travel + Leisure)**

By Isis Briones

October 16, 2017

[Travel + Leisure](#)

Puerto Rico was hit by Hurricane Maria nearly a month ago, but recovery from the Category 5 storm is just beginning.

"People are dying in this country," San Juan Mayor, Carmen Yulín Cruz Soto, pointed out on September 30 — prior to President Trump's visit two weeks after the disaster. "I am begging, begging anyone that can hear us, to save us from dying. If anybody out there is listening to us, we are dying, and you are killing us with the inefficiency and the bureaucracy."

There's no food and no water

According to a news release published by the Environmental Protection Agency (EPA), water safety in Puerto Rico is critical. All water, whether it's being used for drinking, bathing, or brushing teeth, must still be boiled before use, as livestock waste, human sewage, and chemicals may have contaminated all major water supplies.

And many Puerto Ricans are relying on rations for food. Manuel Reyes, the vice president of Puerto Rico's chamber of marketing, industry, and distribution of food told a local CNN affiliate that "resupplying [the food supply chain will] take some time."

Until then, many grocery store shelves will remain barren.

Everyone's living without power

Hurricane Maria knocked out all of Puerto Rico's electric grid — and since then, not much has changed. Puerto Rico Governor Ricardo Rosselló announced on Sunday, October 15 that he plans to restore power to 95 percent of the island by December 15.

"This is an aggressive agenda, but we cannot be sort of passive in the face of Puerto Rico's challenges," Rosselló told CNN. "We are going to need all hands on deck."

Some estimates suggest Puerto Ricans may still be without power in five or six months.

Generators are running on empty

According to Vox, leaving the island is almost impossible, with some airlines reporting waiting lists of more than 20,000 people. In most areas, private generators are the only power source, but fuel shortages mean they may not be running for much longer.

Even hospitals are affected. No generators mean patients with life sustaining devices like dialysis machines won't be able to get the treatment they need. Miami-born performer, Pitbull, was so moved by the situation that he recently lent his private jet to to Puerto Rico to help evacuate Puerto Rican cancer patients to Fort Lauderdale, so they can resume treatment.

People can't communicate

The restoration of cell service continues to be a slow process. On October 6, the FCC reported that 83 percent of Puerto Rico's cell sites are still not working. "It is critical that we adopt a coordinated and comprehensive approach to support the rebuilding of communications infrastructure and restoration of communications services," said U.S. Federal Communications Commission (FCC) Chairman, Ajit Pai, when he announced his plan to create a Hurricane Recovery Task Force.



Google's parent company, Alphabet, also has a plan to bring back service through giant floating balloons. Called "Project Loon," the experimental effort will supposedly provide a network to the 3.4 million residents stranded in the area. The balloons are able to remain airborne for 100 days or more. It's unclear exactly when the devices will arrive at the Caribbean island, but the FCC allowed Alphabet to drop 30 of them on October 7.

But people are coming together

On Saturday, October 14, celebrities including Jennifer Lopez, Demi Lovato, Gwen Stefani, and others came together for the One Voice: Somos Live, a hurricane relief concert that raised \$20 million. Even more impressive, a junior college student at Carnegie Mellon University crowdfunded more than \$82,000 to fill up a plane with supplies and deliver it to Puerto Ricans in need.

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## **POWER / INFRASTRUCTURE / COMMUNICATIONS**

### **Puerto Rico Takes Steps to Boost Electric Power by Next Week (NBC News)**

by Suzanne Gamboa

Oct. 17, 2017

[NBC News](#)

WASHINGTON — The Army Corps of Engineers hopes to have in place by next week — more than a month after Hurricane Maria made landfall in Puerto Rico — two 25-megawatt generators at a plant in San Juan, Puerto Rico, to help stabilize electricity there.

The turbines were received Oct. 13, and the Army Corps wants the generators to be operational by Oct. 25, spokeswoman Catalina Carrasco said Tuesday.

Carrasco said preparations to install the turbines at the Palo Seco Power Plant in San Juan were slowed by the continuous rains that Puerto Rico has been having. Once installed they will allow for customers to have consistent power while repairs are made.

The generators should boost the share of customers with power from the grid from 13.7 percent to 30 percent, Fernando Padilla, project manager for the Corps told El Nuevo Día newspaper in Puerto Rico. The hope is to also make it more stable.

Wednesday will mark one month since the hurricane began charging through the island, causing massive devastation to the island's power grid and infrastructure. As of Tuesday, 17.7 percent of the island's electric utility customers had power from the grid, though it's still not reliable. Others in Puerto Rico, though not all, have power through diesel-fueled generators, but only as long as the diesel lasts.

Officials want to provide stable power to hospitals and water and wastewater treatment plants in the northern part of San Juan and then connect lines in the southern part of the capital. The Corps told El Nuevo Día it also is important to get power to pharmaceutical companies on the island because they are a key part of its economy.

The Corps awarded a \$35.1 million contract to Weston Solutions based in West Chester, Pennsylvania, for the work.

Also, the Corps awarded a \$240 million limited competition contract to Fluor Corp. based in Irving, Texas. The company will provide personnel, technical expertise and equipment for work on the transmission and distribution lines. According to the company's website, it previously built a coal-fired power plant in Guayama, Puerto Rico, that provided power to 9 percent of the island's electrical capacity.

Puerto Rico Gov. Ricardo Rosselló has set a goal of re-establishing electricity to 30 percent of the island by the end of the month and 95 percent by Dec. 15.

Carrasco said that as of Tuesday, the Corps has received \$577 million from the **Federal Emergency Management Agency** for power restoration, and that the figure is likely to rise.

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## **Gobierno reparará la Central Palo Seco ( Metro PR )**

Cybernews

martes 17 de octubre del 2017

11:37 10/17/2017 |3:50 p.m.

[Metro PR](#)

**General Electric Co., which built the Palo Seco Thermoelectric Plant, hired to implement an infrastructure repair plan for the cost of \$ 4.7 million in order to normalize the power the energy in the northern area.**

El secretario de Asuntos Públicos de Fortaleza, Ramón Rosario confirmó el martes la contratación de la compañía General Electric (GE), que construyó la Central Termoeléctrica Palo Seco, para implantar un plan de reparación de esa instalación a un costo de 4.7 millones de dólares para así poder normalizar la generación de energía en el área norte.

“Mientras General Electric hace las reparaciones y la planta se puede prender, lo vamos a hacer. Nosotros queremos funcionar con normalidad, la presión la recibimos nosotros. Nosotros queremos ya generación en el norte”, dijo Rosario en un aparte con algunos medios al concluir una conferencia de prensa.

Incuso, el funcionario aseguró que “ya General Electric estará trabajando en esa reparación”.

Esto, a pesar que la semana pasada, el director ejecutivo de la Autoridad de Energía Eléctrica (AEE), Ricardo Ramos rechazó tajantemente la recoendación de la Unión de Trabajadores de la Industria Eléctrica y Riego (UTIER) de encender las unidades uno y tres de Palo Seco para aumetar la generación de electricidad en el norte. Alegó que un informe de una firma de ingenieros establece que esa planta tiene daños estructurales y que las vigas que soportan las calderas están corroidas, lo que supone un riesgo para los empleados.

El secretario de Asuntos Públicos detalló que el contrato a GE se otorgó a principios de esta semana y que se estuvo negociando desde que salió el informe sobre el estado de la planta antes del impacto de María. Además, dijo que el monto inicial del contrato era de 7 millones de dólares, pero que la cifra luego se redujo a 4.7 millones.

“General Electric es la empresa que hizo la planta (Palo Seco). Ciertamente esto va a coger un tiempo. Antes de eso vamos a tener soluciones. Antes de que Palo Seco esté estructuralmente apta para ser encendida, vamos a tener soluciones”, aseguró.

Rosario dijo que el martes el por ciento de generación es de 17.7. Aclaró que se mantiene la meta del gobernador, Ricardo Rosselló de lograr que el 15 de diciembre el 95 por ciento de los clientes de la AEE tengan energía.

Indicó que al 30 de octubre se debe haber mejorado la generación de electricidad en un 30 por ciento con la interconexión de las plantas generatrices del sur y las del norte y con la instalación de los generadores que el Cuerpo de Ingenieros del Ejército de Estados Unidos gestionó para la Central Palo Seco.

El Cuerpo de Ingenieros ha desembolsado 115 millones de dólares en equipos y 35.1 millones para la contratación de Weston Solutions para los generadores de Palo Seco. También se contrató la empresa Whitefish y el lunes se anunció la contratación de Fluor Corporation por 240 millones de dólares para la reparación de sistemas de transmisión y distribución. Esperan llegar a 966 brigadas de aquí a tres semanas.

Otros detalles sobre el estado de la recuperación del país tras el impacto del huracán María, están disponibles en el portal [estatus.pr](http://estatus.pr).

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## **Puerto Rico Turns to Unproven Montana Company for Massive Power Restoration Job, But No One Knows Why (Weather Channel)**

By Marcus Stern

Oct. 17

[weather.com](http://weather.com)

At a Glance



Power restoration in Puerto Rico has been slow, raising concerns whether Whitefish – the company hired outside the usual channels for the job – is up to the task.

Why did Whitefish, a two-year old private company with few resources of its own, win the contract? **FEMA and the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers are at a loss to explain.**

Facing the destruction of almost its entire electrical grid after Hurricane Maria, Puerto Rico turned to a little-known Montana company to restore power rather than rely on a vast network of public power companies that usually comes to the rescue after disasters.

Overall, progress has been slow and uneven, stoking concerns about whether the unproven company is up to the task – and raising questions about the irregular way in which the territorial government awarded the contract. Ordinarily, the **Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA)** provides money and the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers oversees federally led recovery efforts after a disaster. Neither agency said it had a role in awarding or supervising the contract Puerto Rico awarded to restore its power lines.

Concerns eased Monday after **FEMA** and the Army Corps belatedly announced a \$240 million contract with Irving, Texas-based Fluor Corporation to take the lead in restoring transmission and distribution lines. But head-scratching continues over the curious and opaque manner in which heavily indebted Puerto Rico eclipsed **FEMA**, the Army Corps and a national network of public utilities – brimming with line workers and bucket trucks – by turning over such an immense responsibility to a two-year-old private company with few resources of its own.

Typically, immediately after a disaster, the American Public Power Association – a public utilities trade group – emcees a conference call with its membership – 1,100 public utilities across the country – to get all the needed line workers and bucket trucks to the stricken area as soon as possible under what are called mutual aid agreements. For instance, the public power association facilitated the rapid deployment of many thousands of workers and their equipment to Texas and Florida after hurricanes Harvey and Irma struck.

But the Puerto Rico Electrical Power Authority (PREPA) took a different route after Maria's 155 mph winds decimated the island's already-failing electrical grid on Sept. 20, leaving 3.4 million residents, hospitals and businesses without electricity – possibly for months.

When the power association convened its conference shortly after Maria struck, PREPA told participants it wouldn't need the network's help because it had already contracted with Whitefish Energy Holdings LLC, a two-year-old consultancy, to spearhead the restoration efforts.

Whitefish, having to subcontract almost all of the work, had recruited and deployed 160 of the 1,000 workers needed to do the job – 16 percent – three weeks after Maria struck. By then, coincidentally, 16 percent of the power grid has been restored. Last week, the effort saw reversals when a large number of people whose power had been restored lost it again when a transmission line tripped.

"It's a bit unclear why PREPA chose to go down that route, especially considering the offer was made to them for this mutual aid from the American Public Power Association that apparently wasn't taken advantage of," said Cathy Kunkel, an energy analyst with the Institute for Energy Economics and Financial Analysis, a non-profit that focuses on utility issues.

It might have been "reasonable" to try to act quickly given the devastation caused by Maria, she said. However, she urged a federally appointed board overseeing Puerto Rico's finances to obtain "a copy of that contract and do oversight on how that money was spent" to ensure that local ratepayers and U.S. taxpayers aren't getting "ripped off."

The slow progress and questions surrounding the contract led the public power association to confirm Monday that Puerto Rico bypassed its vast resources by awarding the contract to Whitefish.

"To date, PREPA has not requested aid from the Association; rather, it has engaged Whitefish to marshal the resources required to undertake power restoration," the power authority stated. "Communications with PREPA and Whitefish have been difficult due to the telecommunications issues on the island."

The contract was reportedly awarded through a phone call placed in the days immediately after Maria hit. A PREPA employee who happened to have a satellite phone and phone number for Whitefish made the call,



according a story published by E&E News, an independent news organization that focuses on energy and environmental issues.

The employee had the phone number for Whitefish because PREPA had issued a request for proposals several days earlier to handle far-less-extensive damage caused by Hurricane Irma. It had grazed Puerto Rico two weeks earlier. Whitefish was one of only two companies to respond to the request, and so its phone number was handy after the power grid went dark because of Maria. But the timing left PREPA almost no time to vet the company.

The E&E article was based on an interview with Ricardo Ramos, PREPA's CEO, who told the publication, "The day that the Corps of Engineers showed up and offered the assistance, we immediately accepted because we knew that financially it was a better model. The benefit is that I don't have to spend the remaining dollars that are needed for recuperating the system."

The Army Corps denied any role whatsoever in the awarding or execution of the Whitefish contract.

Andrew Techmanski, who founded Whitefish in May 2015, told Bloomberg News in Puerto Rico that while other power companies were "afraid of the question of how are we going to get paid, Whitefish Energy was the company that actually made the leap of faith and was able to get over here."

But PREPA spokesman Carlos Monroig Aceveda told weather.com that it had paid Whitefish "\$2 million for the costs of mobilizing personnel and equipment," adding that its contracts "are evaluated and awarded by the U.S. Corps of Engineers in coordination with **FEMA**, which disburses the money."

His statement that the Corps was supervising didn't square with what Catalina Carrasco of the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers told weather.com. She said the Corps "does not have any involvement with the contract between PREPA and Whitefish, adding in an email that the Corps "does not know how PREPA negotiated the contract. USACE does not know how PREPA is paying Whitefish. The contract is between PREPA and Whitefish. Corps of Engineers, did not negotiate, does not have ANY involvement between PREPA and Whitefish." The emphasis was in the email.

William Douglass, a spokesperson for **FEMA**, said the agency's databases do not show any dealings with Whitefish, although he added that **FEMA** gives money to agencies like PREPA and those agencies sometimes give some money to a third party like Whitefish without **FEMA** necessarily knowing.

Both **FEMA** and the Army Corps of Engineers have distanced themselves from PREPA's contract with Whitefish. But **FEMA** has given PREPA \$97 million to restore the power lines and PREPA could have used some of that money to pay Whitefish. **FEMA** announced Monday it was approving an additional \$128 million for PREPA.

PREPA itself is bankrupt, \$9 billion in debt and currently generating no revenue. Even before hurricanes Irma and Maria struck, the island was experiencing frequent blackouts because of its aging power infrastructure. PREPA has existed for decades on financial vapors, resulting in critical maintenance being deferred and significant deterioration of its power generation, transmission and distribution infrastructure.

Whitefish's Techmanski was working in Puerto Rico and couldn't be reached for comment, according to spokesman Brandon Smulyan, who was himself unable to answer basic questions about the company because he has only been working with Whitefish under a contract for the past week. For instance, he couldn't say how many employees Whitefish has. Public records list Andrew Techmanski as the president and Amanda Techmanski, whom public records identify as a registered nurse, as the manager. Andrew Techmanski has an extensive background in power-line work, according to his LinkedIn profile and other public records.

Smulyan said the young company is funded by two private equity firms – HBC Investments and Flat Creek Capital – both based in Dallas, Texas – and Brazil-based Comtrafo Transformers, which builds power transformers.

"To date," Smulyan wrote in an Oct. 11 email, "Whitefish has visited, assessed and created operational bases in Cayey, Arecibo, Salinas, Manati, and Ponce and San Juan. Whitefish has repaired structures, conductors and lines in Salinas and has built access roads to the southern portion of the Salinas 230kv line."

It also has contracted with JEA, a public utility serving the Jacksonville, Florida, area to send 41 line workers and service personnel to Puerto Rico. New York has sent a contingent of line workers, as well.



Separately, the Army Corps of Engineers has put in a purchase order for 50,000 utility poles and 6,500 miles of cable. It also awarded a \$35.1 million contract to West Chester, Pennsylvania-based Weston Solutions to install a 50 megawatt generator in Puerto Rico's Palo Seco Power Plant.

**FEMA**, the Army Corps of Engineers and the U.S. Department of Energy all have personnel on the ground coordinating power restoration efforts.

Puerto Rico's power infrastructure has been a concern for decades partly because it lies in the heart of a hurricane corridor. Previously, the territory's power grid was ripped up by Hurricane Georges in 1998.

After Georges, the Clinton administration gave \$133 million to PREPA to fix the power grid and begin putting lines underground. In 2000, the administration issued a glowing report saying the improvements had "empowered" Puerto Ricans to "withstand even the most unreliable weather."

When Hurricane José struck Puerto Rico in 1999, the report said, the improvements left people, including PREPA officials, "confident" the island would not lose power. And it didn't.

But 18 years later, Maria utterly destroyed the grid and it remains unclear when – and for how long – power will be restored.

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## **Trump: Puerto Rico necesita nuevo sistema eléctrico tras daños causados por huracán (Spuntnik Mundo)**

América del Norte

00:51 17.10.2017

[Spuntnik Mundo](#)

**Trump said during a press conference that Puerto Rico will need to improvement on Palo Seco's infrastructure and all its electrical system to restore the damages caused after the passage of the hurricanes Irma and Maria**

WASHINGTON (Sputnik) — Puerto Rico necesitará realizar una importante reforma de su sistema eléctrico para restaurar los daños causados tras el paso de los huracanes Irma y María, dijo el presidente de EEUU, Donald Trump, durante una conferencia de prensa.

"(Vamos a) tener que construir un nuevo sistema de instalaciones eléctricas en Puerto Rico (...) su sistema eléctrico ya estaba en horribles condiciones antes de los huracanes y quedó en peores condiciones después de su paso", sostuvo el mandatario.

El pasado sábado, el gobernador de Puerto Rico, Ricardo Roselló, fijó como meta restablecer 30% del servicio eléctrico antes de fines de octubre, con el objetivo de restaurar 95% del servicio antes de finalizado este año.

Además, Trump afirmó durante la conferencia de prensa que los desafíos específicos que Puerto Rico ha enfrentado a raíz de los huracanes incluyen el acceso externo limitado y la falta de personal para entrega de ayuda humanitaria.

Más de tres semanas después de que los huracanes Irma y María azotaran la isla caribeña, poco más de una décima parte de los hogares de este país ha podido restaurar su servicio eléctrico y los generadores se usan continuamente para entregar energía a los hogares que restan.

El huracán María tocó tierra en Puerto Rico el 20 de septiembre como una tormenta de categoría 4, causando un gran daño a la infraestructura y la red eléctrica de la isla.

Puerto Rico es un estado libre asociado de EEUU que carece de autonomía y de recursos para hacer frente a la destrucción del ciclón.

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## **Baja la cantidad de abonados que ya tenían agua (El Nuevo Dia)**

martes, 17 de octubre de 2017 -

1:00 PM



Por Gloria Ruiz Kuilan1

### El Nuevo Día

**The Director of the Aqueducts and Sewerage Authority (AAA) confirmed "Finally we were able to install the fourth engine of the" superaqueduct ", which suffered serious damage to its engines due to the hurricane path."**

La Autoridad de Acueductos y Alcantarillados (AAA) experimentó hoy una baja en la cantidad de abonados a los que ya se le ha restablecido el servicio de agua potable.

Mientras que la Autoridad de Energía Eléctrica (AEE) aunque logró aumentar la cantidad de generación, tuvo una falla que dejó nuevamente sin luz las instalaciones del Cuartel General, el centro comercial Plaza Las Américas y las oficinas del correo, todas ubicadas en la avenida Roosevelt en Hato Rey.

Como es de costumbre el director de la AEE, Ricardo Ramos no estuvo presente en la conferencia diaria del gobierno en el Centro de Convenciones. Allí estuvo el secretario de Asuntos Públicos de La Fortaleza, Ramón Rosario así como el director ejecutivo de la AAA, Elí Díaz.

El director de la AAA dijo que las recientes lluvias afectaron las operaciones en la represa Carraízo y la planta Sergio Cuevas, que actualmente trabaja con generadores de energía. Esto provocó una baja de un 7% en la cantidad de abonados, por lo que el porcentaje de abonados con servicio bajó de 72% a 65.43%.

"Tenemos varias personas en el área metropolitana afectadas por una situación en Carraízo ,como sabemos hubo mucha lluvia durante el día de ayer. Esto trae mucho sedimento. Se tiene que controlar un poco la producción de agua. Se apagaron dos de las bombas que bombean agua de Carraízo a la planta de Sergio Cuevas", explicó Díaz Atienza.

Dijo que en horas de la tarde y/o de la noche debe haber "alguna mejoría" en el servicio.

Reconoció que hay intermitencia en el servicio puesto que hay pueblos como Caguas, Carolina, Guaynabo, Cidra, Cayey y Bayamón en donde el agua va y viene.

"Muchas de esas áreas tienen que ver con el flujo de Sergio Cuevas y son las áreas más cercanas al sistema. Por lo tanto, es normal de que al haber ido de cuatro bombas a dos bombas en la producción de agua, las áreas más lejanas son las que se están afectando y las áreas que están en el mismo medio van a sentir intermitencia porque puede que por el consumo les llegue menos (agua) y de momento, puede que por la noche –que hay menos consumo- les llegue más (agua)", explicó.

También hubo intermitencia con el suplido de agua del Superacueducto porque "finalmente pudimos instalar el cuarto motor del Superacueducto", dijo. Desde el azote del huracán, este sistema sufrió daños en sus motores que han sido reparados paulatinamente.

Pese a estas fluctuaciones en el servicio, hoy es cuando se refleja una baja en la cantidad de abonados con servicio. Aun así ambos funcionarios dijeron que las cifras provistas por el gobierno se ajustan diariamente.

En cuanto al servicio de la AEE, Rosario dijo que la meta de que haya 30% de abonados con luz al finalizar el mes de octubre, se logrará "con la conexión de energía de la generación del sur al norte y con los generadores que ya se están instalando por el Cuerpo de Ingenieros en Palo Seco".

Esta instalación es posible gracias a la contratación de Weston Solutions por \$35.1 millones. Ese contrato lo concedió el Cuerpo de Ingenieros del Ejército de los Estados Unidos y ayer otorgó otro por \$240 millones a la empresa Fluor Corporation, con sede en Irving, Texas.

Por su parte, la AEE contrató a la empresa Whitefish para atender la conexión de la zona norte, la de mayor demanda, con la del sur que es donde hay más generación. A preguntas de este diario, Rosario dijo que empleados de la empresa Power Secure hacen una evaluación del sistema energético. Esta misma semana Rosario Cortés había dicho que esa empresa había sido contratada por la AEE y luego se dijo que aún no se ha firmado contrato.

"Power Secure se ordenó la movilización de servicios adicionales. Está haciendo los assessment. Ciertamente ya se le dio la instrucción de moverse a Puerto Rico", dijo Rosario Cortés.



Ahora la AEE contrató a General Electric por \$4.7 millones para “en lo que remediamos provisionalmente la generación en el norte, atendamos los problemas de infraestructura de Palo Seco que han impedido que muchas de sus unidades no estén en servicio en este periodo de emergencia”, afirmó Rosario.

Al día de hoy la generación de la AEE está en 17.70%, un poco más que ayer aunque hoy se quedó sin luz nuevamente el Cuartel General, Plaza Las Américas y la oficina del correo ubicadas en la avenida Roosevelt Roads en Hato Rey.

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## **HEALTH / DEATHS / ENVIRONMENTAL**

### **Floating hospital anchored off hurricane-ravaged Puerto Rico is mostly empty (NY Daily News)**

BY Jessica Schladebeck

Tuesday, October 17, 2017, 10:12 AM

[New York Daily News](#)

A floating state-of-the art hospital is anchored off the coast of hurricane-ravaged Puerto Rico to offer assistance to those unable to get treatment in the over-crowded hospitals there — but those in need are struggling to board the ship.

The USNS Comfort has 250 beds for patients on the island shut out by clinics without supplies and other facilities lacking electricity. Only 33 of those beds — about 13% — have been filled in the two weeks since the ship arrived, CNN reported.

“I know we have the capacity,” Comfort’s mission commander and Capt. Kevin Robinson told the news station. “I know that we have the capability to help. What the situation on the ground is... that’s not in my lane to make a decision.”

Puerto Rico Gov. Ricardo Rossello told CNN the problem is rooted in “the communication flow” between doctors and the Department of Health, which is tasked with referring patients to the ship. Hospitals said they were unaware what standards patients need to meet in order to board the medical facility.

“I asked for a complete revision of that so that we can start sending more patients over there,” Rossello said.

The hospital ship was deployed as part of the federal response to Hurricane Maria, which left the 3.4 million American citizens on the U.S. territory without power. They also face water and food shortages as well as communication outages and ongoing health risks.

Almost a month after the hurricane made landfall as a Category 4 storm, 86% of Puerto Rico is still without electricity and nearly 30% does not have access to drinking water. Most cell towers and antennas are also still down.

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### **Drug shortages likely after hurricanes (Formulary Journal)**

October 16, 2017

By Christine Blank

[Formulary Journal](#)

FDA Commissioner Scott Gottlieb, MD, said that the United States is likely to see shortages on certain drugs after Hurricanes Irma and Maria knocked out power to Puerto Rico.

At the same time, Gottlieb said the agency is working with Baxter and other manufacturers to mitigate the shortages.

Around 10% of drugs prescribed in the United States are manufactured in Puerto Rico, which faced a double whammy when Hurricane Irma knocked out power to much of the island in early September and then Hurricane Maira knocked out electricity across the island on September 20.

Only 16% of the power to the island has ben restored, according to a Reuters article.



“A lot of companies say they’re online, but they basically have one of five lines running at 20% or 80% or 50%,” Gottlieb told Reuters. “It’s unclear when they are going to be able to bring that up to full capacity.”

Related: DEA slashes opioid drug production

FDA warned that around 40 drugs manufactured in Puerto Rico could face shortages, including treatments for cancer, rheumatoid arthritis and HIV. Merck & Co, Johnson and Johnson, Amgen, Bristol-Myers Squibb, Eli Lilly and Co., and other major manufacturers have facilities in Puerto Rico.

However, FDA has been working closely with Baxter and other companies “to reduce the risk of shortages of critically important drugs and to minimize impact on any existing shortages,” Gottlieb said in a statement.

For example, Baxter and FDA identified ways to prevent a significant shortfall of production of Baxter’s sodium chloride 0.9% injection bags from its Puerto Rico facility.

“While these products have been in shortage industry wide since 2014 and other manufacturers exist, the agency and Baxter recognized that further shortage of this product could potentially put US healthcare at risk. The FDA has worked closely with Baxter to find solutions to prevent additional shortages,” Gottlieb said.

FDA is helping manufacturers in Puerto Rico secure fuel and manufacturing supplies and is providing logistical support to move critical products onto and off the island.

“FDA is also expediting reviews and approvals of other dosage forms and generic versions of products as alternate sources of critical products,” Gottlieb said.

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## **Proponen que los hospitales tengan un sistema de comunicación satelital (El Nuevo Dia)**

Bárbara J. Figueroa Rosa

10/17/2017 | 00:00 a.m.

[El Nuevo Dia](#)

### **The Commission of Health will seek a law proposal to facilitate satellite communication to every hospital and medical service in case of a natural disaster**

Ante los problemas de comunicaciones que enfrenta la isla tras el paso del huracán María, el presidente de la Comisión senatorial de Salud, Ángel ‘Chayanne’ Martínez, se dispone a radicar un proyecto de ley para fijar como requisito que toda facilidad hospitalaria en la isla cuente con un sistema de comunicaciones satelital para poder operar en caso de que se pierda la comunicación a causa de un fenómeno natural.

La medida legislativa será radicada en la Cámara Alta en los próximos días, ya que la Asamblea Legislativa retomará sus labores esta semana luego casi un mes de receso por el huracán.

“Uno de los grandes problemas que tuvo Puerto Rico, y que en muchas áreas todavía está teniendo, es la falta de comunicación. El impacto del huracán María dejó claramente establecido la vulnerabilidad del sistema de comunicaciones vigente. Los hospitales necesitan tener una fuente para comunicarse con el gobierno y entre sus departamentos o facilidades fuera de la zona para así poder asistir mejor a los pacientes que están hospitalizados y facilitar la comunicación con el gobierno para cualquier emergencia o necesidad apremiante”, señaló el senador por el Distrito de Arecibo en declaraciones escritas.

A poco más de tres semanas del embate del potente ciclón, solo un 59% de la isla cuenta con servicio de telefonía móvil según la página cibernética status.pr, donde el gobierno local actualiza los datos sobre el estado de situación del país.

De hecho, un 25% de las antenas de teléfonos celulares, o sea 672 antenas de las 2,680 que hay en la isla, están funcionando. También está operando un 42% de las torres de celulares (690 torres de 1,619).

Según el legislador, el gobierno tiene una red de teléfonos satelitales que fue clave en las primeras horas después del paso de María, por lo que considera que esa tecnología tiene que ser implementada en los hospitales, particularmente aquellos que operan en la zona rural del país.

“Estamos evaluando legislación para hacer compulsorio que hospitales cuenten con un sistema avanzado de comunicaciones. En esos términos, estaremos pidiendo el gobierno federal asistencia técnica para que provean



los mejores sistemas de comunicación para estas facilidades médico-hospitalarias”, agregó el también portavoz alterno de la mayoría en la Cámara Alta, al destacar que enviará una carta a la comisionada residente en Washington, Jenniffer González, para que ayude en el esfuerzo de dotar como equipos de primer orden a los hospitales públicos y privados.

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## **Usan el Pachín Vicéns como instalación médica (Primera Hora)**

Michelle Estrada Torres

10/17/2017 | 12:18 p.m.

### **Primera Hora**

The Juan "Pachín" Vicéns Auditorium is currently operated by the federal and state Department of Health and nongovernmental organizations such as DMAT and the Syrian American Medical Society and is intended to serve people who are bedridden, ventilated or require oxygen to live.

Ponce. La Estación Médica Federal (FMS, en inglés) contaba este lunes con 12 pacientes provenientes de los refugios y hospitales de la ciudad, en su mayoría adultos mayores que requieren equipo de soporte vital.

La instalación, ubicada en el Auditorio Juan "Pachín" Vicéns, es operada por el Departamento de Salud federal y estatal, y organizaciones no gubernamentales como DMAT y Syrian American Medical Society. Aunque su apertura estaba prevista para el pasado viernes, no fue hasta este domingo en la mañana que recibió los primeros pacientes.

Esta instalación está destinada, principalmente, a atender personas encamadas, que están conectadas a ventiladores o que requieren oxígeno para vivir.

Joyce Oberly, oficial de asuntos públicos del Departamento de Salud federal destacada en el FMS, informó que las personas encamadas que estaban en las escuelas-refugios Lila Mayoral y Aurea Rivera Collazo fueron trasladadas al FMS, y otras fueron referidas por hospitales de la ciudad. Al momento de la entrevista, ninguno de los pacientes era pediátrico y ninguno estaba conectado a un ventilador.

### **El FMS tiene capacidad para 160 adultos y 15 menores de edad, según el Municipio de Ponce.**

Las camas están en el centro del auditorio, donde ubica el tablero de baloncesto. En la entrada hay una mesa de registro donde se toman los datos demográficos de la persona.

También hay un área de cernimiento, donde se toman los vitales del paciente y se determina si requiere hospitalización, indicó Oberly. Esto, porque además de los referidos hay personas que han llegado por su cuenta al FMS.

La instalación cuenta con médicos, enfermeras, nutricionista, farmacéutico, ingenieros, especialista en conducta y oficial de seguridad. En total, son 42 empleados y voluntarios que durante sus horas libres pernoctan en el segundo piso del auditorio.

A los pacientes admitidos se les proveen medicamentos como la insulina y también se dan recetas, dijo la oficial de prensa.

Oberly señaló que se permite un familiar con cada paciente, que se ubica en una cama contigua. Estas personas tienen que proveerse sus alimentos y artículos para pernoctar.

El médico generalista ponceño Juan Camacho es el único galeno del grupo y funge como director médico. Mientras, Sally del Toro, directora del Departamento de Salud en la región de Ponce, es el enlace estatal.

La alcaldesa de Ponce, María Meléndez Altieri, indicó en la emisora radial Notiuno 1260 que el FMS operará durante 30 días.

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## **Discuten acciones para la recuperación de la Isla (El Vocero )**

Redacción El Vocero

17 de octubre de 2017



### El Vocero

**In order to discuss the EPA's action to mitigate the damages caused by the passage of Hurricane Maria, a meeting was held with the President of the House of Representatives and the regional administrator of EPA**

El presidente de la Cámara de Representante, Carlos 'Johnny' Méndez Núñez, sostuvo esta tarde una reunión con el administrador regional de la Agencia de Protección Ambiental (EPA, por sus siglas en inglés), Peter López, con el objetivo de discutir las acciones que está tomando esa dependencia para mitigar los daños causados por el paso del huracán María.

“Fue una discusión abierta, franca y transparente sobre los esfuerzos que está haciendo la EPA para ayudar en la recuperación de Puerto Rico tras el impacto del poderoso huracán María. Dialogamos de varios temas importantes para nuestra isla, particularmente que reglamentación está utilizando la EPA para delinear la recolección, manejo y eventual disposición de las miles de toneladas de escombros. Esto es algo bien importante porque no queremos añadir un problema ambiental a la situación que ya tenemos con los trabajos de recuperación. Tiene que haber una intervención federal para la disposición de estos escombros. Otro aspecto que nos preocupa es como se va a trabajar los residuos sólidos y eso también lo dialogamos”, indicó el líder cameral.

Por su parte López, quien es el administrador para la Región 2 de la EPA, la cual incluye los estados de Nueva York y Nueva Jersey, así como las Islas Vírgenes estadounidenses y Puerto Rico, agradeció al presidente de la Cámara por escuchar sobre las acciones que está tomando dicha dependencia como consecuencia directa del paso de María.

“Fue un honor reunimos con el ‘speaker’ de la Cámara de Representantes sobre las labores que estamos haciendo en la EPA para ayudar a levantar a Puerto Rico. Coincidimos con su (Méndez Núñez) visión de lo que tenemos que hacer, en el área de manejo de escombros, al igual que sobre los residuos sólidos, para asistir a la Legislatura y al gobierno de Puerto Rico en estos momentos. La Legislatura cuenta con el apoyo de la EPA”, señaló el funcionario federal.

Durante la reunión, que se extendió por más de una hora, se tocó también el tema de la limpieza de los terrenos utilizados por la Marina de los Estados Unidos en la isla municipio de Vieques.

“Para mí esto es algo bien importante y el Administrador de la EPA para nuestra región esta consiente de esto. Nos complace su deseo de ayudar a que finalmente se empiece a limpiar todos los terrenos, sin ninguna otra excusa”, dijo Méndez Núñez.

Hace poco más de un año, la EPA concluyó en un informe que se necesitarían alrededor de \$500 millones y 15 años más para completar los trabajos de limpieza de las más de 14,560 cuerdas de terreno utilizadas por décadas como polígono de tiro, tanto en Vieques como Culebra.

“Estos terrenos están bajo el control de la Marina, entidad que actúa como la parte primaria en este asunto, pero estamos trabajando con ellos para movernos en este frente también, mas ahora, después de la tormenta”, agregó López. En medio de la crisis humanitaria que se vive en Puerto Rico, el Departamento de Justicia y el Negociado

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## **BUSINESS / ARTS-HUMANITIES**

### **Miles las pérdidas económicas para los pequeños negocios (Primera Hora)**

Agencia EFE

10/17/2017 |02:19 p.m.

#### Primera Hora

**Economic losses of between 25.000 and 50.000 dollars, countless people moving to the United States and businesses operating at half capacity, are some of the limitations of all**



## **small businesses in Puerto Rico affected by the passage of Hurricane Maria almost a month ago from now**

Pérdidas económicas de entre 25,000 y 50,000 dólares, un sinnúmero de personas mudándose a Estados Unidos y negocios operando a media capacidad, son algunas de las vivencias de pequeñas empresas en Puerto Rico afectadas por el paso del huracán María hace ya casi un mes.

Jeriell Coreano Morales, administrador de la empresa "Sofrito Moralito" -dedicada a la fabricación de sofritos puertorriqueños, preparado con pimientos verdes, cebollas, ajo, ajíes dulces, hojas de cilantro fresco, recaó (cilantro))- dijo hoy a Efe que su empresa ha tenido pérdidas en ventas directas de entre 40,000 y 50,000 dólares desde el paso del ciclón.

Coreano contó que su fábrica, ubicada hace 15 años en Bayamón sufrió los efectos de María al caerle frente a su portón de entrada varios postes de electricidad que cortaban el acceso al negocio, hasta que tres semanas más tarde lograron reabrir el paso.

"Estamos en el negocio, pero no trabajando a capacidad. La planta (generador) que tenemos no nos corre todo el negocio, sino a 'medio pocillo'", sostuvo el empresario sobre las operaciones de la fábrica a mitad de capacidad.

De igual forma, varios de los productos que compran para elaborar el sofrito, entre ellos, los ajíes, pimientos y el cilantro, que se cosechan en fincas en los municipios de Santa Isabel, Corozal o Caguas, se perdieron.

Ante esto y sin perder las ganas de seguir produciendo, Coreano tuvo que decidir importar estos frutos desde la República Dominicana.

"La calidad no es la misma y es más caro. No es lo mismo traer frutos de afuera, porque siempre tratamos de usar los productos de aquí", admitió Coreano, cuya empresa le vende sus productos a supermercados y restaurantes.

"Vamos a seguir. Gracias a Dios los clientes han sido fieles. La gente nos escribe y nos llama y eso nos motiva a seguir", aseguró el empresario, quien vende sus productos en empaques de entre 16 y 128 onzas.

"Tenemos que levantarnos todos los días positivos, echar adelante, ayudar a nuestros hijos y con el mismo afán que nuestros abuelos nos enseñaron", afirmó.

Coreano Morales fue uno de más de 300 empresarios que acudieron hoy al encuentro "Impulso Empresarial", organizado por el Departamento de Desarrollo Económico y Comercio (DDEC), que orientó y ofreció mecanismos que los ayuden en la reconstrucción de su empresa tras ser afectados por el huracán.

El encuentro se llevó a cabo en el Colegio de Ingenieros y Agrimensores de Puerto Rico en San Juan, donde se ubica el Restaurante Booby's, administrado por José Arturo Torres y que suministra comida a eventos, quien contó a Efe que tras el impacto de María, hasta el momento ha perdido 30,000 dólares en inventario.

"No sufrimos daños, pero sí obviamente muchas de las actividades se cancelaron y esto traerá recorte de horas en los trabajadores. Estamos trabajando a todo vapor y haciendo platos a precios módicos para el cliente", indicó Torres.

"Nadie estuvo preparado para esto y esto nos enseñará a cambiar la actitud. Ahora vienen meses más difíciles y las ventas irán bajando", reflexionó el empresario, quien no obstante, a pesar de las pérdidas económicas, continuará -dijo- trabajando a todo tren.

"Nosotros no nos quitamos. Aunque vendamos alcapurrias (plato típico hecho a base de plátano verde relleno de carne de res), al menos vendemos. Si vendíamos antes langostas, pues ahora venderemos biftec (bistec) y no aplicaremos al momento que se vive", afirmó Torres.

Asimismo, Edgardo Román, propietarios de los laboratorios clínicos Lagos de Plata en Guaynabo y en Levittown (Toa Baja) uno de los barrios de la isla más afectados por María, dijo a Efe que sus pérdidas han llegado a los 25,000 dólares.

Este déficit, según Román, ha sido por cerrar el laboratorio de Guaynabo, mientras que el de Toa Baja está "trabajando medio día" y sin electricidad, por lo que están refiriendo algunas de sus pruebas, como las de mayor urgencia, a otros laboratorios u hospitales.



"No puedo cerrar. Tengo muchos pacientes, y estoy buscando la forma de seguir trabajando. Tengo que prender mis máquinas para dar el servicio. Y ahora tenemos que trabajar con muchos laboratorios por gente que contrae dengue o zika", sostuvo Torres, quien ya cuenta con la renuncia de una persona que "no aguantó" el empuje del caos.

Todos estos empresarios podrán recibir ayuda, según expresó durante su ponencia el secretario del DDEC, Manuel A. Laboy Rivera, en el encuentro "Impulso Empresarial".

Según el funcionario, todos estos empresarios recibirán información sobre los diversos recursos existentes para reactivar sus negocios, entre ellos, préstamos especiales, reclamación de seguros, manejo de compras con el gobierno federal bajo condiciones de emergencia e información de ayudas a sus empleados.

Explicó que esos contratos federales son para la reconstrucción de sus negocios, mientras que otros empresarios necesitarán acceso a capital para seguir operando, "cada cual con su interés".

"Estos son empresarios que me demuestran el interés de que quieren echar pa' lante (para adelante) y buscando las herramientas", expresó Laboy Rivera.

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## **Puerto Rico's MMJ Industry Struggles to Recover from Hurricane (High Times)**

**Although still in its infancy, Puerto Rico's MMJ industry struggles to recover from Hurricane Maria.**

October 16, 2017

By Mike Adams

[High Times](#)

Maria vs Mary Jane

On September 20, Hurricane Maria ripped through the island of Puerto Rico. The storm tore down homes, ruined supplies and killed at least 48 people. According to the latest data, it also hurt the U.S. territory's medical marijuana industry by destroying equipment and facilities crucial to the survival of the cannabis plants.

According to Goodwin Aldarondo, the president and CEO of Puerto Rico Legal Marijuana, "big manufacturing and grow facilities have had their roof blown off, there is water in their manufacturing rooms, equipment damaged, no light for plants and most are dead."

"You're talking about millions of dollars of damage, and we just started as an industry," he added.

Last year, Puerto Rico officials passed regulations designed to establish a medical marijuana program.

Some reports suggest that the medical marijuana industry could help pull the island out of its \$74 billion debt. This prediction did not figure in the possibility of damages as a result of high winds and massive flooding.

The Puerto Rico Medical Cannabis Association doesn't know the extent of the damage yet.

They say they are working to assemble those figures. The most these disheveled operations can hope for, however, is that the insurance companies are able to pay the claims. The federal government does not recognize medical marijuana as a legitimate business. Thus, none of the owners or investors connected to the industry qualify for federal assistance to help their businesses recover.

"The longer the industry is out of commission, the more the entire island will suffer," said Ingrid Schmidt, the president of the Puerto Rico Medical Cannabis Association.

"We were expecting a lot from this industry," she said. "It's the only industry that was creating jobs, and a lot of hope was put into this industry because it was critical to the financial circumstance that our island is going through."

There is a bit of good news, though.

Most of the medical marijuana operations have reopened to some degree. But only a small handful of these operations are able to dispense cannabis to patients.

It is for this reason that some of the rules have changed regarding dispensary designation, which, as of the beginning of October, has given registered patients the ability to secure cannabis products from any dispensary with product to sell.



As for now, all of the medical marijuana facilities are still reliant on generators for power. And the people desperately need all the clean water on the island to stay hydrated. This has made it difficult to irrigate plants.

But, despite the island's lack of electricity and clean water, there are plenty of paper towels thanks to a recent visit by President Donald Trump. As Puerto Rico's medical marijuana industry struggles to recover from Hurricane Maria, we can't underestimate the power of paper towels.

Sadly, while the president recently promised to help the U.S. territory through the crisis for as long as it takes, he has since said that the federal government cannot help "forever."

Trump also discussed the possibility of completely eliminating Puerto Rico's multi-billion dollar debt. But now, that too seems highly unlikely.

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## **A oscuras Bellas Artes (Primera Hora)**

Camile Roldán Soto

10/17/2017 | 00:00 a.m.

### **Primera Hora**

#### **Artistic cancellations and cultural activities rare suspended due to the collapse of the power generator that transmits electrical energy to the Fine Arts Center in Santurce.**

El transformador que transmite energía eléctrica al Centro de Bellas Artes en Santurce colapsó tras el embate de los huracanes Irma y María, y es por esta razón que la actividad en este importante espacio cultural se mantiene detenida.

Jetppeth Pérez, gerente general de la institución, indicó que hoy se realizarán varias pruebas y un cambio de aceite al equipo dañado para determinar si es posible volver a instalarlo y ponerlo a funcionar. Si el plan tiene éxito, continuaría la limpieza y acondicionamiento de ciertas áreas adentro de la estructura que debido a la falta de luz no han podido examinarse detalladamente.

Hasta la fecha, sin contar los daños que puedan enumerarse después de esta revisión, las pérdidas en el centro suman aproximadamente medio millón de dólares.

"Los escenarios se humedecieron, entró agua a varios lugares y también se afectó el área de la fuente y las zonas verdes. Algunos cristales de la Sala Sinfónica se rompieron, pero ya los reparamos", explicó Pérez.

#### **Efecto dominó**

Como en tantas otras empresas del País, el efecto dominó creado por los daños de María mantiene sin trabajo a cerca de la mitad de los 150 empleados de la institución. Al momento, solo han sido convocados a trabajar cerca de la mitad. Seis de ellos fueron trasladados a agencias en los municipios de Carolina y Guaynabo que necesitaban refuerzo en estos momentos.

"Todo esto tiene un impacto. El Centro de Bellas Artes es fuente de ingreso para empleados que trabajan en la taquilla, los artistas, productores y gente que se encarga de todo el andamiaje de los espectáculos", lamentó.

Además, Pérez indicó que debido al paso de los huracanes hubo una ola de cancelaciones en la programación para el mes de octubre y principios de noviembre. Por ejemplo, la Orquesta Sinfónica suspendió su temporada de conciertos y solamente realizará un evento el 17 de noviembre.

Así las cosas, el único ingreso que está teniendo el Centro en estos momentos es por concepto de alquiler de la Sala Sinfónica, que tiene energía eléctrica apenas 4 o 5 horas al día a través de un generador.

Pérez dijo que en noviembre y diciembre (que junto a octubre son los meses más activos en el centro) todavía hay muchos eventos programados.

"Esperamos que podamos retomar pronto nuestra agenda", precisó.

Para información actualizada acerca del funcionamiento del Centro de Bellas Artes, el público puede visitar sus redes sociales o la página oficial [www.cba.pr.gov](http://www.cba.pr.gov).

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## **Cientos de comerciantes afectados por el huracán asisten a orientación de ayudas (Metro PR)**

Miladys Soto

martes 17, octubre 2017 12:01

[Metro PR](#)

### **Economic officials seek incentives to merchants and industrialists who were affected by Hurricane Maria.**

El secretario del Departamento de Desarrollo Económico y Comercio (DDEC), Manuel Laboy, llevó a cabo una orientación de ayudas a comerciantes e industriales que se vieron afectados por el huracán María.

Manufactura, tecnología y exportación de servicios son algunas de las áreas que pueden beneficiarse por la Ley 73 y pueden solicitar incentivos. La actividad, que se llevó a cabo en el Colegio de Ingenieros y Agrimensores, contó con diversas orientaciones para los más de 300 comerciantes que de dieron cita en el lugar.

Laboy dijo que iban a evaluar solicitudes de empresarios por las leyes 73 y 20. Asimismo, expuso que hay otras ayudas existentes que los comerciantes podrán solicitar. Los comerciantes pidieron incentivos para restablecer las telecomunicaciones ya que es uno de los problemas que más han enfrentado. En evento fue dirigido a comerciantes, industriales, dueños de Pymes, entre otros.

El titular del DDEC expuso que cuentan con aproximadamente dos millones de dólares en ayudas. Sin embargo, agregó que Small Business Administration (SBA) y otras organizaciones cuentan con ayuda como préstamos.

#### **Evalúan daños en industrias**

Laboy expuso de diversas empresas bajo la Compañía de Fomento Industrial (PRIDCO) se vieron afectadas con el paso dle ciclón categoría 4. El funcionario contó que hay 224 parques industriales, que ya fueron inspeccionados.

"El mayor de los impactos, más allá de la parte eléctrica y la parte de las inundaciones son los techos, sufrieron muchísimo. Parte de la estructura vial, lo que es la carretera tuvo mucho daño. Nosotros estamos implementando un proceso donde número uno si tiene un seguro privado tiene que empezar a reclamar al seguro, por eso es que tenemos una orientación para reclamos de seguro", precisó Laboy.

El funcionario agregó que algunas de las ayudas disponibles para comerciantes e industriales son reclamos a seguros, incentivos, FEMA y préstamos.

Por su parte, Luis Curdiel, presidente del Banco de Desarrollo Económico expuso una orientación sobre préstamos de emergencia. "Puerto Rico ha pasado por un desastre histórico y ahora viene un periodo de reconstrucción", expuso el funcionario, quien agregó que los comerciantes deberán tener calma en ese proceso.

"Yo he visitado muchos negocios y con probablemente \$20,000 pueden iniciar operaciones", expuso Curdiel.

#### **Preocupación por la migración**

Laboy destacó que al momento ninguna compañía ha mostrado su interés de mover sus operaciones fuera de la isla, aunque no deja de ser un factor preocupante.

"Puerto Rico es un lugar que tiene alta concentración de estas empresas. La manufactura representa la mitad de la economía, el 50 % de la economía de Puerto Rico. Representa casi un tercio de los recaudos de Hacienda para el fondo general", destacó.

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## **“Pocas vitrinas abiertas en el Viejo San Juan (El Vocero)**

Carlos Antonio Otero,

17 de octubre de 2017 10/17/2017 |00:00 a.m.

[El Vocero](#)



**The failures and collapse of energy throughout the island hit hundreds of merchants and restaurant owners who want to reopen their businesses in Old San Juan which is the emblematic postcard of tourism in Puerto Rico.**

El Viejo San Juan, la postal emblemática del turismo en Puerto Rico, se acerca a cumplir un mes en sombras y sin la actividad vibrante de miles de visitantes que en tiempos normales transitaban sus calles adoquinadas, mientras el devenir comercial intenta asomarse lentamente a ofrecer sus productos y servicios, en la aspiración de recobrar la cotidianidad interrumpida por los huracanes Irma y María.

Las fallas iniciales y el colapso en la transmisión de energía en toda la Isla no han permitido que un centenar de comerciantes y dueños de restaurantes abran puertas, salvo contadas excepciones, que independientemente de si no generan ventas en sus primeros días de reapertura, prefieren enviar el mensaje de que se comienzan a levantar.

Herminio Morales, gerente de la ferretería True Value en la calle Fortaleza, fue de los primeros en abrir a los pocos días del paso del huracán María el pasado 20 de septiembre. Lo ha hecho en un horario de 10:00 a.m. a 3:00 p.m. y la clientela ha agotado los imprescindibles por estos días, que incluyen estufas de gas, gas, baterías y linternas, principalmente.

Morales indicó que los artículos olvidados, como las antiguas tablas de lavar, han resurgido y han tenido que hacer órdenes a sus suplidores de estos productos que hace mucho no se incluían en los pedidos. En su caso, sirve casi en exclusiva a los residentes y no tienen una dependencia del turismo, pero la falta de estos impide otras actividades que de manera indirecta le generan ventas.

Contó Morales que el Viejo San Juan es particular, por su arquitectura y su condición de lugar histórico, lo cual imposibilita la colocación de generadores eléctricos en la mayoría de los establecimientos y eso ha hecho que sean pocos los que puedan abrir puertas.

De los escasos comercios con generadores se cuenta el restaurante Pan y Agua, localizado frente a la Plaza de Armas, cuyo propietario Kumar precisó de un permiso del ayuntamiento para poder ubicarlo justo en medio de la plaza. “Apenas tuvimos la tormenta Irma, nos llegó María y desde antes muchos comercios no pudieron abrir. Va a haber muchos negocios que a lo mejor no van a poder aguantarlo (el golpe económico de permanecer cerrados)”, señaló Kumar, quien además cuenta con otros dos establecimientos en la ciudad, pero esos otros han continuado cerrados.

En Pan y Agua la mayor parte de los comensales son locales, empleados de la Casa Alcaldía y del Departamento de Estado, y en menor cantidad los turistas. Los otros dos negocios de Kumar, como están dirigidos al turismo, se han quedado sin clientes por estos días, debido a la falta de cruceros en el puerto de San Juan y a la ausencia en la llegada de turistas en general a la Isla.

“Ojalá y Dios quiera que la velocidad del gobierno si ahora mismo está en 3, que se ponga en 8 y 9. Esto mismo, de tener los negocios cerrados, desanima a los ciudadanos”, expresó Kumar, y dijo que les comunicó a todos sus empleados que su apuesta es a mantener los negocios y no irse de la Isla. “Cuando en las buenas el comercio te lo ha dado todo, en las malas entonces tenemos que dar el hombro”.

En la Librería Laberinto, en la calle Cruz, su propietario Javier Ortiz, dijo que su manera de contribuir a levantar la ciudad es con la apertura del negocio “aunque no venda ni un solo libro”.

“Las primeras dos semanas esto era un pueblo fantasma. No hay luz y en algunos momentos hay agua. Hace una semana que abrí porque uno hace el esfuerzo aunque no haya venta, que la gente vea que vamos recuperando”, expresó Ortiz.

En la Librería Laberinto dependen del consumidor local, pero Ortiz reconoce que la gente está en otros asuntos para atender sus necesidades apremiantes, aunque siente el compromiso de tener las puertas abiertas. Mientras era entrevistado por EL VOCERO, una asidua clienta llegó para pedir un libro que aún no lo reciben, y esta comentó que aunque hay necesidad de muchas cosas, es importante que los comercios de todo tipo empiecen a abrir.

Para Paola Romo, dueña del restaurante St. Germain Bistro & Café en la calle Sol, es un momento complicado donde los ciudadanos y el sector privado tienen que unirse para levantar a la Isla y la actividad



económica. En St. Germain, que suelen recibir a muchos turistas en sus dos conceptos de negocio (operan The Mezzanine at St. Germaine), han revisado sus ofrecimientos para suplir lo que busca el cliente local en este momento.

Romo explicó que han comenzado a utilizar de manera limitada un generador de energía para poder ofrecer almuerzos y café, de 11:30 a.m. a 3:30 p.m. y ver que alimentos dentro de sus propuestas saludables son más viables para los clientes.

El VOCERO visitó un negocio de recordatorios en la calle Cristo, el cual espera por visitantes, y una lavandería que recibía órdenes para poder lavar en otro lugar y luego hacer la entrega a los clientes.

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## **CHARITY / HUMAN INTEREST / VOLUNTEER EFFORTS**

### **With food, water and hugs, Molina delivers help to Puerto Rico (St. Louis Dispatch)**

By Derrick Goold, Birdland column

10/17/17

[St. Louis Post-Dispatch](#)

ST. LOUIS • A short drive from where Yadier Molina grew up in Vega Alta, Puerto Rico, and into the Mavilla neighborhood, the Cardinals catcher stood atop a blacktop road surrounded by stripped-clean and snapped trees and covered with a message that gave words to the reason he came home.

“AYUDA,” it listed. “AGUA. ALIMENTO.”

Translated it asked for “help,” “water,” and “food.”

Written atop, “SOS.”

No translation needed.

The road and the request scrawled along it are clear in a photo that Molina posted last week on his Instagram page. In it, Molina, wearing a St. Louis Blues T-shirt, stands beside residents as part of his visit to Puerto Rico to do exactly what was asked – bring food, water, and help to an area still recovering from the damage of Hurricane Maria.

Molina, along with his older brother Jose and wife Wanda, visited the area around Vega Alta in the past week and went door to door with supplies, according to a description provided by Evelyn Guadalupe, a spokesman for Molina’s Fundacion 4.

Molina traveled the area without journalists so he could knock on the doors and spend time with neighbors, many of whom are still without power and some of whom were already in what he has described as an “underprivileged” area.

He chronicled the visits on Instagram and in photos provided by his foundation. In them, Molina is delivering water, dry goods, and many embraces. In one photo, Molina is clutching hands with a neighbor and in the background stands statues of him and his two brothers, all three of whom played catcher in the major leagues. Molina’s foundation delivered trucks loaded with ice as well as water and other provisions. In one video Molina shared, palettes were stacked with water bottles 12 deep and six bottles high.

A month after Hurricane Maria tore through Puerto Rico, many of the 3.4 million U.S. citizens living there still lack power, clean water, and basic supplies. Communication is limited or nonexistent across the island. Reports from this past weekend said 1.2 million residents do not have potable water, and Puerto Rico’s electric power authority said 85 percent of the island does not have power. Scores of Americans remain unaccounted for and this past weekend the death toll rose, nearing 50.

The island, its crippled infrastructure, and its recovery has become a quagmire for President Trump, who has used Twitter to engage in spats with officials or question the extent of help the federal government can provide. He wrote on Twitter that the grid and infrastructure was a “disaster” before the hurricane and that federal relief could not go on “forever.” This past week, Congress passed relief funding.



In the closing days of the Cardinals' season, as he recovered from post-concussion symptoms, Molina declined to wade into the politics of Puerto Rico's recovery.

He stressed that his role should be "helping as many people as possible."

"I am going to go to help," he said.

Two days after the Cardinals' season ended, Molina did that. After stopping in Florida to help organize goods, Molina and his wife traveled to Puerto Rico to handle the deliveries in person. According to Guadalupe's description, the foundation had five trucks "loaded with provisions." Shortly after Hurricane Maria and its eye wall passed near Molina's hometown of Vega Alta, the catcher started a GoFundMe account that raised more than \$155,000. Molina said that money would go to purchase the supplies brought to the towns and neighborhoods around Vega Alta.

Before leaving St. Louis, Molina said he would add to the fund with a personal donation. He did not disclose how much. Several teammates, including Kolten Wong and Tommy Pham, also provided financial support for Molina's efforts.

Molina's group visited at least four towns during the humanitarian trip, which ended Sunday.

Two of the towns have welcomed Molina before as he makes annual trips in with turkeys that he gives families for Thanksgiving dinner as part of Fundacion 4's work. Yadier and Wanda Molina founded their charitable organization in 2010.

He has also hosted Christmas parties in the neighborhoods.

In December, Molina will return to Puerto Rico to host the second annual Yadier Molina Home Run Derby & Celebrity Softball Game. The event will be at San Juan, Puerto Rico's Hiram Bithorn Stadium, and Molina's foundation announced this week that proceeds will benefit organizations that are helping residents recover from Hurricane Maria damage.

In the "SOS" photo, which Molina shared on Instagram on Thursday, the Cardinals catcher shares the frame with as many nine children and friends who traveled with him from home to home to deliver items. The popular social media site allows people to tap a heart icon if they "like" the photo, and as of Tuesday morning more than 9,950 people had.

One was Carlos Beltran.

"I have friends and family over there and things are not getting better," Beltran told the New York Post. The former Cardinals outfielder is currently playing for Houston in the American League championship series while also watching and helping his homeland's recovery. "For the first week and a half, I couldn't sleep. I was going crazy. I didn't hear from my family for a week. Everyone is in the same boat, all different classes. You can have money, but if you don't have food to buy, then you don't have anything. The situation is critical.

"If they want it to disappear," Beltran told the paper, "then Puerto Rico is going to disappear."

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## **Jewish Philanthropists Launch Online Campaign to Aid Puerto Rico (Chabad Lubavitch News)**

### **George and Pamela Rohr, and an anonymous donor, join Chabad's efforts on the ground**

By Eric Berger

October 16, 2017 2:41 PM

[Chabad Lubavitch News](#)

A group of donors have agreed to match contributions to Chabad Lubavitch of Puerto Rico totaling \$125,000 as part of a 30-hour campaign to help the Jewish center in its relief efforts following Hurricane Maria.

Longtime Jewish philanthropists George and Pamela Rohr have offered \$100,000—and an anonymous donor has offered \$25,000—to jump-start a campaign that begins Monday at 3 p.m., Eastern Standard Time.

The Chabad center, co-directed by Rabbi Mendel and Rachel Zarchi, is doing all it can to assist in recovery efforts on the island, where the majority of residents still do not have power—and many lack potable water—following the devastating Sept. 20 storm.



“We recognize that we can’t help everyone, but we all need to do our part, our share. Our model is to help one person, one family, at a time, and if we all make that concerted effort, the difference will be great,” Rabbi Zarchi tells Chabad.org.

Most of the buildings on the island have suffered some physical damage, and water has seeped or flooded into homes, businesses and properties, reports Zarchi. Looting has also resulted, particularly of cars and other vehicles.

The rabbi estimates that more than half of the 2,500 Jewish residents have left Puerto Rico, though he describes their exit as temporary. Other residents have not been able to leave and are often in worse shape, he says. Doctors have warned of the potential for disease outbreaks because of contaminated water being used for drinking, cooking, cleaning and washing.

“It inspires and obligates us to help those who are less fortunate,” says Zarchi, who is one of seven Chabad staff members now offering assistance on the island.

The rabbi hands out cleaning supplies to a line of waiting people.

The funds will go towards items such as baby formula, diapers, nonperishable food products, first-aid supplies, clothing and blankets. Despite the fact that recovery will likely happen slowly—analysts have estimated that it could cost as much as \$95 billion—Zarchi insists that he and other Chabad representatives are “here to see it through to the end.”

Last month, two planes chartered by Chabad donors delivered essentials to the island.

“Puerto Rico will flourish again,” says the rabbi, “with the Jewish community being a very big part of that renewal.”

[Click here to donate to relief efforts in Puerto Rico.](#)

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## **José Andrés Is Serving More Than 100,000 Meals Daily in Puerto Rico (Eater)**

### **He’s cooking in the region to help Hurricane Maria victims**

By Monica Burton Oct 16, 2017, 11:31am EDT

[Eater](#)

José Andrés now serves “well above” 100,000 meals per day in Puerto Rico. The Washington, DC-based chef arrived on the island nearly three weeks ago with his disaster-relief nonprofit World Central Kitchen to help feed those affected by Hurricane Maria.

After arriving just days after the hurricane made landfall, Andrés mobilized volunteers, activated food trucks, and called on #ChefsForPuertoRico to establish kitchens all over the island. Recently, Andrés switched focus to serve the people in Puerto Rico’s hardest hit areas and those that have been neglected by other forms of aid.

Over the weekend, the chef established one of his kitchens in Aguadilla, a town on Puerto Rico’s northwest coast left without water, cell phone service, or electricity in the wake of the hurricane. The Aguadilla kitchen joins kitchens in Ponce, Farjado, and more than one operation in San Juan, including the World Central Kitchen headquarters at the Coliseo de Puerto Rico, which Andrés described as “the largest restaurant in the world.”

World Central Kitchen serves the areas without activated kitchens in other ways, and recently, the operation spread out. Starting Friday, the nonprofit delivered food door-to-door in Loiza, sent food trucks to Vega Alta, and set up a paella pop-up in Humacao to serve 5,000 people.

Puerto Rico still mostly lacks electricity, and water and other supplies are hard to come by, even for World Central Kitchen. But, Andrés’s team of hero chefs and volunteers remain dedicated to getting food to those who need it, even delivering meals by rope to people stranded in a high-rise apartment building.

How does #ChefsForPuertoRico @WCKitchen deliver food to people who live many floors up with no electricity for an elevator? Watch! [pic.twitter.com/NPySIFTO13](http://pic.twitter.com/NPySIFTO13)

— José Andrés (@chefjoseandres) October 15, 2017



However, Andrés is adamant that he can't single-handedly repair the devastation Hurricane Maria left behind. **The chef consistently calls out FEMA for its lack of support, and during his weeks in Puerto Rico,** he uses his Twitter platform to publicly ask for their help, as well as to request help from other organizations, like AARP.

Still, Andrés is clearly an expert in matters of disaster relief, and yesterday, the chef took a pause from Puerto Rico updates to dole out advice to people in Ireland, who were expecting their own hurricane, tweeting "We need to start having food feeding plans yesterday!"

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## **Panamei steps up to help Puerto Rico (Seafood Source)**

By Christine Blank

Published on

October 17, 2017

[Seafood Source News](#)

With a significant presence in hurricane-ravaged Puerto Rico, Miami, Florida-based supplier and distributor Quirch Foods is stepping up its efforts to help the island's residents and get its business back up and running.

Hurricane Maria, which made landfall on Puerto Rico on 20 September, destroyed hundreds of homes and businesses and knocked out power throughout the island. Maria followed on the heels of Hurricane Irma, which hit Puerto Rico on 7 September. Like most other residents, Quirch's more than 70 employees on the island have since been suffering power outages, food shortages and a lack of clean water.

"It is a huge strain on employees' lives," Jorge Roza, marketing director for Quirch, a meat and seafood distributor that markets the Panamei brand of frozen fish portions and shellfish to retailers, told SeafoodSource.

Quirch Foods, which operates five distribution centers in the U.S. encompassing nearly 600,000 square feet of refrigeration and freezer space, including a 85,000-square-foot distribution center in San Juan, Puerto Rico, moved quickly-delivered food, potable water, and generators to employees to help them get back on their feet.

"Our first priority was to get on that island, and the second was to drop off supplies to employees," Roza said. "We are working with the governor of Puerto Rico to provide canned chicken, water, and other supplies."

The company itself was fortunate, as its San Juan facility suffered only cosmetic damage from the storm, and generators were able to keep its frozen seafood inventory safe.

While Roza expects it will be months before power is fully restored to Puerto Rico, "We are starting to see the island come back to life a bit, with the National Guard getting more involved and President Trump's visit."

As a result, some of the island's supermarkets were able to open in early October and Quirch resumed seafood deliveries to them.

Puerto Rico is an essential part of Quirch's strategy to expand its presence across the Americas, Roza said. In the United States, the Panamei brand is sold at Walmart, Kroger, and other national supermarket chains. Quirch, which is celebrating 50 years in business this year, is now focusing on international expansion in Mexico, Central America, and other areas.

"Our export and international market is growing every day. We are starting to establish trade partnerships in Columbia and Mexico, so now we have got our product in those markets, and have good relationships with the major retailers there," Roza said. "We have introduced Panamei to a much broader audience, including Honduras and Nicaragua."

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## WHITE HOUSE / CONGRESS / POLITICS

### Melania Trump urges Americans to donate, volunteer for hurricane relief (Palm Beach Post, MSN, Washington Examiner, The Hill, Washington Times, Daily Caller)

George Bennett  
October 17, 2017

[Palm Beach Post](#)

- **See the video on [MSN](#)**
- **Similar coverage, [Washington Examiner](#) [The Hill](#) [Washington Times](#) [CNN](#) [Daily Caller](#)**
- The White House has released a public service ad today featuring First Lady and part-time Palm Beach resident Melania Trump urging Americans to donate and volunteer to help victims of hurricanes in Texas, Florida and Puerto Rico.

First lady Melania Trump in April talking to girls from HomeSafe in Lake Worth. (photo provided by HomeSafe)

President Donald Trump on Monday praised his administration's efforts in Puerto Rico, pointing out at a news conference that former Clinton Administration **FEMA** Director James Lee Witt told The Washington Post that the Trump Administration deserves an A+ grade for its response.

But more help is needed, Melania Trump says in the new 30-second PSA.

"The president and I have witnessed firsthand the compassion and commitment of Americans as friends and neighbors and strangers continue to volunteer time and money to help one another following the recent hurricanes," the first lady says.

"Your help is still needed," she continues. "Donate to an organization of your choice and volunteer to help your fellow Americans. Visit [nvoad.org](#) and [ready.gov](#) to learn more."

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### Crisis in Puerto Rico Reveals Deeper US Political Fissures (Nonprofit Quarterly)

By Cyndi Suarez | 2 hours ago  
October 16, 2017

[Nonprofit Quarterly](#)

It's less than a month since Hurricane Maria hit Puerto Rico, but Puerto Ricans are already adapting and doing all they can to take care of each other. Adaptation has been hard, and has included making do with substandard or nonexistent basics like food, water, and power; moving stateside; or sending children away to attend school.

One of the many disturbing realities: CNN reported yesterday that people are drinking water from the Dorado Groundwater Contamination Site, a Superfund site that the EPA designated as contaminated with industrial chemicals that can cause damage to the liver and increase the risk of cancer. According to the Associated Press, "Even the island's own water authority has distributed water from some wells at the Dorado Superfund site." Puerto Rico, an island 100 miles across and 40 miles north to south, contains 18 Superfund sites, likely the result of the US pharmaceuticals companies that took advantage of tax-free policies and US Navy bombings.

The EPA is asking residents to avoid using the wells in the western portion of the site. Erik Olson, the Health Program Director for the Natural Resources Defense Council in an email to CNN wrote, "It is irresponsible to not make every effort humanly possible to find and provide safe drinking water as soon as possible." Academi, the private security firm headed by Betsy DeVos's brother—you may remember it as Blackwater, from when four guards were found guilty in 2007 of the shooting of over 30 Iraqis—has received requests to send employees to the island to protect fuel and water distribution. The New York Post writes that armed mercenaries now roam the streets and local leaders seek to regulate their presence and behavior.



According to The Hill, unemployment is close to 100 percent. Since October 4th, less than two weeks ago, 30,000 have left the island. Of 1,113 schools in Puerto Rico, NPR reports that only 200 have reopened. Students have already lost 35 to 40 days of school, according to Julia Keleher, the island's secretary of education. In many cases, students are traveling stateside, often on their own, and staying with relatives to attend school. In the case of the children covered in this report, it wasn't the federal government that helped, but the company of the husband of the family taking them in.

US politicians, particularly Democrats, are trying to mobilize those coming to the mainland as potential voters. Meanwhile, Trump begrudgingly provides as little rebuilding support as possible while complaining that he should not have to and blaming Puerto Ricans for being the cause of their own problems, debt, and failing infrastructure. It's as if the fact that US companies have benefitted from the tax haven and market that is Puerto Rico—if the island were an independent country, it would be the United States' fifth-largest market—does not figure into the account.

But this is how domination works: a removal from history and a reversal of facts. In spite of high poverty, Puerto Rico has a literacy rate of 94 percent; an island of just over three million awards 50,000 college degrees a year. With 97 percent of these graduates currently unable to find employment on the island, The Hill concludes that what Puerto Rico needs is a business plan that starts at zero—that is, with no debt, from scratch (right now, Puerto Rico's debt totals \$74 billion). By now, we can conclude that this isn't something that the US federal government or its agencies will support.

In this political leadership vacuum, nonprofits, private companies and individuals are taking the lead. We saw this script play out before with Katrina. At the time, we thought this was an exception to the rule. Now it is beginning to look like the new normal, only this time, unlike with Katrina, the scenario of an absent federal response is playing out without 24-hour coverage. In short, it seems it's not just Puerto Rico's infrastructure that is collapsing, but the legitimacy of the US government. We may want to pay attention and learn; one day, this may hit even closer to home...your home.—Cyndi Suarez

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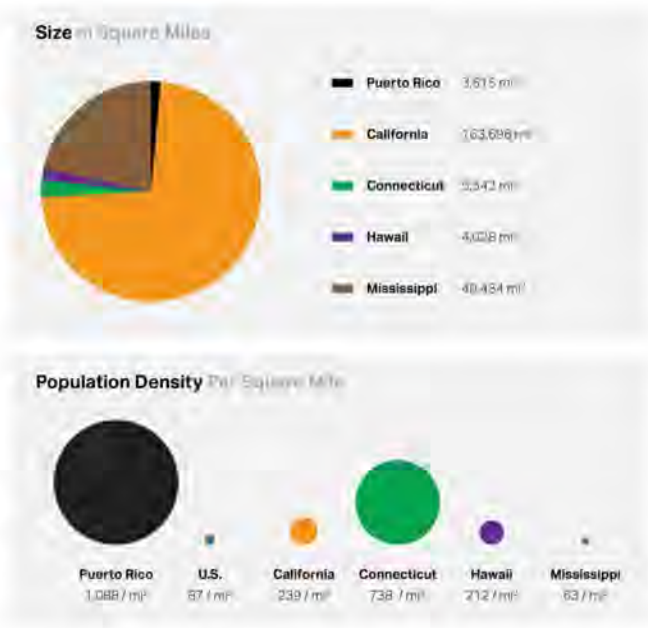
## **Trump's second-class response to Hurricane Maria deepens the divide with Puerto Rico (Think Progress)**

**It's not just a geographical gap.**

Mark Hand Oct 17, 2017, 9:45 am

[Think Progress](#)





CREDIT: THE PROGRESSIVE FOUNDATION

Almost a month after Hurricane Maria made landfall in Puerto Rico, the situation for the U.S. island territory remains bleak. Residents have expressed disappointment with the federal response as much of the island is still enduring a massive humanitarian crisis.

For the island’s 3.4 million residents, basic needs of daily life are still in limbo. Less than 15 percent of the island has electricity service. And nearly a third of the island still doesn’t have any running water.

President Donald Trump and Vice President Mike Pence visited Puerto Rico to observe relief efforts. But Trump’s comments upon his return to the mainland generated anger. The president tweeted that **FEMA** and first-responders can’t remain in Puerto Rico “forever” and commented that the island’s economy and electric power system were a disaster even before the hurricane.

Partly in response to the president’s comments that local officials aren’t doing enough and his threats to withdraw assistance from Puerto Rico, Trump’s approval rating for handling the federal government’s response to recent hurricanes has dropped 20 points in the aftermath of Hurricane Maria.

Despite Trump’s controversial remarks, a recent poll found that support for aid to Puerto Rico increased the most among Republicans and Trump voters who were previously unaware that Puerto Ricans are, in fact, fellow American citizens.

While many television news crews have left the island, other reporters are still working hard to get the word out about post-hurricane conditions in Puerto Rico. As more and more stories come out about the Trump administration’s botched efforts to bring aid to Puerto Rico, it’s worth considering where the island stood even before Hurricane Maria made landfall.

Situated in the Caribbean Sea about 1,000 miles southeast of Miami, Puerto Rico is a 3,500-square-mile island with 3.4 million residents. Despite its distance from Florida, it is closer to the U.S. mainland than either Alaska and Hawaii, which are both about 2,300 miles from the next nearest state.

Puerto Rico is one of the more highly developed islands in the Caribbean, but the standard of living there still trails far behind life in the U.S. states. The poverty rate in Puerto Rico is 46 percent, compared to a U.S. national rate of less than 15 percent. The median household income in Puerto Rico is \$19,350, well behind the U.S. median of \$55,775 and more than \$20,000 lower than that of Mississippi, the state with the lowest household income.

Even though they’re U.S. citizens, Puerto Ricans don’t have the same rights as residents of the 50 U.S. states. They don’t have federal representation in Washington. They can’t vote for president. There’s even legal



confusion over whether a U.S. citizen in Puerto Rico could become president of the United States. Because of all this, it's harder for Puerto Ricans to get their voices heard. Today, it is pleas for disaster relief. During the previous 10 years, it was appeals for debt relief.

"Historically, we've seen that the United States has left Puerto Rico on their backside on a lot of issues. Because of the hurricane, we're now receiving more attention," Adriana Gonzalez, environmental justice organizer for the Sierra Club in Puerto Rico, told ThinkProgress.

Even before the storm, Puerto Rico suffered from a potable water problem. In 2015, 69.4 percent of the population in Puerto Rico, or more than 2.4 million people, got their water from community water systems that violated the federal health-based standards. For context, 100,000 people were potentially exposed to high levels of lead contamination in their water during the Flint, Michigan, drinking water crisis.

If Puerto Rico were a state, it would rank as the third-smallest in area, ahead of only Delaware and Rhode Island. Despite its small area, if granted statehood, Puerto Rico — which approved a resolution in June to become a state — would be the 30th most populous state in the union.

But Puerto Rico's estimated population of 3.4 million is down more than 10 percent from its peak in 2004 of 3.8 million. By 2025, the island's population is projected to fall below 3 million — a projection made prior to Hurricane Maria.

Puerto Rico has been undergoing a decade-long recession that led to high unemployment and eventually forced the commonwealth into bankruptcy earlier this year. Puerto Rico began defaulting on its debts two years ago, seeking to avoid budget cuts that officials said would deal another blow to an already shrinking economy. In the wake of the storm, Puerto Rico bondholders are already expecting to get reduced repayments.

For the time being, though, addressing Puerto Rico's debt problems is taking a backseat to getting residents access to basic services.

Puerto Rico's governor has set a goal of restoring electric service to 30 percent of the island by the end October. The government hopes to have 95 percent of customers with electricity by December 15.

Maria slammed into Puerto Rico on Sept. 20 as a Category 4 storm with winds of 155 mph that devastated the U.S. territory. The international airport in San Juan, Puerto Rico's capital, has reopened, packed with people who want to leave the island. Puerto Rico schools likely won't open for weeks. Obtaining water, food, and fuel for cars turns into a daylong mission for each item. Cell phone service is slowly returning, but it's still extremely spotty.

Unlike most residents on the mainland United States, Puerto Ricans are used to regular power outages. "We jokingly say, 'I'm already accustomed to not having power because this has happened so much in recent years,'" said Gonzalez, who said electric poles and debris littered her street in San Juan for weeks after the hurricane.

As Puerto Rican playwright José Rivera wrote in an op-ed earlier this month, "Waiting is what Puerto Rico does best." The island's people waited 500 years for the Spanish to end their rule. But at the end of the 19th century, the Spanish empire was replaced by U.S. rule, which is nearing its 120th year.

Many of Puerto Rico's residents share similar hardships to low-income residents across the mainland. They face heightened health hazards and vulnerabilities like residents of New Orleans' Lower Ninth Ward and Houston's Manchester neighborhood, which have also experienced devastation from natural disasters in recent years.

"If you also look at a place like New Orleans and what has happened after Katrina, we know already that in other disaster situations, the preexisting inequalities just get exacerbated. And so the folks who were already suffering the most in these places are the ones who will benefit the least from the reconstruction," Yarimar Bonilla, a noted social anthropologist, said in an interview with journalist Bill Moyers.

In Texas, wide-scale flooding from Hurricane Harvey led to the greatest misery for residents. Power outages were minimal as the winds died down by the time the storm came ashore. In Florida, Hurricane Irma's high winds caused one of the largest natural disaster power outages in U.S. history. The day after the storm hit, 62 percent of Florida's 10.5 million households were without power.

Power restoration efforts were swift in most parts of Florida, although some regions faced days-long outages. For the people of Puerto Rico, most are still sweltering in the dark in the wake of Maria, as the Puerto



Rico Electric Power Authority (PREPA), the government-owned electric utility, struggles to find its footing. Despite the shoddy service, customers of the bankrupt electric utility, which has \$9 billion in debt, pay more for electricity than any other state but Hawaii.

PREPA delivers electricity to about 900,000 homes through 31,000 miles of distribution lines. The utility also owns and operates about 2,400 miles of major electric transmission lines. It is estimated that 80 percent of this electric infrastructure was “wiped out.”

Tired of waiting for assistance, residents are banding together to try and solve the crisis on their own.

Puerto Rico has traditionally relied on highly-polluting petroleum products to produce about two-thirds of its electricity. On the U.S. mainland, petroleum products fuel less than 1 percent of electricity generation.

Over the past two decades, though, the commonwealth has tried to diversify its power generation fuel sources. With the addition of natural gas at the Costa Sur generating facility in southern Puerto Rico, petroleum now serves as the fuel for about 49 percent of the island’s electricity, while natural gas supplies 32 percent, coal about 17 percent, and renewables about 2 percent.

Puerto Ricans deal with many of the same environmental issues as mainland residents. Opposition to the disposal of toxic coal ash in landfills has grown into a powerful movement over the past few years. Regulators granted AES Corp., the owners of the island’s only coal-fired power plant, permission to deposit coal ash in local landfills, reversing its promise from the 1990s that the coal ash would be transported off the island.

After Maria lashed the island, Puerto Rican officials released an official statement saying that coal ash at a landfill in Guayama was not flooded and that high winds had not blown away the coal ash. Local residents, however, are skeptical and are waiting for confirmation from people who have been able to visit the site. At another dump site, near the southern town of Peñuelas, the town’s residents have been blockading trucks carrying coal ash into their community.

Renewable energy advocates are pushing to move the island away from relying on centralized fossil fuel-fired plants, for both environmental and resiliency reasons. Solar companies are offering aid to the island while also promoting a more sustainable future and resilient energy system. Empowered by Light, a nonprofit group, and solar company Sunrun are working with nonprofit GivePower to provide Puerto Rico’s remote communities with solar-powered water desalination systems, water production systems, and portable solar-powered units, Common Dreams reported.

Some experts also suggest that segmenting Puerto Rico’s electric grid may be a much faster and more reliable rebuilding approach to repowering the island. A microgrid system could help the island have more reliable electricity and prevent such long and widespread outages the next time a storm hits, they say.

Gonzalez doesn’t believe it’s too soon to begin thinking about Puerto Rico’s future as an island less reliant on fossil fuels. Government agencies, as well as nonprofit, and business groups, can continue with the hard work of making sure people have enough food and clean water in the coming weeks and months. At the same time, Puerto Ricans also can begin the conversation of how they want to redevelop their island so that they can have a sustainable and prosperous future, she said.

“Hopefully we can continue capture the attention of the United States and move to not only rebuild the island but do a transformation of the electric and economic system. That’s what we need — not just to pay the bondholders but to have a booming island and economy,” Gonzalez said.

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## **Puerto Rico resident commissioner: We would have more help if we were a state** (The Hill)

By Rebecca Savransky

10/17/17 11:57 AM EDT 92

[The Hill](#)

Puerto Rico resident commissioner Jenniffer González-Colón said if Puerto Rico were a state, it would likely have more aid in the wake of hurricanes Irma and Maria.



“Saying that Puerto Rico is in bankruptcy as a way or excuse just to not to help is not wise. It’s not American, and it’s not rightful,” González, a lifelong Republican, told Politico's "Off Message" podcast.

“If we were a state, we already would have a lot of the help that Florida did.”

During the interview, she also said this isn't the time to be "talking about withdrawing the help."

“This is not the time to talk about how much it’s costing the U.S., because we are American citizens,” she told Politico.

She called Trump's statements and attempts to put blame on Puerto Rico "shocking."

She said everyone on the island is "frustrated," because they didn't expect to be "hit by this kind of hurricane" and to be without power for so long.

González's comments come after Trump has faced backlash for the federal response to the devastation in Puerto Rico. Trump sparked controversy after blasting local Puerto Rican officials and suggesting the island do more to take on the burden of recovery.

Last week, Trump warned his administration's response to the hurricane-ravaged territory can't last forever.

On Monday, during a press conference in the Rose Garden, Trump defended the federal response to Puerto Rico and said many problems with distributing aid supplies on the ground were because of local issues.

A poll released Monday found that Trump's approval rating on his response to hurricanes has dropped 20 points since the storm hit Puerto Rico.

Much of the island is still without power and many residents don't have access to clean drinking water.

A report this past weekend said some Puerto Rico residents desperate for drinking water are turning to a hazardous waste site.

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## OPINION

### **Melania Trump Wants Americans to Help Puerto Rico, Maybe She Should Tell her Husband** (Newsweek, MSN, Washington Examiner, The Hill, CNN, Palm Beach Post)

By Beatrice Dupuy On 10/17/17 at 11:53 AM

[Newsweek](#)

First lady Melania Trump is calling on Americans to help hurricane victims, despite her husband's much-criticized delayed response to helping devastated Puerto Rico after Hurricane Maria.

In the PSA posted to the White House YouTube channel on Tuesday, Melania Trump says she and her husband have been affected by the recent hurricanes Harvey, Irma and Maria, and all Americans need to do more.

“Your help is still needed,” she says. “Donate to an organization of your choice, and volunteer to help your fellow Americans.”

She also gave the web address of National Voluntary Organizations Active in Disaster, an aid group.

The video represents the first live comments by the first lady on the natural disasters since she and the president traveled to Puerto Rico on Oct. 3 to survey relief efforts. In that much-mocked appearance, President Trump complained that the Caribbean island had “thrown our budget a little of whack” and said Hurricane Maria wasn't a "real catastrophe" like Hurricane Katrina in 2005 because there were only 16 deaths on the island at the time.

He landed in more hot water when he threw rolls of paper towels into a crowd waiting for relief. Melania Trump's choice of footwear also earned criticism after she boarded presidential planes in stilettos before changing into sneakers.

America is noticing. A new CNN poll shows that 47 percent of respondents disapproved of the way the president has handled efforts to aid the island of 3.4 million Americans. Trump had a 25 percent disapproval rating after Hurricanes Harvey and Irma hit the mainland.



Some respondents were no doubt influenced by Trump attack on the San Juan Mayor Carmen Yulín Cruz, whom he called a “nasty woman” in a tweet after she called out the president for his lack of support.

“Such poor leadership ability by the mayor of San Juan, and others in Puerto Rico, who are not able to get their workers to help,” he tweeted. “They want everything to be done for them when it should be a community effort.”

Virtually the entire island remains without power.

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## **Opinion: Puerto Rico’s Crisis, by the Numbers (NY Times)**

David Leonhardt

OCT. 17, 2017

[NY Times](#)

The humanitarian crisis in Puerto Rico, by the numbers:

More than 80 percent: The portion of the island’s electric grid that is not functioning.

28 percent: The share of Puerto Rican residents who lack running water.

72 percent: The share of residents who have running water and thus are subject to the health department recommendation that people boil or disinfect their water before drinking it.

100 percent: The share who are in one of the two previous categories.

40 percent: The share of residents who lack a cellphone signal.

20, out of 51: The number of sewage-treatment plants not functioning.

5, out of 18: The number of toxic-waste sites that have not been inspected by the Environmental Protection Agency since the hurricane.

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Close to half: The portion of hospitals without electricity.

48: The official death toll, although health experts believe — and media reports suggest — the real number to be higher.

(Sources: CNN, NBC, Stat, The Washington Post.)

Where, oh where, is the urgency from Washington about this crisis?

The “message out of Washington amounts to a doctrine of personal responsibility and culpability applied only to Puerto Rico and its people,” writes The Atlantic’s Vann Newkirk II, “not the other areas of the United States affected by recent storms.”]

*[Story trimmed for space and relevancy]*

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## **SOCIAL LISTENING**

### **Hurricane Maria DR-4339-PR – Social Listening Report**

Tuesday, October 17, 2017 1400

*Compiled by: Savannah Brehmer, Virginia Case and Bree-Constance Huffin*

**Summary:** Frustration and tensions are high today with many looking for someone to blame for slow progress. Recent videos include the wasted supplies, footage from the Sheraton in San Juan, and reports of FEMA employees leaving the agency to volunteer. There is hope in reports that cell service and power is gradually coming back. Recent rains continue have caused more flash flooding and landslides. People continue to express gratitude for the efforts from the National Guard, lineman and volunteers providing needed resources. The USNS Comfort continues to be of great interest to locals.



## Public Perception

### FEMA Conversation:

- The video showing the first floor of the Sheraton across from the Convention Center from Sunday now has over 200k views as it continues to circulate stating that **FEMA, the military and others are partying**. On one Facebook group, many do not see this as a problem, just people who work hard and need to unwind.
- Individuals are angry with **FEMA** about supplies and goods not being distributed around the island in timely manner. Some have specified that it's **not the fault** of the local governments but that the Federal government is wholly responsible.
- A person from outside the affected area shared information on a popular community page stating that **FEMA** offers Transitional Sheltering Assistance, and that it may not be advertised but that it is available to survivors in Puerto Rico. The post has received a small amount of attention so far but an individual has **commented on it confirming** that others are currently receiving this assistance.
- Those inside and outside the impacted area are heavily discussing **FEMA's** process of helping survivors recover.
  - A **video** receiving a lot of attention on Instagram is stating that **FEMA** employees are leaving the agency to help the survivors recover.
  - Many commenting from inside and outside the impacted area are very upset to hear that a person is leaving an agency that is supposed to help to find ways to help more.
- A **video** of a group giving back to survivors is receiving many reactions from those inside and outside the impacted area.
  - A few criticized **FEMA's methods of helping communities** recover after a storm.
  - A few suggest survivors **apply for FEMA's** disaster assistance.

### Public Sentiment:

- An article by CNN about the USNS comfort has received a lot of **attention on community pages** within Facebook. It shares that there are more than two hundred beds currently available for people in need of medical attention. Individuals who are replying, and sharing the post are angry because they feel the government is not doing enough to get patients in need onto the ship.
  - There is a slight trend with individuals in the affected areas discussing their travels to the USNS comfort **before realizing** that they are not able to get onto the ship even if they are in need of medical attention. Confusion about **how to qualify** for admittance onto the ship is **prominent** among survivors.
- Individuals from Caguas are posting their pictures from **yesterday's flooding**, and sharing their feelings of hopelessness about the rain continuing to come.
- People are **thankful** for the linemen who are working to restore the power throughout the island.
- There is a general sentiment that **the government is not helping**.
- Appreciation continues for the work the Army and National Guard has done in Puerto Rico after Maria. (**example 1** , **example 2**)
- Many are expressing gratitude toward chefs who in addition to cooking hot meals for survivors are delivering tarps.
  - Many inside and outside the impacted area are proud of their work and sending praises. One comment challenges **FEMA** to do better. (**example 1**, **example 2**)
- Friends and family who have loved ones on the island are asking what the most efficient way to get **supplies to Puerto Rico** is because of the delay in shipments when utilizing the post office.



- Evidence of donated food and water for Patillas in a possible waste container has people inside and outside the impacted area outraged. (example 1 , example 2 , example 3 , example 4 , example 5 , example 6)
  - A video circulating on Twitter and Facebook shows boxes of food and jugs of water wet and tossed into a giant container.
  - People are wondering why the food is placed here and not being distributed.
- The story written by the [Huffington Post](#) that was mentioned in yesterday's report has gained a considerable amount of attention within the local communities. Commentary on the post ranges from positive support for the mayor to individuals stating she's playing politics and does not care about what's truly happening within the island.
- [Politics continue to generate lengthy conversations](#) over how things are being managed and who to blame. It's a way for some to blow off steam, others to grandstand, while others try to meter it saying that the [circumstances should bring everyone together](#).

## Operations

### Volunteer/Donations:

- There's a woman who is offering her experience [helping Puerto Ricans relocate to Florida](#).
- Volunteers are [continuing to donate](#) to their community.

### Communication:

- As cell service continues to improve throughout the island friends and family share stories of their loved ones [being located](#) or being able to [communicate](#) that they are alive and well.
- It is worth noting that people are posting screen shots of texts on social media, indicating that information flow may move from those who have cell voice and text service to social for those who don't have internet access. (example 1, example 2)

### Mass Care:

- As of 2100 EST- The Humane Society of Puerto Rico faced flooding yesterday, and was required to [evacuate the animals](#).
- As of 1900 EST- A post that asks for more [doctors to be made available](#) for the survivors in Florida, Puerto Rico has received a lot of attention on Facebook. It describes the patients, conditions they are suffering from, and the desperate need they are in for more medical staff.

### School:

- Schools are reopening: [Juan Morell Music Institute in Ponce](#), [Head Start in Ponce on Wednesday](#)
- As of 1030 ET, today some residents are [still without water](#) in certain metropolitan areas in Puerto Rico.
  - Survivors are confirming this statement as well as providing their location for help.

### Critical Infrastructure/Public Works:

- Some residents are [still without water](#) in certain metropolitan areas in Puerto Rico.
  - Survivors are confirming this statement as well as providing their location for help.

### Energy:

- [News that the Tesla energy company is having trouble](#) completing their restoration project has many people reacting negatively.
  - Some people inside and outside the impacted area do not understand why they are running into issues restoring while some survivors just want their power restored because they have been without power for over a month.
- People are happy to learn about a contract awarded to a company in Texas to [restore power](#).



**Life Safety:**

- Friends and family are [continuing to look for their loved ones who have been missing since the hurricane.](#)
- Photos are being shared by many of a [missing man from Yabucoa village.](#)

**Public Safety:**

- Individuals are sharing [warnings for flash floods that are due to take place throughout the week.](#)
- There's an order to freeze prices in order to avoid price gouging from the [Secretary of the Department of Affairs.](#)
- Cabo Rojo recommended [how to avoid spreading diseases,](#) and while mostly was well received, some point out that they may not have water to be able to do so.

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# FEMA

## Media Monitoring Report

### October 17, 2017

#### FEMA Region 2

*This report is a compilation of news media stories pertinent to Region 2 and the Sandy recovery efforts in New York and New Jersey for FEMA employees and a small number of government officials working on FEMA's issues. To be added or removed from this distribution, please e-mail [gina.callaghan@fema.dhs.gov](mailto:gina.callaghan@fema.dhs.gov)*

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##### **75,000 Army Veterans Live In Puerto Rico. Many Struggle In Shelters After Hurricane Maria**

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By Mahita Gajanan

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### **Private Security Mercenaries Are Now Moving Into Puerto Rico**

By Larry Celona And Danika Fears

[New York Post](#), October 16, 2017

### **Democrats Seek Tax Relief For Puerto Rico, Virgin Islands**

By Marcy Gordon

[Associated Press](#), October 16, 2017

## **HURRICANE MARIA USVI**

### **FEMA Disaster Recovery Center Opens In Frederiksted**

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### **Mapp Appoints Panel to Help Guide Hurricane Recovery**

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### **USVI Hurricane Survivors Encouraged To Stay In Touch With FEMA**

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### **FEMA Representatives on St. John Warn of Fraudulent Phone Calls, Texts**

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### **Cruises To St. Thomas To Resume In November**

By Gene Sloan

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### **Cruzan Rum Distillery Resumes Production Following Hurricane Maria**

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### **Power Restoration Work Hampered On Monday By Inclement Weather, WAPA Says, Latest Update Released**

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### **Juan Luis Hospital Appoints New CEO**

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### **Arcadis Named FEMA Engineer Of Record For The City Of New York's East Side Coastal Resiliency Project**

New York Real Estate Journal, October 17, 2017

## **OTHER NEW YORK NEWS**

### **Sending Relief By Air And Sea To Puerto Rico From The Bronx**

By Rick Rojas  
[New York Times](#), October 16, 2017

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### **Complaint Filed Against Somers Point Contractor For Alleged Hurricane Sandy Home Repair Fraud**

By Lauren Carroll  
The Press of Atlantic City, October 16, 2017

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### **Dredging Scheduled For South Jersey Channels**

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### **Atlantic City Completes First Phase of Flood Gates Construction**

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### **As Congress Weighs Debt Forgiveness For Flood Program, Some Want To See It Reformed**

By Kate Aronoff  
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### **Some Homes That Repeatedly Flood Could Lose Insurance Under Proposed Federal Overhaul**

By Katie Leslie



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### **How The Pentagon Spun Hurricane Maria**

By Christopher Flavelle

[Bloomberg News](#), October 13, 2017

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### **Líderes Demócratas Del Senado Piden Que FEMA Libere Fondos Para Reconstrucción De Puerto Rico**

By María Peña

[La Opinión \(CA\)](#), October 16, 2017

### **El ‘Cash’, Los Abanicos Y Las Tablas De Lavar, Necesarios En Medio De La Falta De Electricidad En Puerto Rico**

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### **Opinión: ¿De Quién Fue La Idea De Que Puerto Rico Importa Menos?**

By Linda Chavez

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### **Hurricane Victims Don’t Have the ‘Complexion for Protection’**

By Lois Marie Gibbs

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### **Letter To The Editor | Addressing The Looming Cost Of Rebuilding**

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## STORIES

### **HURRICANE MARIA PUERTO RICO**

#### **Puerto Rico Desperate For Supplies, FEMA Aid (VIDEO)**

[CNN](#), October 16, 2017

CNN’s Bill Weir visits Guaynabo, Puerto Rico, where families are desperate for FEMA aid and supplies after a bridge collapsed in Hurricane Maria’s aftermath.

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## **Raw Sewage Contaminating Waters In Puerto Rico After Maria**

By Michael Melia

[Associated Press](#), October 16, 2017

CAGUAS, Puerto Rico (AP) — Raw sewage is pouring into the rivers and reservoirs of Puerto Rico in the aftermath of Hurricane Maria. People without running water bathe and wash their clothes in contaminated streams, and some islanders have been drinking water from condemned wells.

Nearly a month after the hurricane made landfall, Puerto Rico is only beginning to come to grips with a massive environmental emergency that has no clear end in sight.

“I think this will be the most challenging environmental response after a hurricane that our country has ever seen,” said Judith Enck, who served as administrator of the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency region that includes Puerto Rico under President Barack Obama.

With hundreds of thousands of people still without running water, and 20 of the island’s 51 sewage treatment plants out of service, there are growing concerns about contamination and disease.

“People in the U.S. can’t comprehend the scale and scope of what’s needed,” said Drew Koslow, an ecologist with the nonprofit Ridge to Reefs who recently spent a week in Puerto Rico working with a portable water purification system.

EPA officials said that of last week they still had not been unable to inspect five of the island’s 18 Superfund sites — highly contaminated toxic sites targeted for cleanup because of risks to human health and the environment — including the former U.S. Navy bombing range on the island of Vieques.

“I just wish we had more resources to deal with it,” said Catherine McCabe, the EPA deputy regional administrator.

Puerto Rico has a long history of industrial pollution, and environmental problems have worsened due to neglect during a decade-long economic crisis. A dozen over-packed landfills remain open despite EPA orders to close them because local governments say they don’t have the money.

With homes damaged or destroyed, power lines obliterated and traffic chaotic, many of the EPA’s own island-based personnel were unable to report for work immediately after the hurricane tore across the island on Sept. 20.

Twelve days after Maria made landfall, the EPA said it had 45 people in Puerto Rico. By Sunday that number stood at 85 — a force that Enck said was still insufficient.

Less than 20 percent of the island’s power grid was back online, and while hundreds of large generators have been brought in, the U.S. territory’s out-of-service sewage treatments plants include several that sit upstream of drinking water supplies.

One of Puerto Rico’s biggest treatment plants discharges into a river that feeds Lake Carraizo, a reservoir that provides drinking water for half of the metropolitan San Juan area. Several of the plant’s pumping stations remain out of service due to lack of diesel for generators, leaving sewage running into the lake.

“We’re not going anywhere near it,” resident Edwin Felix, 46, said, nodding toward the greenish brown river coursing past his hillside home.

That puts an extra strain on the filtration plants that give a final treatment to the water reaching the capital.

Officials say running water has been restored to 72 percent of the island’s people. The water authority says it’s safe to drink, though the health department still recommends boiling or disinfecting it.



In the town of Juncos on Thursday, EPA personnel warned people who were swimming in a river by an overflowing manhole that it was contaminated by sewage because a pumping station had failed, said Jaime Geliga, chief of the agency's local municipal water program branch.

"That's the only water they get," he said. "That's the difficult part."

Even the island's own water authority has distributed water from some wells at the Dorado Superfund site, according to Gov. Ricardo Rossello, who said that water has been tested and complies with all federal health standards.

But the EPA said Sunday that some people have ignored fences and warning signs and have taken water for drinking from wells on other, more dangerous parts of Dorado, which was brought into the Superfund program due to dangerous levels of industrial chemicals in groundwater.

The agency put up new fences over the weekend and said it had taken samples from those wells, though the results of tests were not yet available.

Islanders also have been urged to avoid drinking or touching surface waters such as lakes or rivers, particularly after a deadly outbreak of suspected leptospirosis, a bacterial disease spread by animals' urine.

The EPA said it plans to dedicate more staff this week to inspect the roughly 250 small water utilities that serve remote, isolated communities and are typically in poor repair.

Many Puerto Ricans fear other existing threats could have grown worse.

In the southern coastal city of Guayama, residents long have protested the dumping of a several-story-high mountain of coal ash on the grounds of nearby power plant. The pile looks intact after the hurricane, but many fear the winds and flooding could have sent coal ash laced with heavy metals into adjacent neighborhoods.

Benjamin Planes Lugo, 70, lost the roof of the house he built with savings from running a gas station in New York, but he said he's more concerned about the ash, which he already blamed for his respiratory problems. The EPA said Sunday that it had visited the site and was awaiting test results.

"We're real worried about it," Planes Lugo said.

Enck, the former EPA administrator who also oversaw the cleanup after Superstorm Sandy in New York and New Jersey, said her successors should pull in staff from all over the country to address Puerto Rico's problems.

"They have to inspect every single landfill," she said. "EPA needs to go and look at how much material has moved offsite because, inevitably, it did."

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## **Mudslide Hits Puerto Rico Neighborhood That Trump Visited**

By Bill Weir and Rachel Clarke

[CNN](#), October 16, 2017

Torrential rains washed away weeks of clean-up and brought new problems for Puerto Ricans on Monday.

A small creek a few miles outside of San Juan became a raging river, picking up trees, pipes and rubble from a mountainside where they had been dumped after Hurricane Maria.



The debris added weight and force to a mudslide that took out a bridge in the Guaynabo neighborhood outside San Juan, stranding families who may now have to hike through mountainous, overgrown terrain to get food and water.

This is the working class part of the same neighborhood where President Trump tossed out rolls of paper towels earlier this month and then handed out lanterns, while telling people they did not need them any more.

Efrain Diaz saw the bridge tumble, and with it hopes for his business of restoring Corvettes. “Everything I’ve been struggling for all my life, all of a sudden is gone,” he said. The trailer where he stored parts was tossed in the mudslide and some of his cars totaled.

He and his wife Luz have had no power since Maria hit the island on September 20, and have been spending their savings on gas for the generator to keep the refrigerator on and Luz’s life-saving insulin fresh.

Diaz said he has seen no FEMA staff and no distribution of food, fuel or fresh water since Maria came ashore nearly four weeks ago.

When local mayor Angel Perez came by the neighborhood, Luz accused him of forgetting about them. “We need water,” she told him.

Perez had also been there when President Trump made a show of handing out supplies in the Calvary Chapel, and says that FEMA has helped. “It’s been slowly, but it’s there,” he said. “They have given us water, food, the tarps.”

President Donald Trump tosses paper towels into a crowd at Calvary Chapel on October 3.

But it’s not enough yet, he said. “We want more help,” Perez said. “We need more help.”

And now he has another wish, this time for the Army Corps of Engineers. His town needs a new bridge.

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### **Solar Industry Wants To Build Puerto Rico’s Grid Of The Future**

[Bloomberg News](#), October 16, 2017

It began with a question posed by Richard Birt, a Las Vegas Fire & Rescue captain: What do you need?

The answer for the San Juan fire house was simple enough: electricity. It’s what much of Puerto Rico has needed since Hurricane Maria tore through the commonwealth more than three weeks ago, laying waste to an already weak grid. Without power, basic logistics such as coordinating and transporting equipment had proven insurmountable.

At the station in Barrio Obrero—Spanish for “workers’ neighborhood”—the situation was dire. A single diesel generator failed at times thanks to contaminated fuel. Firefighters were mostly working in darkness, relying on word-of-mouth to serve the mounting needs of a low-income community. “There are more incidents because people are using hibachis, generators and candles,” said Francisco Cruz, a lieutenant with the San Juan fire department. Nearby, a large tree covered in electrical wires blocked a main road to the station, which helps serve the city’s airport.

Birt suggested a micro-grid featuring solar and battery storage and began mobilizing a team to help put it all together. Funding for the project was provided by Empowered by Light (a group backed by Leonardo DiCaprio), rooftop company Sunrun Inc. (which also donated the solar panels), and GivePower, a nonprofit that specializes in solar installation in conflict regions.

The solar industry has taken particular interest in San Juan in the aftermath of the hurricane. It’s primarily a humanitarian effort for these companies, but it’s also a chance to showcase an energy



source capable of enduring natural disasters. Tesla Inc. is sending its Powerwall battery systems and Sunrun has sent more than 12,000 pounds of solar products and equipment to the island. The Solar Energy Industries Association has received pledges for more than \$1.2 million in product and monetary contributions from its network.

A week and a half after Birt's initial outreach, a plane arrived in San Juan carrying enough solar panels and batteries to install 18.4 kilowatts worth of systems. The installations in Barrio Obrero were completed two days later, about 13 hours after President Donald Trump, who has noted the commonwealth's long-standing financial and electrical woes, tweeted: "We cannot keep FEMA, the Military & the First Responders, who have been amazing (under the most difficult circumstances) in P.R. forever!"

Some hope the crisis will spur greater energy self-reliance. "We should be more flexible, to allow regions to have their own systems," said Marco Antonio Rigau, president of San Juan's city council, in an interview. "We are not using solar energy completely."

"We put solar on the roof because the sun comes up every day," Birt said, who himself has lived off the grid using solar and batteries for more than a dozen years. "It's not going to run out of diesel like a generator or have a problem. The sun comes up, it charges the battery and the batteries are full every day waiting for the power to go down."

Sunrun is using these charitable installations, that will allow the firehouses to produce their own power for lights and communications equipment, as a test for setting up more microgrids around the island, said Chris Rauscher, director of public policy for the company.

Providing storage is crucial at this point; solar panels alone can't provide round-the-clock power. With the grid down, existing panels atop Puerto Rico homes and Wal-Mart Stores Inc. stores that are affiliated with utility Puerto Rico Electric Power Authority, or Prepa, have failed to operate.

Houston-based Sunnova Energy Corp., which has 10,000 residential customers in Puerto Rico who depend on Prepa, is asking battery providers to send shipments to the island on the expectation that restrictions preventing their use will be eliminated. Chief Executive Officer John Berger said he met last week with Governor Ricardo Rossello for assistance "to cut the red tape to allow those batteries to come in and allow our customers to have power."

But for now, logistics remain a problem. Because of limited cargo space, some goods are being sent to a Miami warehouse. "We are going to continue to solicit donations and try to arrange transportation," said SEIA spokesman Dan Whitten in an email.

Getting the power back on is the current priority, Governor Ricardo Rosello told a Bloomberg News reporter in San Juan on Friday, but more thought must be given to the future of the energy grid. (He has already held an "initial conversation" with Elon Musk on the subject, he recently tweeted.) The island must "give ourselves an opportunity to not just rebuild the old system but rather to establish a platform so that we can consider microgrids" and other uses of renewable sources, he said.

– *Naureen Malik and Brian Eckhouse*

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### **Fewer Puerto Ricans Have Power Restored Than A Week Ago**

By Sam Petulla

[CNN](#), October 16, 2017

As Puerto Rico struggles with water shortages and a dire situation for many seeking medical care, the number of customers getting power off of the island's grid has declined, according to the latest available data and conversations with energy experts.



Last Monday, 15% of customers were receiving power compared with typical peak load. Today, that number was down to 13.7%, according to Department of Energy and Puerto Rican government status reports.

Puerto Rico Gov. Ricardo Rosselló said Sunday that he hopes to have 95% of power restored by December. The progress of the last week shows how difficult getting there will be, say groups working on the ground and energy analysts. The December goal “is indicative of the extent of the damage and the challenging terrain and geography,” said Chris Chiames, a spokesman for Whitefish Energy Holdings, an energy company working with the Puerto Rico Electric Power Authority on the recovery.

From all sides, those trying to get the grid back up face challenges. Analysts who have studied Puerto Rico’s grid gave several reasons the recovery is progressing so slowly.

1. Trying to put the electrical grid back together is a chicken and egg problem. Strange as it may sound, to get a grid working well, you need a strong existing grid to balance out problems that may occur. Electrical grids are self-serving systems that modulate power. Power plants run on synchronized intervals. When parts of a grid breakdown, it adds stress on the existing system.

2. The bad weather Puerto Rico has had in recent weeks is delaying progress.

3. Before Hurricane Irma, Puerto Rico has power plants had high outage rates.

4. Disorganization and lack of funding after the hurricane limited partnerships that would have helped.

Much of the island’s turned to generators for the time being. The US Army Corps of Engineers has set up dozens of large generators and received a large new shipment over the weekend. These are used to power anything from homes to local services like police departments. Stores have been selling generators at a rate of over 200 per day, according to reports. Some say the generators are driving up bills beyond what’s sustainable.

A Department of Energy spokesperson said more rapid improvements should be seen soon. But they are more likely to come in weeks than days. Today, the US Army Corps of Engineers, which FEMA has tasked with helping rebuild the island’s infrastructure, awarded a \$240 million contract to repair the power grid. That is expected to make a dramatic difference. “It’s going to be a long process,” he said. “The generators that arrived over the weekend. That was a big step forward. This is another step forward.”

The Puerto Rico Electric Power Authority said it did not reach out for more help because it did not think it could afford it. Chiames said that Whitefish Energy, a company it did reach out to, wants to do more on the island but the surrounding recovery is holding them back. Whitefish has 200 linemen on the island and plans to grow the workforce to more than 1000.

But the slow progress on recovery has held his teams back. “We are limited by the amount of equipment and other infrastructure issues (i.e., housing, road access),” he wrote to CNN via email. “We are not bringing workers to the island until we have concrete assignments for them to take on, the logistics for them to get to the sites, and the equipment to make the repairs.”

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## **Floating Hospital Sits Empty Near Puerto Rico (VIDEO)**

[CNN](#), October 16, 2017

As Puerto Rico’s health system struggles to cope from Hurricane Maria’s destruction, the US Navy Ship Comfort, a state-of-the-art floating hospital, sits offshore with more than 200 empty beds. CNN’s Leyla Santiago reports.



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## **75,000 Army Veterans Live In Puerto Rico. Many Struggle In Shelters After Hurricane Maria**

[USA Today](#), October 13, 2017

It's early in the morning, and the entire city of San Juan, Puerto Rico, seems to be gazing at the sky with concern. It looks like rain but the island just can't handle any more flooding.

On the highway, under the dark, heavy clouds, a small car makes its way through traffic. In it are four women, Ghislaine Rivera, Mia Lind, Janine Smalley and Katie Blanker, with whom I'm spending the day — it's Oct. 5.

Our first stop? A school that's been turned into a hurricane shelter.

Lind, an occupational therapist for the VA Caribbean Healthcare System in San Juan, goes to the door, asking, "Are there any veterans here?"

Every day since the hurricane hit, she and her team have been roaming from shelter to shelter, looking for veterans who need medical attention.

There are somewhere around 75,000 U.S. Army veterans living in Puerto Rico. Most served during the Vietnam War. After Hurricane Maria, many are now living in shelters. Thousands of people, not just veterans, have been displaced by the storm, and the shelters are packed.

At the school, a supervisor answers: Yes, there's a veteran here.

The VA team finds 70-year-old Luis Torres lying in bed. His dress shirt is wide open and his baseball cap is flipped backward. His bed is surrounded by piles of clothing and some bags of food.

The Air Force veteran was honorably discharged; he has his military ID, but the other paperwork was lost in the storm. "My house ... it disappeared," he says, breaking down in tears.

His teenage son, Andrew Torres, who is also staying here, pulls out his phone to show us pictures of what's left of their house. It's like the roof and the walls were just plucked out. On the second floor, a toilet stands alone in the open.

Janine Smalley takes Luis Torres's vitals. His blood pressure is 130 over 80, so that's "perfect," she says, asking, "Do you take any meds?" Smalley is the VA team's registered nurse and Disaster Emergency Medical Personnel trained by the Federal Emergency Management Agency. She's here from Cleveland, Ohio. She volunteered to come help. She says when she saw what was happening in Puerto Rico, she asked to be sent here.

Meanwhile, Katie Blanker, who also volunteered for this assignment, brings Torres toothbrushes, heating pads and food. Blanker is from Stevens Point, Wisconsin. She's a social worker with the VA and a veteran herself.

Torres cheers up. "Where's the T-bone steak?" he jokes. At least for a few minutes, the mood has lightened up.

Lind says that she, too, had been thinking about steak, just the day before. There is a meat shortage on the island. "I really want to have a meal for my kids that includes beef. That was my goal. To get my kids not canned food. When you have chaos like this, the only right you have is to stay alive. You stay alive, and you survive," she says.

Lind fights back tears. The others from her team hug her. Then she smiles and announces the next neighborhood they're heading to: "Let's go to Rio Grande!"

Let's go "before we're all crying. I was hoping to wait till noon to cry again," Smalley says.

The next shelter is even more packed than the last one.

"May we come in and ask if anyone is a vet?" Lind asks.

A man says there aren't any vets there.



Lind asks the man how he knows.

The man bristles, saying, “I can’t force them to talk to you.”

Lind thanks him, and the team leaves. Later on, in the parking lot, Lind tells me she suspects some shelters just don’t want the VA team coming in. She and her colleagues represent the federal government. And they have to report it if a hurricane shelter isn’t providing enough food and water. Or if it’s overcrowded.

A lot of these shelters are just repurposed schools, places for people to lie down and rest, with no running water or electricity. This is the new normal. Which is why the last shelter we go to takes us a little by surprise.

The team walks right in. There’s a radio blasting pop music. There are kids painting murals. And then there’s Benny Molina.

The residents cheer his name as he sits down for a checkup by nurse Smalley. Molina, 61, is a veteran — “National Guard in Riverdale, New Jersey. Specialized in tanks. Driving the tanks,” he says.

“Benny that’s perfect!” interrupts Smalley. Benny’s blood pressure is normal. He jokingly offers to do pushups — in a while — he just had a big meal. The room erupts in laughter.

Ghislaine Rivera, a social worker, asks him what happened to his home. It’s gone. Benny lost everything he owned to the storm. The team offers to give him aid packages, with basic supplies, but he refuses. “Right now, we have food and everything ... but some other people are sleeping on the street and they have nothing to eat.”

As he fills out his paperwork, Smalley and Blanker take a quick break in the shade. They are red from the heat and visibly tired. They’ve come a long way, from Ohio and Wisconsin. But, they say, this is a responsibility they have. All of us do.

“We don’t know them all, but we owe them all,” says Smalley.

“All of the veterans we’re here for served for the United States,” says Blanker. “This is Americans helping Americans. These veterans were stationed in the US, went to war with the US. I think that’s the thing that people forget.”

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## **OTHER PUERTO RICO NEWS**

### **The American Government Has Failed.’ Celebrity Chef José Andrés Slams FEMA’s Puerto Rico Response**

By Mahita Gajanan

[TIME](#), October 16, 2017

José Andrés is proud to say he’s serving nearly 100,000 meals a day in hurricane-ravaged Puerto Rico. But the celebrity chef says much more needs to be done, and he’s frustrated that the federal government isn’t stepping up to do its part.

Andrés, who is known for his activism and advocacy, often on behalf of the underrepresented, has traveled all over Puerto Rico in the last three weeks bringing meals to people cut off from government aid in the wake of Hurricane Maria. He said he’s thrilled to bring food to the people, but that the Federal Emergency Management Agency has not offered him the support he needs to more efficiently feed the U.S. island territory’s residents. Although the amount of food he serves is growing, Andrés says government help could immediately get the operation to half a million meals a day.



“People are hungry today. FEMA should be in the business of taking care of Americans in this minute,” he told TIME from Puerto Rico. “The American government has failed.”

Parts of Puerto Rico are still without electricity or adequate drinking water since Hurricane Maria hit. At least 45 people have died, and more than 110 people are missing. The New York Times reports that some Puerto Rico residents continue to wait on FEMA for food and water deliveries. While 86% of grocery stores have reopened, the government has not guaranteed that they are stocked with enough supplies.

Through his nonprofit, World Central Kitchen, which works to empower communities with food, plus volunteer work from several local and international chefs, Andrés has delivered hot meals and sandwiches to tens of thousands of hungry people in Puerto Rico. Using the hashtag #ChefsForPuertoRico, Andrés has documented on Twitter how his team has served food to people stuck in Puerto Rico’s rural, hard-to-access areas. By next week, Andrés hopes to have established a total of 12 kitchens throughout the island, paid for through World Central Kitchen.

FEMA did help Andrés at first, with a contract that gave him about \$1.5 million. But the costs of serving meals in Puerto Rico have far exceeded the original amount of what Andrés called “petty cash.”

“FEMA used me as a puppet to show that they were doing something,” Andrés said, referring to the original contract.

A FEMA spokesperson said the agency attempted to negotiate with World Central Kitchen to provide an additional 20,000 meals total, but that Andrés requested a contract for more than 120,000 meals, which exceeds the agency’s threshold. Andrés said he’s frustrated by the regulations and bureaucracy. FEMA should “embrace complexity,” he said, because he believes lives are on the line.

Andrés also criticized President Donald Trump over FEMA’s response. Trump has been on the defensive about the way his administration has handled the crisis in Puerto Rico. Trump on Thursday threatened to pull support from the island, but said

Friday that he will always be with the “wonderful people of Puerto Rico.” A White House spokesperson did not comment.

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### **Private Security Mercenaries Are Now Moving Into Puerto Rico**

By Larry Celona And Danika Fears

[New York Post](#), October 16, 2017

The situation is so bad in Puerto Rico that a private security firm formerly known as Blackwater has fielded several requests to send employees to the island — and there are already guards roaming around with long guns on the streets of San Juan.

US security firm Academi, formerly called Blackwater, has received at least five different requests for help, including one from Federal Protective Services, which is part of the Department of Homeland Security.

“We’ve been invited to bid armed and unarmed security of fuel and water, but have not received responses,” said Paul Donahue, CEO of Constellis, Academi’s parent company.

“The top two concerns as reported to us are the need for security of fuel (for gas stations and for generators so businesses can operate), and for humanitarian support, i.e. water distribution.”

A job listing on the Constellis Web site says they’re looking for “security professionals to deploy to Puerto Rico to provide humanitarian and armed security services.” One of the tasks would be dealing “tactfully with the general public,” it says.



The Whitestone Group, another U.S. security company, posted an online ad on Sept. 29 seeking “retired officers with gun licenses for immediate response in Puerto Rico,” the island’s Center for Investigative Journalism reported.

Armed guards from unidentified private security companies have also been spotted around San Juan, some with long guns that may be illegal because they require special licenses given out by the government, experts told the CIJ.

“It is very restricted,” said Rosa Emilia Rodríguez, the chief federal prosecutor in Puerto Rico. “I’m surprised that this is happening. I don’t know if they are off-duty police officers. I don’t know, I would have to see the circumstances. A police officer can work in a private security company in their spare time.”

Héctor Pesquera, secretary of the Puerto Rico Department of Public Safety, is crafting an executive order with rules that private guards must abide by.

Rodríguez said security contractors shouldn’t be able to carry long guns.

“They would be going very far,” she told CIJ.

A law enforcement source said sending private security guards over to Puerto Rico to help with relief efforts “sounds unusual since Puerto Rico is a US territory.”

“Private contractors are usually hired for hot zones like the Middle East where there are concerns about terrorist attacks,” the source said.

But Donahue, the CEO of Constellis, said private security details were also deployed in the wake of Hurricane Katrina.

“In Katrina, we protected schools, churches, hospitals, food suppliers, water, power, tent cities...everything,” he said. “The police, military and guard were doing the heavy lifting and we were in critical support roles.”

In 2014, four former Blackwater security guards were found guilty in the 2007 shootings of more than 30 Iraqis in Baghdad, which raised questions about the US use of private security contractors during the Iraq War.

One of the convictions has since been overturned.

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### **Democrats Seek Tax Relief For Puerto Rico, Virgin Islands**

By Marcy Gordon

[Associated Press](#), October 16, 2017

WASHINGTON (AP) — A group of Democratic lawmakers are asking for tax relief for hurricane-stricken Puerto Rico and the U.S. Virgin Islands, saying people and businesses in the two U.S. territories don’t enjoy the same benefits as those in the mainland.

The lawmakers are asking Rep. Kevin Brady, R-Texas, head of the tax-writing House Ways and Means Committee, to work on legislation that would, for example, extend the earned income tax credit for low- to moderate-income workers to Puerto Rico and increase the amounts paid under the low-income housing tax credit.

The House last week passed a \$36.5 billion disaster aid package for Puerto Rico and the U.S. Virgin Islands. But that relief was “paltry” for the territories’ residents “given that they are not able to avail themselves of some of the tax benefits we typically provide,” said the lawmakers led by Democratic Reps. Joe Crowley and Nydia Velazquez, both of New York.

The request comes as Congress prepares to craft into legislation a nearly \$6 trillion tax overhaul plan pushed by President Donald Trump and GOP leaders. The plan, which Republicans view as an imperative for them to prevail in next year’s midterm elections, proposes to nearly double the



standard deduction, to \$12,000 for individuals and \$24,000 for families; dramatically cut taxes for corporations and potentially for individuals; shrink the number of personal income brackets; and simplify the tax system.

The Democratic lawmakers sent a letter Monday to Brady and Rep. Richard Neal of Massachusetts, the top Democrat on the Ways and Means Committee. Their spokesmen didn't have an immediate comment Monday.

The Democrats also asked the panel to provide additional funds for the new markets tax credit to help businesses that were lost in Hurricane Maria. The lawmakers requested the reinstatement of the tax credit for domestic manufacturers in Puerto Rico and its expansion to be applied to the Virgin Islands.

In addition, they are seeking the permanent reinstatement of the tax system for rum, in which the excise taxes collected on rum produced in Puerto Rico and the Virgin Islands was paid to the U.S. government but then transferred back to the territories.

Most residents of Puerto Rico don't have to pay federal personal income tax; they do pay into Social Security. Residents of the U.S. Virgin Islands pay income taxes to the local government that are deemed to be close in amount to what they would pay the federal government.

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## **HURRICANE MARIA USVI**

### **FEMA Disaster Recovery Center Opens In Frederiksted**

*Virgin Islands Daily News*, October 17, 2017

A second Disaster Recovery Center — DRC — opened in St. Croix on Friday to provide information and help for survivors of hurricanes Irma and Maria.

The new DRC is open in Frederiksted at the Rotary Club West, 40 KA-KD Estate LaGrange.

Another DRC is at the Old Post Office Building at Church and Company streets in Christiansted.

Operating hours for both DRCs are 8 a.m. to 6 p.m. until further notice.

FEMA registration sites

St. Thomas

Omar Brown Sr. Fire Station, Conference Room 108, Ross Taarnbjerg, across from Barbel Plaza, 9 a.m. to 6 p.m. daily.

The Estate Bordeaux Farmers' Market, Estate Bordeaux, 9 a.m. to 6 p.m. daily.

St. John

National Park Service Center, Cruz Bay: 9 a.m. to 3 p.m. until further notice.

Coral Bay Fire Department: 9 a.m. to 2 p.m. until further notice.



St. Croix

Rotary Club West, 40 KA-KD Estate LaGrange, 8 a.m. to 6 p.m. daily.

The Old Post Office, Church and Company streets, Christiansted: 9 a.m. to 6 p.m. daily.

By phone or online

Registration is also available via phone at 1-800-621-3362 or online at [disasterassistance.gov](http://disasterassistance.gov)

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### **Mapp Appoints Panel to Help Guide Hurricane Recovery**

St. Thomas Source, October 17, 2017

Gov. Kenneth E. Mapp on Monday announced the creation of an expert advisory committee to help guide reconstruction and resiliency efforts in the U.S. Virgin Islands in the wake of Hurricanes Irma and Maria.

The V.I. Hurricane and Resiliency Advisory Group, under the Office of the Governor, includes local officials and community members, as well as business and environmental experts, and thought leaders from around the United States, according to a news release issued Monday by Government House.

Under the Governor's direction, the group will assess hurricane damage and outline the risks facing the USVI from potential future natural hazards, looking ahead 30 years. Those risks include how threats may evolve with climate change.

The group also will set the course for the USVI's long-term security and economic recovery, with a special focus on making the territory's critical infrastructure, homes, and businesses more resilient to future storms and other natural disasters, the news release said.

The 18-member V.I. Hurricane and Resiliency Advisory Group will also focus on:

- The ongoing planning, coordination and implementation of USVI response and recovery efforts across the human services, infrastructure, housing and economic sectors.
- The development of a centralized process to attract, coordinate and leverage federal, private-sector and philanthropic funding and volunteer efforts.
- The development and implementation of a coordinated economic recovery plan, with a particular focus on the tourism industry and all related services.
- Tracking and monitoring distribution and spending of federal disaster assistance funding and private donations, including the Community Fund for the Virgin Islands, administered by the Community Foundation of the Virgin Islands.



– The near- and long-term actions needed to increase the USVI’s resilience from natural hazards, including policy recommendations and guidelines and prioritization for infrastructure investments.

“We’re bringing together experts from many disciplines to help the U.S. Virgin Islands build back as fast and smart as possible to enhance the long-term resiliency and economic health of our islands, while protecting our communities from future storms,” Mapp said.

Clifford Graham, president and CEO of the West Indian Company (WICO) port facilities and Havensight Mall on St. Thomas, will serve as chairman of the group. Graham previously served two terms as a senator in the Legislature of the U.S. Virgin Islands, overseeing the Finance and Rules Committees and was the long-time executive director of the Virgin Islands Housing Finance Authority.

Other members will be:

– U.S. Surgeon General Jerome M. Adams: Dr. Adams is an anesthesiologist and a vice admiral in the U.S. Public Health Service Commissioned Corps. He was sworn in Sept. 5 by Vice President Mike Pence as the 20th Surgeon General of the United States. He holds a masters degree in public health from the University of California, Berkeley.

– Elizabeth Armstrong: General manager of the Buccaneer Hotel on St. Croix, which her family has owned and operated since 1947. Armstrong led a successful \$25 million capital renovation of every aspect of the Buccaneer resort while maintaining its authenticity and cultural heritage. She also serves as chairwoman of the Governing Board of the V.I. Water and Power Authority, vice chair of the Virgin Islands Next Generation Network, and is a past president of the St. Croix Hotel and Tourism Association.

– Valdamier Collens: Commissioner for the USVI Department of Finance and Executive Director of the Virgin Islands Public Finance Authority. Collens formerly served as the chief financial officer for the Virgin Islands Port Authority and assistant commissioner for the Department of Finance.

– Vivek Daswani: President and owner of Royal Caribbean. Daswani has worked to develop and expand his family’s retail operations in the U.S. Virgin Islands for the past 20 years. He has served on the boards of the Community Foundation of the Virgin Islands and the V.I. Institute of the Performing Arts.

– Judith Enck: Visiting Scholar at Pace University’s Elisabeth Haub School of Law. Enck brings more than 37 years of experience in the environmental field, most recently as a former EPA Region 2 administrator, which includes New York, New Jersey, Puerto Rico, the U.S. Virgin Islands, and seven tribal nations. Prior to her role at the EPA, Enck served as the New York State deputy secretary for the environment.



- Andrew Farkas: Founder, chairman and CEO of Island Capital Group, a real estate and merchant banking firm with significant interests in the USVI. Farkas was previously chairman and CEO of Insignia Financial Group, a global real estate services company. He is an avid philanthropist and sailor.
  
- Eugene Farrell: Chief of Staff to Gov. Kenneth E. Mapp. Prior to assuming his current position, Farrell was the governor’s senior policy advisor for justice, law enforcement, security and emergency operations. He comes with more than 30 years of management and leadership experience in the U.S. Armed Forces, Civilian Emergency Response System and as a business owner.
  
- Sen. Novelle E. Francis, Jr.: A member of the Legislature of the Virgin Islands, Francis is serving his second term representing the St. Croix district. He is a former chair of the Committee on Homeland Security, Justice and Public Safety and presently chairs the Committee on Rules and Judiciary. Francis has extensive experience in emergency management and response, having served for 25 years in the Virgin Islands Police Department, where he attained the rank of commissioner.
  
- Daryl Griffith: Acting executive director and chief financial officer for the V.I. Housing Finance Authority. Griffith works to increase access to housing and community development opportunities throughout the USVI. Prior to his work with the Housing Finance Authority, Griffith was a vice president and commercial relationship manager with Sun Trust Bank, where he worked with business owners to access capital and grow their companies.
  
- Anthony Hurley: Associate managing director with Witt O’Briens, an emergency and security risk management firm. Hurley brings 37 years in the utility industry, working for five electric utilities across three states. He has an extensive background in emergency management and hurricane recovery, having supported emergency responses to Hurricanes Isabel, Francis, Ivan, Katrina, Rita, Irene, Sandy, Harvey, and now Irma and Maria.
  
- Hans Lawaetz: President of Annaly Farms, Inc., Lawaetz is a St. Croix businessman and cattle farmer. He served as a U.S. Air Force captain after graduating from Cornell University. Lawaetz has served on the boards of the V.I. Conservation District, Good Hope School, St. Croix Landmark Society, the Virgin Islands Olympic Committee and the 2017 V.I. Transfer Centennial Commission. He is president of the St. Croix Friends of Denmark Society.
  
- John McInnis III – Director of the Kenny Chesney Foundation and CEO of McInnis Industries, a construction company his family founded in 1970 that has grown to a more than \$1 billion enterprise. McInnis and his company have been instrumental in several national emergency cleanup operations including Hurricanes Ivan and Katrina, and the BP Horizon oil spill. The McInnis Family is also the majority owner in one of the world’s most famous road house beach bars, The Flora-Bama, on the Alabama/Florida state line.
  
- Beverly Nicholson-Doty: Commissioner of Tourism for the USVI. Nicholson-Doty oversees the advertising and marketing strategy for the entire USVI, as well as its national and



international tourism-related efforts and product development. Raised on St. Thomas, she was appointed in 2004 president of the USVI Hotel and Tourism Association.

– Basil Ottley: Director of policy for the Office of Insular Affairs within the U.S. Department of the Interior. Ottley coordinates federal policies for the territories of American Samoa, Guam, the U.S. Virgin Islands, and the Commonwealth of the Northern Mariana Islands while overseeing U.S. federal assistance provided to Micronesia, the Marshall Islands and the Republic of Palau.

– Geri Purvis: Purvis has worked with FEMA for almost 15 years and has responded to more than 25 disaster operations throughout her time serving in the field of emergency management. She has worked in individual assistance, fraud investigation and external affairs. She has recently responded to Hurricane Sandy, Hurricane Irene and several disasters across the United States as a member of the Region II Incident Management Assistance Team. Purvis represents the areas of mass care, emergency assistance, housing, and human services.

– Marjorie Roberts: Head of Marjorie Rawls Roberts, P.C., a law firm specializing in tax, corporate/securities, estate planning, and business law. Roberts' practice focuses on representing major U.S. and international companies seeking to do business in the USVI. She formerly served as technical advisor and chief counsel to the USVI Bureau of Internal Revenue, as well as general counsel, vice president, and director for Globalvest Management Company, LP, a St. Thomas-based investment company.

– Harriet Tregoning: Immediate past principal deputy assistant secretary of the Office of Community Planning and Development at the U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development. At HUD, Tregoning focused on helping states and cities across the country build a strong foundation for resilience in the face of a changing climate. Tregoning was previously director of the District of Columbia Office of Planning and served as director of development, community and environment at the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency.

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### **USVI Hurricane Survivors Encouraged To Stay In Touch With FEMA**

[Virgin Islands Consortium \(VIR\)](#), October 16, 2017

Hurricane Irma or Maria survivors who have registered for disaster aid should remember that keeping in touch with the Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA) could result in more timely assistance, FEMA said Monday.

FEMA recommends survivors make sure they update their address, phone number, and banking and insurance information if there are any changes after they register. Updated banking information is very important after a disaster because assistance grants may be sent via direct deposit and incorrect information could result in funds being returned.

By providing current information survivors can make sure they don't miss important correspondence or phone calls regarding their application for assistance.

“Displaced Virgin Islanders may be moving around quite a bit as they work to recover,” said FEMA's Federal Coordinating Officer William Vogel. “Please let us know each time you change any important information so we get help to you as quickly as possible.”



Applicants may update their contact or banking information at a Disaster Recovery Center in their area, online at [www.DisasterAssistance.gov](http://www.DisasterAssistance.gov) or via phone at 800-621-3362 or TTY 800-462-7585. Those who use 711-Relay or Video Relay Services can call 800-621-3362.

The toll-free telephone numbers are operating from 7 a.m. to 11 p.m. (local time) seven days a week until further notice. Operators are standing by to assist survivors in multiple languages. Two recovery centers are open in St. Croix, and others will open soon in St. Thomas and St. John. The Frederiksted center is at the Rotary Club West, 40 KA-KD Estate LaGrange. The Christiansted center is at the Old Post Office Building at Church and Company streets. Operating hours for both recovery centers are 8 a.m. to 6 p.m. until further notice.

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## **FEMA Representatives on St. John Warn of Fraudulent Phone Calls, Texts**

St. Thomas Source, October 17, 2017

After three reported instances of potential fraud on St. John over the weekend, the Federal Emergency Management Agency is reminding residents not to respond to phone calls or texts asking for personal information on behalf of the agency.

No matter how convincing a call or text message may be, if it involves a request for a Social Security or bank account number, it isn't from FEMA.

"FEMA will never call and ask you for private information," said Bea Riddle, who works in FEMA's individual assistance program. "They will never call and ask for your Social Security number or your bank account. Never."

The only time such information should be provided to FEMA is during the assistance application process, Riddle said.

"We may call later and ask how your experience was with FEMA when you registered, but that's it," she added.

Identity theft and other scams are, sadly, not uncommon in the aftermath of disasters. People under extreme stress may let their guard down and give out information they normally wouldn't to strangers promising help. Desperate circumstances are likely to draw out those looking to take advantage.

"It doesn't matter where the disaster is, it always happens," said FEMA public information officer Darrell Habisch.

Habisch said that, so far, there haven't been many reports in the V.I. of suspicious phone calls or texts claiming to be from FEMA employees. But he added that, "one is too many." The reports of potential scammers contacting people by phone have so far come from the St. Thomas-St. John district.

It also isn't unheard of for scammers or thieves to impersonate disaster assistance workers in person, but there have so far been no reports of that occurring in the territory after Hurricanes Irma



and Maria. Still, residents can stay safe by asking to see, and even photograph, disaster workers' identification badges. Any suspicious activity related to disaster assistance can be reported to the National Center for Disaster Fraud at 1-866-720-5721, and to local authorities.

Chances are good, though, that anyone who residents encounter doing the hard work of disaster recovery and survivor assistance is in the territory to help.

Housing inspectors are on the ground across the V.I., and have begun the process of doing property assessments. But FEMA representatives say the agency is still largely occupied with the task of making sure that everyone who needs assistance gets to apply. Residents of disaster areas have 60 days after their area is declared a disaster to apply for individual assistance. Lack of access to the internet and unreliable cell phone service in some parts of the territory have made the process challenging.

On St. John, FEMA assistance teams have been helping residents through the registration and application process at the V.I. National Park Visitor Center in Cruz Bay and the Coral Bay Fire Station, but plans are in the works to move at least one of those locations by the end of the week.

Cruz Bay's official "disaster recovery center" is likely to be located at the St. John legislature annex as relief efforts move forward, FEMA representatives reported Monday at a meeting of government agency and NGO heads that occurs three times a week in Cruz Bay. After that meeting, an assessment team from FEMA was scheduled to make a final determination on whether the annex meets all safety and accessibility requirements to function as a recovery center.

If it meets the federal requirements to become a recovery center, the annex will become the headquarters of employees of FEMA, the Small Business Administration and the Army Corps of Engineers, potentially as soon as Wednesday.

"A disaster recovery center is a one-stop shop," said Habisch, stressing the need for the center to be accessible to all. "There are a lot of people who are much more comfortable sitting down face to face and looking the other person in the eye, and then explaining their situation and giving their personal information."

He added that the annex has the benefit of being a more central location in Cruz Bay than the park visitor center.

Assistance teams will still be available at the visitor center on a daily basis until a disaster recovery center can be officially established in Cruz Bay. Coral Bay's center is likely to remain at the fire station, or near it, Habisch said.

The SBA will also increase its presence on St. John in the coming weeks. FEMA has arranged for lodging for SBA representatives on the island so that won't have to continue commuting from St. Thomas, which they began doing on Saturday.

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## **Cruises To St. Thomas To Resume In November**

By Gene Sloan

[USA Today](#), October 16, 2017

Cruise ships will begin returning to St. Thomas on Nov. 10, less than two months after the island was devastated by hurricanes Irma and Maria, the government of the U.S. Virgin Islands announced Monday.

In a statement sent to media outlets, the Virgin Islands government said Royal Caribbean's 3,114-passenger Adventure of the Seas would be the first cruise vessel to return to the island on a regular sailing since the back-to-back storms.

Irma and Maria caused widespread damage across St. Thomas, knocking out power, ripping roofs from homes and stripping foliage from vegetation. At least one reporter who visited the island in the days after Irma hit said it looked like a conflict zone.

But the government of the U.S. Virgin Islands has been racing to restore the territory's top tourist areas so it can reopen to visitors. Tourism accounts for an out-sized portion of the Virgin Islands economy, and the livelihoods of thousands of Virgin Islands residents are dependent on a quick return of visitors, officials have said.

Cruise ship visits, in particular, are a major driver of the Virgin Islands economy. In late September, Virgin Islands officials said they were hoping to have cruise vessels back to St. Thomas by late October.

"Welcoming cruise visitors back to the U.S. Virgin Islands is key to our economic recovery," U.S. Virgin Islands tourism commissioner Beverly Nicholson-Doty said in a statement released Monday.

Royal Caribbean on Monday said it was working with the government to restore St. Thomas's famed Magens Bay beach area in time for Adventure of the Seas' arrival on Nov. 10. Magens Bay is one of the biggest draws for cruise tourists on the island.

Royal Caribbean also said most of St. Thomas's downtown shops, restaurants and bars as well as tour operators would be fully operational when Adventure of the Seas arrives. Among tours that will be available to passengers are boat and catamaran excursions around the island and trips to area beaches, the line said.

In addition to returning to St. Thomas on Nov. 10, Royal Caribbean on Monday said it was committed to resuming cruise calls at the hurricane-ravaged islands of Puerto Rico and St. Martin by the end of November.

By Dec. 1, all scheduled calls to the three islands will operate as planned, Royal Caribbean said.

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## **Cruzan Rum Distillery Resumes Production Following Hurricane Maria**

Virgin Islands Consortium, October 16, 2017

ST. CROIX — The Cruzan Rum distillery has resumed rum production following a temporary shutdown due to the impact of Hurricane Maria, the company announced Monday. Located on St. Croix, the Cruzan distillery produces some of the world's finest aged rums and is also a popular destination for visitors to the island.

While the distillery suspended operations for approximately three weeks due to storm damage, Cruzan completed critical repairs and does not expect any supply disruptions in the marketplace. Even though some of the company's warehouses sustained damage, Cruzan's aging rum supply was



not impacted. Previous investments to establish the distillery's own power generation facility to strengthen business resilience also enabled the timely resumption of rum production.

“Cruzan’s roots are wide and deep in the USVI, and Cruzan and the Beam Suntory family have been engaged from the start in support of our employees and neighbors in the territory during this incredibly challenging time,” said David Hunter, SVP of Global Supply Chain at Beam Suntory, the parent company of Cruzan Rum. “Our first priority was to establish the safety and wellbeing of our employees, and to help them get back on their feet. We airlifted in 35 restoration workers with necessary equipment and supplies to help get the distillery back up and running safely. In partnership with our friends at Diageo, we teamed up to ship to St. Croix a container of relief supplies, including 90 generators and drinking water. Thanks to the courage, character and commitment of our Cruzan team, led by Master Distiller Gary Nelthropp, our people are looking ahead and helping contribute to the long-term recovery of the U.S. Virgin Islands.”

Cruzan Rum and Diageo are indelible to the territory’s financial stability, as the USVI’s rum cover over funds — well over \$200 million annually — are used to pay the government’s bondholders.

According to Cruzan, in recent weeks, Beam Suntory, its brands and its parent company have provided more than \$2 million in cash and in-kind support for disaster relief in the US, USVI and Mexico, including:

- \$1 million to the American Red Cross for hurricane relief
- \$500,000 to the Fund for the Virgin Islands
- \$100,000 to employee assistance funds established by distributor partners
- Cash donations to relief organizations including the Bartenders Emergency Fund and Operation Barbeque Relief
- Proceeds from the sale of remaining bottles of Booker’s Rye, 2017 Whisky Bible’s “World Whisky of the Year,” donated to hurricane relief
- Dollar-for-dollar company match of eligible employee donations to relief agencies
- Airlift of 35 restoration workers and supplies to repair distillery
- Partnership with Diageo to ship relief supplies to St. Croix, including 90 generators and bottled water
- \$200,000 to the Mexican Red Cross for earthquake relief

The Cruzan brand will soon announce a program to further support the ongoing recovery in the U.S. Virgin Islands, the company said.

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## **Power Restoration Work Hampered On Monday By Inclement Weather, WAPA Says, Latest Update Released**

Virgin Islands Consortium, October 17, 2017

The Virgin Islands Water and Power Authority said in its latest power and potable water restoration update that work to restore power to the USVI was hampered on Monday by inclement weather and saturated grounds. The stoppage was a result of a weather system that



affected the territory and brought disorganized showers on Sunday, with its remnants lingering through Monday.

Below, find the latest updates:

On St. Thomas, crews worked on reconstructing the primary lines on Feeder 7A toward Patriot Manor while poles were planted in another section of the feeder near Altona. Work also continued on the redevelopment of a transmission feeder that will bring electrical service to the WAPA East End substation, and subsequently to customers on St. John as well as the Red Hook and Nazareth areas of St. Thomas.

On St. John, additional poles were planted from Cruz Bay to Estate Pastory, and work was done on a section of Feeder 9E. Crews from one of the off-island contractors will be dedicated to the restoration of St. John.

On St. Croix, line crews worked Monday on circuits leading from Mill Harbor to Five Corners and on a portion of Feeder 8B leading to Frederiksted. Clean up crews worked in Sunny Isle and on the campus of Central High School.

Over the weekend, 260 linemen arrived in the territory to assist in WAPA's restoration of electrical service. The linemen are equally divided between both island districts and are already working alongside WAPA Line Department personnel and on-island contractors. 250 additional linemen are expected in the Virgin Islands on October 27, bringing the total number of off-island personnel to more than 500.

The Authority has contracted with debris removal crews in each district to clean up fallen lines, poles, transformers and other utility-owned hurricane debris. Efforts continue to identify debris sites on all islands.

### Potable Water System

There are four days of emergency water storage on St. John; seven days on St. Thomas and three days on St. Croix.

On St. John, repairs are pending at the Cruz Bay pump station. Until these repairs are completed, the town of Cruz Bay is being provided potable water service from St. Thomas.

On St. Croix, both the Concordia and Contentment pump stations are back in service. Water pressure will increase over the next few days in Frederiksted and other west-end communities.

On St. Thomas, electrical service was restored to the Contant pump station. Potable water service is now available in Contant and the surrounding areas including the Contant Knolls housing community. All potable water pump stations on St. Thomas are now online and functioning normally.

### Other Information

Emergency Call Centers operate 9 a.m. – 5 p.m., seven days a week. St. Thomas – St. John district, 340-774-1424; St. Croix district, 340-773-0150

WAPA telephone contact: St. Thomas – St. John district, 340-774-3552; St. Croix district, 340-773-2250

Customer Service Offices operate Monday – Friday, 10 a.m. – 4 p.m. at Sunny Isle on St. Croix and at Port of Sale Mall on St. Thomas



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## **OTHER USVI NEWS**

### **Governor Expresses Condolences for Death of FEMA Worker**

St. Thomas Source, October 17, 2017

Gov. Kenneth E. Mapp and Lt. Gov. Osbert E. Potter expressed condolences Monday to the family and colleagues of Federal Emergency Management Agency outreach worker Rich Bradley, who died of natural causes this weekend on St. Croix.

“By all accounts, Mr. Bradley was a very dedicated public servant who cared deeply about his work and supporting disaster survivors,” Mapp said.

According to FEMA, Bradley began his career with the agency during the Florida hurricanes of 2004 as a voluntary agency liaison, and continued to share his passion helping disaster survivors recover throughout his years of service. Even before his career with FEMA, Bradley exemplified the spirit of selflessness throughout his time with the Seventh-day Adventists and the State of Florida during disaster response operations, the Government House news release said.

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### **Juan Luis Hospital Appoints New CEO**

By Ernice Gilbert

Virgin Islands Consortium, October 17, 2017

ST. CROIX — The Juan F. Luis Hospital and Medical Center’s governing board announced late Monday that it had selected a new CEO, naming Wanda M. Ruben to the chief executive post, a position at the beleaguered facility that has been volatile at best during the past few years.

The selection of Ms. Ruben was made during an emergency board meeting held last night at the hospital; former acting CEO, Richard Evangelista, who served in the position for well over a year and during a time when the hospital seemed to be in perennial crisis, was returned to his role as the hospital’s chief legal counsel.

“The District Governing Board of Directors of the Governor Juan F. Luis Hospital and Medical Center congratulates Ms. Wanda Ruben on her appointment as CEO of this institution,” said Troy deChabert-Schuster, the board’s acting chairman. “Ms. Ruben, a native daughter of St. Croix, is very experienced in nursing and healthcare administration and we are confident in her ability to lead JFL into the future.”

The leadership change follows damage the hospital sustained by Hurricane Maria, and comes as it faces an urgent need of funds for repairs and operations.

On the hospital’s grounds, Department of Defense personnel, through the Federal Emergency Management Agency, have been installing mobile medical units that Governor Kenneth Mapp has said will function as fully equipped hospitals.



“The board thanks Atty. Richard Evangelista for his service as acting CEO,” Mr. deChabert-Schuster said. “Atty. Evangelista served during a very challenging time in the history of JFL and the Virgin Islands. He led the hospital through CMS surveys and two Category 5 hurricanes. We thank him for his courageous leadership.”

It was not divulged why Mr. Evangelista was removed.

Ms. Ruben has been serving as JFL’s chief nursing officer (CNO) since July of this year, according to the hospital. The release says she has more than 19 years of healthcare experience, and prior to working at JFL, she worked most recently as the CNO at Garden Grove Hospital Medical Center in California.

Ms. Ruben also has an extensive background in nursing administration, including wide-ranging experience in emergency department management, according to JFL. She obtained a bachelor of science degree in nursing from Loma Linda University, and a master of science degree in nursing from the University of Phoenix.

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## **NEW YORK CITY**

### **Arcadis Named FEMA Engineer Of Record For The City Of New York’s East Side Coastal Resiliency Project**

*New York Real Estate Journal, October 17, 2017*

Manhattan, NY Arcadis, a global design and consultancy firm for natural and built assets, has been selected as engineer of record for the Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA) flood protection multiphase design of the city’s East Side Coastal Resiliency (ESCR) project. Arcadis is part of a team supporting the city’s efforts to safeguard the Lower East Side against severe weather events and continued sea level rise.

The ESCR Project, led by the Mayor’s Office of Recovery and Resiliency, is an urban flood protection solution spanning 2.5 miles, including the East Side, and is the first element of coastal storm and sea level rise defense system for the East Side and Lower Manhattan.

Following completion of ESCR’s conceptual design and preliminary design phases, Arcadis was selected as part of a multi-disciplined engineering team contracted by the New York City Department of Design and Construction during final design phase of the project.

In collaboration with the city of New York and local communities, Arcadis will design flood protection solutions that merge into the urban fabric for 200,000 residents and 21,000 businesses. Arcadis will also develop supporting documentation necessary for changes to FEMA flood hazard maps.

Design features will incorporate a combination of architectural floodwalls, bridging berms, embankments, moveable floodgates, and interior drainage improvements, all integrated with East River Park amenities to include recreational facilities, pedestrian and bicycle pathways.



As the five-year anniversary of Sandy approaches, these solutions will strengthen coastal defenses and improve community enjoyment of existing parks while offering future flood protection and environmental benefits.

Hurricane Sandy devastated coastal zones and low-lying urban areas of New York City, and Manhattan's economy suffered during and after the storm. Neighborhoods, businesses and underground transportation systems flooded and the New York Stock Exchange closed for two days. Hurricane Sandy brought to the forefront New York's vulnerability to coastal flooding and the need to improve its resiliency to severe weather events.

"New York City is particularly vulnerable to the effects of sea level rise as proven by Hurricane Sandy's economic impacts on the city's dense population and business centers as well as underground infrastructure," said Peter Glus, Arcadis City executive for New York City. "Our team brings a wealth of expertise in climate change adaptability and resilience from our Dutch heritage and from our experienced engineers who designed flood protection systems across the Louisiana coast following Hurricane Katrina."

Arcadis has undertaken many high-profile water management and resiliency planning projects throughout the U.S., including Hurricane Harvey response in Houston to support damaged or at-risk commercial, industrial or public sector facilities, the assessment of San Francisco's Mission Creek, and reducing risks to communities in Norfolk, Virginia, against severe weather events via an enhanced flood protection system.

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## **OTHER NEW YORK NEWS**

### **Sending Relief By Air And Sea To Puerto Rico From The Bronx**

By Rick Rojas

[New York Times](#), October 16, 2017

The pleas for help, arriving in text messages and on Facebook, have not relented, filling Lymaris Albors's phone since the hurricane that roared across Puerto Rico, her homeland. The people on the other end were asking for all sorts of things: food, generators, solar lights, tarpaulins to take the place of roofs shredded by the hurricane.

As she assembled the items and looked for ways to deliver them, her corner office in the South Bronx had been transformed into a makeshift command center. A growing list of needs covered one whiteboard. The logistical details of how she planned to ship them filled another. And there was yet another list, this one with the people and the groups on the island to whom she hoped to send aid.

"How and when," she conceded, "I have no idea."

Ms. Albors has a number of titles at the Acacia Network, a health and social services organization that is among the largest founded and run by New York's Puerto Rican diaspora. She is usually the chief of staff to the chief executive officer and vice president of business development. But for the past few weeks, her work has boiled down to one all-consuming job: coordinator, putting together the nonprofit organization's relief efforts for Puerto Rico.



Already, two planes loaded with supplies, including one with dozens of generators, had flown to the island, and Acacia employees had been dispatched there to help. Next, they planned to fill a cargo container, which would be sent by ship.

The work at Acacia is just one piece of New York's vast official and unofficial response, as Hurricane Maria's aftermath has, in many ways, both tested and underscored the bonds between the city and Puerto Rico.

There have been donation drives and fund-raisers. Masbia, a network of soup kitchens, gathered batteries, hygiene products, diapers and oatmeal, and SoulCycle has planned a "relief ride." Tidal, Jay-Z's music streaming service, chartered planes to carry supplies to Puerto Rico, and so did Bethenny Frankel, one of the "Real Housewives of New York."

Ms. Albors, for her part, has been propelled by a sense of duty, her own bond with Puerto Rico. Work, though, has also given her a place to channel the despair and anxiety that the storm has stirred. She had heard from her nieces on the island; one, who spent the summer with her in New York, wiped tears from her eyes in a videochat with her aunt. Ms. Albors still had not talked to her mother.

"I can tell you that I can deal with everything in my life, except when my island is in crisis," Ms. Albors said in her office a week after the hurricane made landfall. "There's this deep-rooted love for Puerto Rico, and my family — everyone's there. I'm the only one here."

By a window, Ms. Albors had one more whiteboard. Any time she felt like Acacia had accomplished something, she wrote it there. She needed the reminder that progress was being made.

"We're so committed to the island," she said, her voice cracking. She repeated a line heard often in New York since the hurricane: "It is personal."

The Acacia Network has a complex of buildings in the Mount Hope neighborhood of the South Bronx. Its work includes physical and mental health care services, alcohol and substance abuse treatment, vocational training, day care and nursing homes. Among its projects is an affordable housing residence for older people being built in the Puerto Rican city of Toa Alta.

After Hurricane Maria made landfall, on Sept. 20, organization officials said they decided almost immediately to start their own effort.

They began with a fund-raiser, with their own donation of \$1 million. (So far, they have raised another \$700,000.) Then, Ms. Albors heard from a children's hospital that had enough food for its patients but not for relatives and others who were also in the hospital. Three days after the storm, she said, the organization found a supplier that was still open and paid for food.

And then there was the container. In a neighborhood of narrow streets, stubby blocks and pedestrians crossing wherever they please, the 53-foot long blue cargo container, through a feat of truck driving, had been delivered to a slice of pavement outside one of Acacia's buildings. A Puerto Rican flag hung off the front.

"Things that are needed, we're sending," Raul Russi, the chief executive of Acacia, said. "We're just going to try it our way and see if we can get it done."

On a recent evening, a crew loaded construction supplies and solar lights into the container. A truck on its way from Texas carrying 60 generators was somewhere near Philadelphia. As soon as those were placed inside, the container would be sealed, setting off for Puerto Rico in the morning.

Mr. Russi said he knew the container was a gamble, acknowledging the accounts of other shipments stalled at the port in San Juan. Even so, he was optimistic. If the supplies were not delivered to the intended recipients, he figured, it was likely they would end up with someone who needed them.

"If we can get through with one shipment," Mr. Russi said, "then I'm going to keep working and send these shipments until either we run out of money or things get situated in Puerto Rico."



The shipment carried items that had been on Ms. Albors's list. Her cellphone is always in hand, almost always buzzing. "Every five minutes," she said, "somebody gets access to Wi-Fi." And like clock work, another message asking for help lands in her inbox. Some were sent directly to her, and others took a more circuitous route, funneling their way through the city's Puerto Rican community.

One of those messages came from Christopher Young and Rosa de la Sota, the architects designing Acacia's senior complex in Toa Alta.

They reached out about another affordable housing complex they had designed, near San Juan. They had checked on the residents after the storm and found, Mr. Young said, that they needed "just about everything": food, water, cleaning supplies. Ms. Albors set up a line of credit with a local supplier for \$5,000.

"Really, it's very fragile here," he said. "Like everyone, we're trying — day by day, in this new reality we're living in Puerto Rico — to move forward."

Since the storm, Ms. Albors has worked around the clock: late nights in the office, calls with Mr. Russi first thing in the morning. Sleep, she said, has been difficult to come by.

"I always work like this," she said. "I'm always on a mission here."

But now the work also kept her occupied. Ms. Albors, who came to New York in 2000, grew up in Manatí, a city on the northern coast. Like much of the island, it, too, was pounded by the hurricane. Ms. Albors thought of her nieces and nephews — "They're my life," she said — and her mother, who is in her 70s and was alone in Manatí.

As the days wore on, the list of needs kept growing. The messages kept arriving. But she could tell a tide had shifted: Now, she was receiving pictures of smiling volunteers handing out bags of supplies and of teenagers cleaning the homes of older people. The other list, the one by the window, grew, too: More things were getting done.

Mr. Russi described the work as a collective effort. But Ms. Albors, he said, was at the center of it. "I can move things; I can make things happen," he said. "She has such great connections in Puerto Rico. She has a real good network and good sense of the island, so giving her charge of this thing has been a godsend."

The cargo container still had not made it to the island. It was supposed to take a week to get there, but then, the shipping company told her, it would be at least a week longer. But, she said, that had not halted their work: Another plane was bringing 50 more generators and more than 1,000 tarps.

And as her phone kept vibrating with messages, she received one she had been waiting for. There was a picture of her mother, leaning back in a rocking chair, safe and content. Ms. Albors, at last, felt a wave of relief.

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## **OTHER NEW JERSEY NEWS**

### **Complaint Filed Against Somers Point Contractor For Alleged Hurricane Sandy Home Repair Fraud**

By Lauren Carroll

The Press of Atlantic City, October 16, 2017

A Somers Point contractor is accused of defrauding homeowners of more than \$1 million in federal funding to repair, rebuild or elevate homes after Hurricane Sandy.

New Jersey Attorney General Christopher Porrino and the state Division of Consumer Affairs filed a complaint in the Superior Court Chancery Division in Atlantic County against Werks



Intended LLC, also doing business under the name McAllister Building Group, and company owners Lawrence “Tre” McAllister III and Monica McAllister.

McAllister is registered with offices in Ocean City, Linwood and Somers Point.

According to the complaint, the defendants took more than \$1.6 million from customers for home repair and rebuilding work, including home elevations, after Hurricane Sandy. More than \$1.3 million was from the Reconstruction, Rehabilitation, Elevation and Mitigation, or RREM, and the Low-to-Moderate Income, or LMI, programs, administered by the state Department of Community Affairs.

In a January interview, Lawrence McAllister said about 70 percent of the company’s house-raising projects were related to Sandy recovery and thus eligible for RREM funds. He said dealing with the program is “awful, absolutely awful” because of delayed payments and red tape.

The state said 23 homeowners have claimed McAllister did substandard work, failed to provide completion dates, did not make repairs and caused damage to their homes. It also alleges the company failed to pay subcontractors and asked customers for more money to finish jobs, in some cases stopping work until it was provided.

The complaints alleged multiple violations of the New Jersey Consumer Fraud Act, the Contractors Registration Act and several other regulation acts.

The state is seeking restitution for the homeowners, as well as a return of the federal funds, and to permanently prohibit McAllister from doing construction work in New Jersey, Porrino said in a press release.

Consumers who believe they have been cheated or scammed by a business, or suspect any other form of consumer abuse, can file complaints online with the DCA by visiting its website, [www.njconsumeraffairs.gov](http://www.njconsumeraffairs.gov), or by calling 1-800-242-5846 or 973-504-6200.

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## **MITIGATION**

### **Jersey Shore Towns Receive \$2.8 Million FEMA Grant to Raise Homes**

SNJ Today, October 16, 2017

NEW JERSEY - State officials have announced new federal funding to help residents at the Jersey Shore recover and stay protected from major flooding.

United States Senators Bob Menendez and Cory Booker have announced that more than \$2.8 million in federal funding from the Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA) will be used help elevate 22 flood-prone homes in Margate, Brigantine, and Longport that were damaged after a blizzard in 2016 dumped nearly three feet of snow causing severe flooding in the area.



Officials say the project will make the homes more resilient to flooding caused by various natural disasters and ultimately help keep residents safe.

The money granted to the municipalities from FEMA will allow all elevations to be designed and constructed in accordance with the national flood insurance program standards.

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## **Dredging Scheduled For South Jersey Channels**

By Lauren Carroll

The Press of Atlantic City, October 16, 2017

TRENTON — Channels in Atlantic and Cape May counties will be part of a \$1.6 million dredging project to repair damage from Winter Storm Jonas, state Department of Transportation officials announced Monday.

The channels — St. George's Thorofare in the Absecon Inlet, Beach Creek Channel in Hereford Inlet and Spicers Creek Channel in Cape May Harbor — will have sand and silt deposits hydraulically dredged and pumped through submerged pipelines.

According to a press release, the channels were restored to navigable depths after Hurricane Sandy but were severely re-shoaled in January 2016 during Jonas.

The DOT said the contractor, Wickberg Marine Contracting Inc., has begun mechanically dredging sand from the mouth of St. George's Channel in Brigantine. The sand will be used to replenish eroded sections of the Inlet Beach.

Work is expected to begin on the Beach Creek Channel in North Wildwood starting in mid-October and continue through early November, and work in Spicers Creek Channel is expected to start in November and continue until the end of the year.

The DOT asked the public to stay away from dredging and trucking equipment. Mariners are advised that state Aids to Navigation will be removed from the channels during the projects and that they should be alert to project pipeline routes and crossings.

In March 2014, the DOT announced a comprehensive Channel Dredging and Emergency Response Program to ensure and maintain safe navigation statewide and to continue to be able to respond adequately to waterway impacts from named storms.

The DOT said the work schedule is subject to change due to weather and other factors.

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## **Atlantic City Completes First Phase of Flood Gates Construction**

By Nina Baratti

SNJ Today, October 16, 2017



ATLANTIC CITY, N.J. - Officials hosted a ribbon-cutting ceremony in Atlantic City, marking the completion of the first phase of new flood gates connecting to the Baltic Avenue Canal.

This is a project that is intended to prevent nuisance flooding.

"I think it's great," said Atlantic City Mayor Don Guardian. "It's part of being able to rebuild the city after [Hurricane] Sandy. It was time to do things that'll be good for 10 and 20 and 50 years down the road, not just to solve the problem right now."

In 1912, the original Baltic Avenue Canal was built with timber flood gates that had to be hand cranked to get into position, opening the gateway to water coming and going.

"Given the tides that we see, that wouldn't be appropriate," said Jim Rutala, a grant consultant for Atlantic City. "These are electronically controlled steel flood gates that will operate under any condition."

As part of a \$12 million effort to rebuild the Baltic Avenue Canal, two outlets have been reconstructed into modern gates that is said to help prevent nuisance flooding (six to 12 inches of water) in the streets.

The city was awarded grant funds from multiple organizations to use towards this project.

"Two gates will be able to keep the bay out when it's high tide and it will also be able to drain the canal when one end of the city is at high tide," explained Guardian.

"And when the other end of the city is at high tide, it'll drain at the opposite gate."

Controlled by a generator, the gates should be able to be manipulated in any weather, despite the amount of rain or severity of a storm.

"The generator is 12 feet off the ground, so that under any flooding conditions it won't be affected," said Rutala.

Guardian said that the canal can fit a jitney driving through and can store 1.2 million gallons of water.

"It can be filled up with water so that the city doesn't flood, but during high tide, the bay comes into the canal and it forces the water up through the drainage system," said Guardian. "And what this does is [it] actually closes off those gates."

With pumping stations included, the men hope for the project to be done by the middle of December, when the month's high tide is expected.

That's when they say residents should notice a difference.



“It’s one more resiliency measure in Atlantic City, the seawall is another,” said Rutala. “And there’s many others that are planned, and it just makes Atlantic City a much better city to live and work in.”

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## **OTHER NEWS**

### **How The Pentagon Spun Hurricane Maria**

By Christopher Flavelle

[Bloomberg News](#), October 13, 2017

Late last month, Pentagon communications officials inadvertently included Bloomberg climate reporter Christopher Flavelle on an internal distribution list, in which Defense Department and Federal Emergency Management Agency officials discussed their evolving strategy for presenting the response to Hurricane Maria.

Despite repeatedly alerting officials to the error, Bloomberg continued receiving the emails for five days. Those messages, each of which was marked “unclassified,” offer a glimpse into the federal government’s struggle to convince the public that the response effort was going well. That struggle was compounded by the commander-in-chief, and eased only when public attention was pulled to a very different disaster.

Below are passages from those messages, tied to the events that federal officials were trying to respond to.

Sept. 28: Eight days after Maria hit, coverage of the federal government’s response is getting more negative.

The Government Message: Pentagon officials tell staff to emphasize “coverage of life-saving/life-sustaining operations” and for spokespeople to avoid language about awaiting instructions from FEMA, “as that goes against the teamwork top-line message.”

Sept. 29: San Juan Mayor Carmen Yulín Cruz criticizes Washington’s spin, calling Puerto Rico a “people-are-dying story.”

The Government Message: FEMA talking points ignore Cruz, instructing its officials to say that “the federal government’s full attention is on Hurricane Maria response.”

Sept. 30: Trump attacks the mayor’s “poor leadership ability.” The Pentagon worries that Trump’s “dialogue” with Cruz is becoming the story, with “many criticizing his lack of empathy.”

The Government Message: FEMA stresses its success in reaching “all municipalities in Puerto Rico.”

Oct. 1: Trump calls critics of the response “politically motivated ingrates.”

The Government Message: Defense staff admit that “the perception of USG response continues to be negative.” Spokespeople are told to say, “I am very proud of our DOD forces,” before conceding “there are some challenges to work through.”

Oct. 2: The massacre in Las Vegas dominates the headlines.

The Government Message: The shooting “has drawn mainstream TV attention away from Puerto Rico response,” FEMA says. Still, the roundup seems to have lost some of its previous optimism. It concludes, simply: “Negative tonality.”

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## **INSURANCE and LEGAL**



## As Congress Weighs Debt Forgiveness For Flood Program, Some Want To See It Reformed

By Kate Aronoff

[Intercept](#), October 15, 2017

The Senate is expected to vote this week on \$16 billion in debt forgiveness for the National Flood Insurance Program, continuing the bizarre bipartisan politics that have defined the beleaguered FEMA program. Meanwhile, Congress has less than two months to decide whether to reauthorize the NFIP, renewing calls for an overhaul of the program made especially urgent by the climate change-related increase in catastrophic storms.

The House approved the debt forgiveness in a 353-69 vote on Thursday. As *The Intercept* previously reported, the bill cancels two-thirds of the flood program's debt while offering Puerto Rico a \$5 billion loan from the U.S. Treasury—a baffling move considering the small island is already at least \$74 billion in the red to a number of mostly foreign creditors who aren't about to give up their investments without a fight.

The difference? Puerto Rico is effectively a colony of the United States. The National Flood Insurance Program (NFIP) happens to help a lot of millionaires.

For that reason, the NFIP has historically been a rare spot of cross-aisle agreement, with loyalties divided more along geographic lines than partisan ones. Because homeowners living in floodplains are required to purchase flood insurance, the politicians who represent coastal constituencies tend to favor keeping rates low in order to keep them happy.

Yet the forgiveness—which came partially at the request of the White House—is still something of a surprise. Prior to a few weeks ago, Rep. Maxine Waters, D-Calif., who's gained a considerable following among progressives for her opposition to President Donald Trump, was the main advocate pushing for her colleagues in Congress to forgive the flood insurance debt in its entirety.

The House's vote for forgiveness this week was opposed by several conservative groups, and every one of Thursday's 69 “no” votes came from the GOP. “The administration's request to treat a \$16 billion bailout for the failing federal flood insurance program as an emergency is irresponsible,” Heritage Action vice president Dan Holler wrote in a statement last week, arguing that forgiveness should have been offset with spending and tax cuts.

Part of the vote can be explained by sheer urgency: For obvious reasons, the NFIP's lifeline was tied to a broader relief package that would be politically dubious to refuse. Per the government's most recent estimate, the NFIP is \$24 billion in debt, a figure bound to increase as damage totals from this hurricane season become clearer in the coming weeks and months. Without some kind of forgiveness, the program would likely have exceeded its \$30.4 billion borrowing limit and been unable to pay out claims as early as October 23, according to a recent estimation from FEMA of when funds would run dry.

What might be most baffling about the program's popularity in Congress, though, is that—outside of Medicaid and Medicare—the NFIP happens to be the only socialized insurance program in the country. Created in 1968 to fill coverage gaps left by the private insurance market, the NFIP is subsidized by FEMA and administered by private insurance sellers around the country.

It's not just for the rich and their beach houses, either. Palatial coastal mansions by no means represent either the majority of the policies the NFIP subsidizes or its losses. The average value of some 75 percent of Severe Repetitive Loss Properties—those that have flooded multiple times with high rebuilding costs, around 30,000 in all—is around \$110,000, according to an analysis done by the Natural Resources Defense Council (NRDC). The environmental group also found that just 0.6 percent of homes covered in the program account for over 10 percent of its claims. Around 1 percent of homes are responsible for around a quarter of claims.



The way flood insurance and associated programs are currently structured, middle- and working-class coastal residents simply don't have many options other than to rebuild as-is. After Hurricane Sandy, many people abandoned their homes altogether when they were unable to afford legally required upgrades. Staten Island residents—sick of multiple rounds of rebuilding—embarked on an exhaustive campaign to get New York State to free up funds for relocation.

In the context of a near-total lack of planning for coastal adaptation, then, ire at the NFIP may be misplaced.

That said, the program carries flaws that need to be addressed sooner rather than later. In light of recent storms, Congress extended its five-year deadline to reauthorize the program from the end of September until December 8. Between now and then, many are hoping for a deep overhaul.

The main body that's been arguing for reforms is an oddball coalition called SmarterSafer, which houses everyone from green groups like the NRDC to private insurance companies to free-market think tanks such as R Street, a spin-off of the Heartland Institute that—unlike its progenitor—doesn't deny climate change.

SmarterSafer lobbyist and spokeswoman Jenn Fogel-Bublick told *The Intercept* that the group was also dismayed by the relief package, though it didn't go as far as Heritage Action in opposing it. "We're not saying [the debt] shouldn't be forgiven, but that it shouldn't be forgiven unless we're making real reforms...we're not even urging folks to vote no on the package," she said shortly before last week's vote in the House. "We understand that the first order of business has to be to get claims paid, to make sure people can rebuild."

Among other reforms, the coalition hopes that any eventual re-authorization will include provisions for more accurate flood mapping and more private sector involvement in the flood insurance market, as well as a move away from subsidized rates and toward more "actuarially sound" policies, with some level means-tested relief for lower-income coastal homeowners.

For better and for worse, the 15-point plan offered by the White House after Harvey and Irma includes several of the coalition's demands and was drawn largely from the re-authorization bill the House Financial Services Committee passed in April. Among the administration's more admirable proposals is a prohibition on new policies for buildings constructed in floodplains after 2021.

Rob Moore, Senior Policy Analyst for the NRDC's Water Program and the author of the NFIP analysis referenced above, suggests a more holistic approach to reform than simply revoking policies or making them reflect market rates. "We need to preserve affordability," he told *The Intercept*, "but insurance doesn't stop flooding from happening. We also have to back that affordability up with other kinds of assistance—to move out or relocate when living in a certain place becomes untenable."

One clear takeaway from climate data is that plenty of NFIP-insured homes will be virtually uninhabitable in the not-too-distant future—if they aren't already. "With sea level rise," Moore explained, "everybody is not going to be able to live in the same place where they live today."

While the Trump administration is unlikely to admit it, climate change is only making catastrophic, home-wrecking storms like Harvey, Irma and Maria more likely, increasing the severity of storms rather than their frequency. Referring to this year's hurricane season as well as destructive wildfires out west, Moore said "these all look like things scientists told us to expect thanks to climate change."

Those changes are also going to be expensive.

Statistics collected by the National Oceanographic and Atmospheric Administration (NOAA) drive this point home. While the agency's data doesn't yet include figures from Harvey, Irma and Maria, it shows that weather events costing over \$1 billion (adjusted for inflation) have spiked in the last decade. This year rivals only 2011 in terms of the sheer number of billion-dollar disasters experienced at this point in the year, with 15 such events happening within its first 9 months.

As temperatures rise, policymakers will face far bigger hurdles and line items in adapting to climate impacts than the NFIP's budget—whether they admit the reality of warming or not.



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## **Some Homes That Repeatedly Flood Could Lose Insurance Under Proposed Federal Overhaul**

By Katie Leslie

[Dallas Morning News](#), October 16, 2017

WASHINGTON — As lawmakers look to rehabilitate the deep-in-debt National Flood Insurance Program, they're turning their focus to one of its most complicated problems: multiple loss properties.

These are the homes and businesses that repeatedly flood, leading the owners to file multiple claims. And while they're just 2 percent of the program's 5 million policies, they account for roughly 30 percent of flood claims — about \$17 billion — paid over the program's history, according to the Federal Emergency Management Agency.

The program could receive a boost as the House approved a disaster relief bill that would forgive \$16 billion of its debt, a decision that now heads to the Senate. But both the White House and Dallas Rep. Jeb Hensarling, chairman of the House Financial Services Committee, say changes are needed to bring the program closer to solvency.

Hensarling, a Republican, wants to step up buyout and mitigation efforts, while he and the White House both support measures that would make it easier to deny or drop coverage for some of the most flood-prone properties.

“As a card-carrying member of the fiscal conservative caucus, I'm here to say we'd be better off spending a whole lot more money on the front end to buy out these homes or to mitigate than we would spending hundreds of billions of dollars on the back end,” Hensarling said in a September interview with *The Dallas Morning News*.

Most say addressing multiple loss properties is common sense, but that could be nerve-racking for homeowners like Michael Bolton, whose northwest Houston home has repeatedly flooded over the past decade.

Bolton lived there for 17 years before it first took on significant water during Hurricane Ike in 2008. He had flood insurance, though he wasn't required to carry it, unlike those who have federally backed mortgages and live in high-risk flood zones.

His house has flooded three more times since Ike, with payouts from the federal program totaling more than \$205,000 — not including Hurricane Harvey damage. According to his most recent appraisal, his property is worth \$206,000, down from \$230,000, he said.

He looked into elevating his home, but one contractor told him it would cost \$100,000, and another warned it would collapse if he tried.

He applied for a buyout from the Harris County Flood Control District, but was rejected last year in a district with thousands of more problematic homes.

He put his property on the market earlier this year, but has received interest only from investors offering him half its value, he said.

Now, as he watches neighbors cut their losses and move after Harvey caused the latest round of flooding, Bolton, 57, is weighing his options.

“If I had no equity, I'd walk away,” he said, later adding: “I'm too old for this.” Proposed legislation

One of the measures Hensarling's committee passed earlier this year, as part of an upcoming five-year re-authorization of the program, would phase out existing discounts for some multiple loss



properties. It would also increase the federal assistance for mitigation and buyouts, something a committee spokesman said could help people like Bolton.

Wisconsin Rep. Sean Duffy's 21st Century Flood Reform Act would also create a category of "extreme repetitive loss" for structures that have at least two separate flooding claims and payouts exceeding 150 percent of the maximum coverage value.

The legislation would give the program authority to deny continued coverage to those policyholders, if they refuse a mitigation offer.

The White House wants to go even further, allowing the flood program to drop coverage for extreme repetitive loss properties if "it is not in the best interest of the program's financial solvency to renew coverage or make an offer of mitigation," Office of Management and Budget Director Mick Mulvaney wrote to congressional leaders this month.

Last week, the House left out the Financial Services Committee's proposals in its disaster aid bill, prompting Hensarling and a handful of Texans to vote against it.

Without changes, the flood program "will continue to subsidize and encourage people to live in harm's way — putting their lives and property at risk," Hensarling said in a statement. "This is unacceptable."

#### Historic problems

The flood program's debt ballooned after Hurricanes Katrina and Sandy, and it maxed out its \$30.4 billion borrowing limit soon after Harvey and Irma.

Harvey could cost flood insurers \$11 billion, but funds are running out

But several environmental experts say its problems were long in the making, in part because cities like Houston developed before federal flood maps were drawn. What's more, many say the maps — which insurers and government officials use to assess risk — are out of touch.

Rice University and Texas A&M researchers found that FEMA's flood maps for southeastern Harris County missed about 75 percent of the damages from Hurricanes Ike, Allison and three other storms, according to The Associated Press.

"FEMA's concept of flooding and flood plains is outdated," said James Blackburn, a Rice environmental law professor, who said the maps don't adequately account for rainfall changes and development-induced flooding.

Blackburn contends the very program intended to shield property owners from catastrophic loss is partly responsible for why many have remained in flood-prone zones. "Because if we had not been able to insure these houses that flooded, you would have seen them abandoned long ago."

He said Congress must step up its buyout efforts, a sentiment echoed by National Flood Insurance Program director Roy Wright in September.

For people like James Wade, who oversees the buyout program for the Harris County Flood Control District, that's welcome news.

The district has identified about 3,300 homes it wants to purchase to alleviate chronic flooding problems. It would need a whopping \$650 million to do it, he said. As of early October, his organization had just a fraction of that amount — about \$24 million, from two separate federal grants.

"You have to make recovery funds available immediately so that you capture the people before they rebuild and say you know what, I put time and money in, I don't want to leave now," he said. "Or before they sell to an investor ... and someone else moves in."

According to FEMA, which houses the flood insurance program, Texas has received more than \$331 million in hazard mitigation dollars to buy damaged homes since 1989.



Harris County has received the bulk of that money, about \$122 million. Dallas County, by comparison, received just over \$1 million in 2008. Looking ahead

Dan Delich, the head of the Plano-based Floodplain Alliance for Insurance Reform, said that problems with the flood program “are broader, deeper and more significant” than multiple loss properties.

Over the years, the program has been slammed with accusations of fraud and mismanagement, not to mention overcompensating private insurers who help sell the policies.

He isn’t optimistic that Congress will succeed in approving a major overhaul before its spending bill expires in December. Lawmakers in both the House and Senate have larger disagreements, such as whether to bar the program from insuring new construction in flood zones, how to address compliance issues, and over raising rates, which many fear could discourage new customers or cause others to drop coverage.

But despite the challenges, Delich doesn’t view the federal program as an abject failure, as policyholders have paid into it, he said.

If you look at the program “as an actuarially sound program ... it’s flawed, for sure,” he said. “If you look at it as a disaster relief program, there’s not another on the books that’s been more successful.”

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## **SPANISH**

### **Líderes Demócratas Del Senado Piden Que FEMA Libere Fondos Para Reconstrucción De Puerto Rico**

By María Peña

[La Opinión \(CA\)](#), October 16, 2017

WASHINGTON – Líderes demócratas del Senado pidieron este lunes que la Administración Federal para la Gestión de Emergencias (FEMA) libere pronto los fondos para agilizar la reconstrucción de Puerto Rico, como prueba del compromiso de la Administración Trump con esos esfuerzos.

En una carta enviada al administrador de FEMA, Brock Long, los senadores demócratas señalaron que el gobernador de Puerto Rico, Ricardo Rosselló, hizo una solicitud formal de fondos hace más de una semana para iniciar obras de reconstrucción de infraestructura, pero la agencia aún no le ha puesto su “sello de aprobación”.

La lista de prioridades incluye la reparación de puentes y carreteras, de instalaciones para controlar la calidad del agua, y otros servicios públicos, señalaron en la misiva.

“Los fondos de Obras Permanentes de FEMA es la principal fuente de ayuda federal para ayudar en las reparaciones comunitarias y de la infraestructura pública tras un desastre natural, y no debe haber ambigüedad alguna de que el gobierno federal prevé dar esta ayuda crítica”, indicó la carta.

Según los senadores, la ayuda tiene urgencia debido a la crisis fiscal que ya afrontaba Puerto Rico antes del paso del huracán “María”, y que posiblemente le impide aportar el 25% de fondos locales que le corresponde dar a cambio de recibir ayuda federal.

Por ellos, la carta también pidió que la Administración aporte el 100% de los fondos para la categoría de “Asistencia Pública”, incluyendo reparaciones permanentes.

El grupo envió la misiva días después de que el presidente Donald Trump causara controversia al sugerir que la ayuda de EEUU para Puerto Rico no sería “para siempre”. Posteriormente, varios



miembros de su Administración tuvieron que explicar lo que Trump quiso decir, y al día siguiente, el mandatario reafirmó el compromiso de EEUU con la isla.

La semana pasada, la Cámara de Representantes aprobó un paquete de emergencia para responder a desastres naturales, que incluye casi \$5,000 millones en préstamos para ayudar a Puerto Rico a cubrir salarios de equipos de emergencia. El plan debe ser aprobado por el Senado.

La carta está firmada por el líder de la minoría demócrata en el Senado, Charles Schumer, y los senadores Bill Nelson, de Florida, Maria Cantwell, de Washington, Kirsten Gillibrand, de Nueva York, Chris Murphy, de Connecticut, y Cory Booker, de Nueva Jersey.

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### **El ‘Cash’, Los Abanicos Y Las Tablas De Lavar, Necesarios En Medio De La Falta De Electricidad En Puerto Rico**

[El Nuevo Herald \(FL\)](#), October 16, 2017

Las tablas de lavar, las velas y el dinero en efectivo se han vuelto imprescindibles en esta isla sin electricidad.

Casi cuatro semanas después que el huracán María arrasó Puerto Rico, el 85 por ciento de la población sigue sin servicio eléctrico, lo que obliga a la gente a volverse creativa en momentos que enfrentan un largo periodo sin electricidad.

Después que María destruyó el taller de chapistería donde trabajaba, Eddri Serrano, de 20 años, comenzó a fabricar tablas de lavar, como las de antes, pero ahora de plástico.

El sábado, él y su primo caminaban junto a una carretera vendiendo las tablas en \$15 cada una.

“Y tenía que hacer algo”, dijo Serrano, quien afirma que ha llegado a vender 70 tablas en un día. “Tenía que hacer esto o robar, y prefiero no robar”.

Una clienta agradecida, Cruzdelia Cardona, de 72 años dijo que no había usado una tabla de lavar desde que era adolescente. “Esto me hace recordar mi juventud”, dijo.

Las autoridades puertorriqueñas están haciendo lo posible por que los servicios básicos de la isla regresen al siglo XXI, en momentos que enfrentan críticas cada vez más fuertes sobre la lentitud de la recuperación.

El sábado, el gobernador Ricardo Rosselló dijo que la FEMA estaba haciendo un desembolso de \$128 millones para cuadruplicar la cantidad de cuadrillas de reparación de la red eléctrica en las próximas tres semanas. También prometió restaurar la electricidad al 50 por ciento de la isla para el 15 de noviembre, y al 95 por ciento para diciembre, mucho más rápido que los estimados anteriores.

La red eléctrica de Puerto Rico estaba ya en mal estado antes de la tormenta, víctima de una recesión que ya dura un decenio. Pero es difícil imaginar el alcance y la escala de la destrucción provocada por María.

El gobierno informa que hacen falta unos 50,000 postes y 6,500 millas de cables eléctricos para reanudar el servicio. Como señaló una estación de radio, eso es equivalente a un cable que vaya desde Ponce a la Antártida.

En al menos un caso, la crisis de electricidad se ha convertido en un asunto de vida o muerte. El sábado, el gobierno dijo que la cifra de víctimas directas e indirectas de María había aumentado de 45 a 48 fallecidos, entre ellas una persona quien no pudo usar un sistema de oxígeno debido a la falta de electricidad.

Pero para la mayoría de los 3.4 millones de habitantes de Puerto Rico, este apagón prolongado es una molestia constante que afecta todos los aspectos de la vida.

Elia Baquer, de 66 años, de la localidad de Laguna, no tiene electricidad desde el 6 de septiembre, cuando el huracán Irma —el anterior a María— golpeó la isla de refilón. Desde entonces tiene que esperar horas para conseguir hielo, agua y alimentos.



El sábado había estado en fila dos horas para sacar dinero de un cajero automático. Sin electricidad, muchos negocios no aceptan tarjetas de crédito, lo que vuelve a dar al efectivo su importancia de antaño, y provoca escasez de billetes.

Baquer dijo que extraña el televisor y el aire acondicionado, en ese orden. Pero también ha encontrado algunas cosas positivas a la crisis. Ha descubierto que le gusta cocinar con madera y pasar más tiempo con su familia.

“Nos reunimos a jugar dominó, a las cartas, cualquier cosa”, dijo de las noches sin electricidad. “Caminamos y matamos mosquitos”.

Kenneth López, de 36 años y empleado del aeropuerto, dijo que se ha acostumbrado a la vida sin electricidad.

“No lo extraño”, dijo de su televisor. “Paso el tiempo en el patio mirando las estrellas y conversando con los vecinos, con quienes no hablaba mucho”.

Pero los que no tienen luz son algunos de los que tienen suerte. Casi la mitad de los puertorriqueños tampoco tienen agua corriente.

En la localidad de Toa Baja, fuertemente afectada por la tormenta, Angel Rivera dijo que la falta de servicios públicos ha puesto las cosas en perspectiva.

“Lo que necesitamos es agua”, dijo, mientras paleaba lodo de su casa. “Yo puedo vivir sin electricidad. Las velas son caras, pero ¿qué se puede hacer?”

La tormenta y la falta de electricidad a largo plazo probablemente afecten sustancialmente la frágil economía de la isla. Muchos negocios siguen cerrados, y los que funcionan con generadores se quejan de que sus costos de operación se han disparado. El desempleo, que ya era más del 10 por ciento —más del doble del territorio continental— seguramente empeorará.

Pero la crisis también está creando oportunidades únicas. En una tienda de artículos baratos en el suburbio de Carolina, el empleado dijo que estaba vendiendo unos 10 ventiladores por hora.

Mientras Lourdes Cancel, de 49 años y trabajadora social, compraba algunos ventiladores y redecillas para el cabello, para que no le molestara sobre el cuello, dijo que aprovechó para comprar dos banderas puertorriqueñas en miniatura.

Todas las compras tenían alguna relación con María, dijo.

“Cuando la situación se pone difícil es que uno entiende el patriotismo”, dijo. “Eso hace que uno quiera más a su país”.

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### **Opinión: ¿De Quién Fue La Idea De Que Puerto Rico Importa Menos?**

By Linda Chavez

[Al Día Dallas](#), October 16, 2017

“Los apoyaremos hoy, mañana y el día después”, prometió el presidente Donald Trump a los damnificados del huracán Harvey.

“Cuando una parte de América está lastimada, nos lastima a todos. Cuando vemos a nuestros vecinos en apuros, corremos a ayudarles. No les preguntamos su nombre ni de dónde vienen. Ayudamos a nuestros compatriotas siempre. Ese es el espíritu de América”, declaró el presidente el 1 de septiembre.

Pero eso era entonces y los estadounidenses a los que se refería eran en su mayoría de Texas, un estado que había votado por Trump en las elecciones de 2016.

El jueves, Trump dio un mensaje muy diferente a otros 3.4 millones de estadounidenses, más del 80% de los cuales no tienen energía eléctrica y muchos ni siquiera agua potable.

Una gran cantidad de sus casas y negocios quedaron destruidos, y muchos no pueden ir trabajar porque las calles quedaron intransitables.



“No podemos dejar a FEMA, las fuerzas armadas y primeros auxilios, que han hecho un admirable trabajo (bajo las circunstancias más difíciles) en P.R. para siempre!”, tuiteó airado Trump solo tres semanas después del peor desastre que haya sufrido Puerto Rico en su historia.

Trump hizo lo que mejor sabe hacer: echarle la culpa a otros.

“Electricidad y toda la infraestructura era un desastre antes de los huracanes. El Congreso decidirá cuánto gastar”, tuiteó una vez más mientras la Cámara de Representantes se preparaba para votar un paquete de ayuda por \$36,500 millones.

Pero seamos claros: el presidente Donald Trump piensa que en realidad los puertorriqueños no son estadounidenses, y a juzgar por los más de 30,000 likes que recibió su tuit (y eso fue solo inmediatamente después de publicarlo), muchos en su base de apoyo tampoco los consideran estadounidenses.

Apuesto a que son los mismos que no creen que los niños nacidos en Estados Unidos de padres indocumentados sean estadounidenses, a pesar de la 14ta Enmienda, de fallos de la Suprema Corte y del hecho de que el derecho de ciudadanía por nacimiento en suelo estadounidense data de tiempos coloniales.

La Constitución declara que todas las personas son iguales, pero el presidente parece creer lo que dijo el cerdo llamado Napoleón en Animal Farm de George Orwell: “Todos los animales son iguales, pero algunos son más iguales que otros”.

Podemos sostener un sano debate sobre qué lugar ocupa Puerto Rico. ¿Debe convertirse en el estado número 51, que ha sido la postura del Partido Republicano por años?

¿Debe seguir siendo territorio estadounidense? ¿Se le debe dar la independencia?

Periódicamente el pueblo boricua vota su preferencia.

La última vez fue en junio, cuando el 97% votó por la soberanía (aunque participaron menos de 1 de cada 4 electores registrados en esta votación mayormente simbólica).

En plebiscitos previos a 2012, la mayoría había votado por mantenerse como territorio.

Pero solo el Congreso puede decidir. La Constitución otorga al Congreso la autoridad de decidir la suerte de los territorios de Estados Unidos, cosa en la que Puerto Rico se convirtió cuando fue adquirido después de la Guerra Hispano-Americana de 1898.

“El Congreso debe tener el Poder para abrogar o disponer todas las Reglas y Regulaciones necesarias respecto al Territorio y otros Bienes pertenecientes a EU”, declara el Artículo 4.

Pero, por ahora, Puerto Rico es parte de Estados Unidos.

Los puertorriqueños son estadounidenses, hayan nacido en la isla, en el continente o en cualquier parte del mundo, siempre y cuando al menos uno de sus padres sea puertorriqueño.

Son ciudadanos de Estados Unidos, punto.

Merecen ser tratados como tales por sus compatriotas estadounidenses, pero, más que nada, merecen ser tratados como tales por el presidente de los Estados Unidos.

De todas las cosas repugnantes que ha hecho Trump desde que anunció su campaña por la presidencia y desde que asumió el cargo el 20 de enero, las palabras que ha dicho sobre Puerto Rico tal vez sean las peores.

Trump ha decidido que no es el presidente de todo el pueblo y no tiene deseo de serlo.

En su mundo, o se está con él o contra él, no importa qué diga o haga Trump, y si usted encaja entre estos últimos, no es su presidente.

No espere que le preocupe lo que le pase a usted. Es culpa suya; debió haber estado con él desde el principio.

*Linda Chavez es autora del libro An Unlikely Conservative: The Transformation of an Ex-Liberal.*



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## **OPINION**

### **Hurricane Victims Don't Have the 'Complexion for Protection'**

By Lois Marie Gibbs

Common Dreams, October 16, 2017

Millions of Puerto Ricans are still without water, food, electricity and shelter, four weeks after Hurricane Maria destroyed the island. With waterborne illnesses on the rise, a full-blown humanitarian crisis is on the horizon.

"Raw sewage continues to be released into waterways and is expected to continue until repairs can be made and power is restored," the EPA warns in a memo.

When the agency issued this statement, eighty-four percent of Puerto Rico was without electricity, and sixty percent of water treatment plants out of service.

"Water contaminated with livestock waste, human sewage, chemicals, and other contaminants can lead to illness when used for drinking, bathing, and other hygiene activities," the EPA says.

To make matters worse, Puerto Rico is home to 21 Superfund sites – the nation's most deadly depositories of toxic chemicals. The island also has a five-story-high coal ash dump in Guayama that was hit by the storm.

Floodwaters have already mixed deadly toxins from these sites into nearby waterways, which residents are forced to use to bathe and drink. In a desperate attempt to save their own lives, some Puerto Ricans are drinking highly contaminated water from wells that were once sealed to avoid exposure to deadly toxins.

Families who have lost everything now must contend with the possibility that their groundwater is tainted with poison.

#### **The Complexion for Protection**

On the same day the EPA issued its warning, President Trump took to Twitter to complain, "We cannot keep FEMA, the Military & the First Responders... in P.R. forever!"

First, Mr. President, a reality check. The devastation caused by major storms takes years, not weeks, to repair. FEMA is still at work in New Orleans, twelve years after Hurricane Katrina, and in New Jersey and New York five years after Hurricane Sandy. EPA cleanup of contaminated sites takes even longer.

Second, a political check. Puerto Ricans are American citizens, and have been for more than a century. They serve in our Armed Forces and pay taxes, even if they weren't allowed to vote for you – or any candidate – for President, and have no representation in Congress.



As Puerto Rico's Governor, Roberto Roselló, wrote in his response to Trump's Twitter tantrum, "The U.S. citizens in Puerto Rico are requesting the support that any of our fellow citizens would receive across our Nation.

This is discrimination, plain and simple. When President Trump visited San Juan, he threw paper towels at a crowd of suffering people and scolded them for busting his budget. They weren't amused by his theatrics.

They, like the Houston residents who live near waterways fouled by toxins from the San Jacinto Superfund site, are people of color – apparently not the right complexion for protection.

### Dismissing the Victims

Dismissing victims is not unusual for this administration and for the EPA. The agency's new chief, Scott Pruitt, spends his time on the road meeting privately with corporate CEOs responsible for these toxic waste sites. He then takes their wish-lists back to Washington so he can draft new ways to roll back the environmental protections they loathe.

But local community leaders, with few exceptions, have not been given the opportunity to talk with Pruitt.

Congress passed legislation in 1986 directing EPA to pursue permanent remedies or cleanups that conform to stringent standards. Although permanent cleanups cost more at the front end, they save money over the long term, as evident by the disruption of buried waste from storms like Harvey, Irma, Katrina and Sandy.

So, why won't the EPA enforce the permanent cleanup of these sites to avoid future cleanup costs as well as protect the community?

Because the people who live around most Superfund sites are poor and of color and are considered not worth the investment.

This is even more the case in Puerto Rico, since lawmakers in D.C. feel no accountability to the island's citizens, who are separated from the mainland and denied the right to vote.

### The EPA Told Me So

How do I know this? An EPA regional representative recently told me they were not going to spend millions to clean up a site when the surrounding houses are worth \$60,000. It doesn't make cost-effective sense, he said; we'll just try to contain the waste.

Yet these houses are people's homes; inside are human beings raising their families, having backyard picnics and celebrating birthdays. The homes are their American Dream. How dare these government officials devalue their neighborhoods because they are not wealthy!



These families pay taxes, contribute to society and deserve every protection available from our government, regardless of their wealth, language or the color of their skin.

I fear that families that have already lost so much in this summer's severe hurricanes will suffer even more in coming months because of the color of their skin and the level of their income.

And as they try to clean up the mud and debris and rebuild their lives, families must also worry about how much chemical residue is in the mud they and their children have been exposed to.

They Don't Care, So We Must

There is no question in my mind that the Trump Administration does not care for victims, whether in Houston, Miami or San Juan. So we have to take responsibility to compel the administration to act and hold them accountable.

We have to force the government to protect people living near Superfund sites by permanently cleaning them up, and to give Puerto Rico's people the equal treatment they deserve.

*Lois Marie Gibbs is a former resident of the Love Canal community and founder of the Center for Health, Environment and Justice, a project of People's Action.*

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## **Don't Mix Disaster Relief With Flood Insurance Reform**

[New Orleans Times-Picayune](#), October 15, 2017

When the White House sent a \$29 billion request for disaster aid to Congress Oct. 4, it included major changes to the flood insurance program. The revisions would have phased out policies on new homes in flood zones and allowed property owners with repeated flood claims to be dropped, among other changes.

House leaders unveiled their relief bill Tuesday night (Oct. 10), and it didn't include the administration changes to flood insurance. That is the right approach. Disaster aid shouldn't be held hostage by complicated and controversial provisions like the ones the White House proposed. Congress already is considering several flood insurance reform bills and should do that separately.

The National Flood Insurance Program "is not designed to handle catastrophic losses like those caused by Harvey, Irma, and Maria. The NFIP is simply not fiscally sustainable in its current form," White House budget director Mick Mulvaney said when the disaster package was submitted.

The flood insurance program does need to be reformed, but that effort should not distract from disaster relief that is needed immediately.

FEMA is dealing with massive destruction from Hurricanes Harvey, Irma, Maria and Nate. Flood insurance claims will be a major part of the Harvey recovery, and the program needs cash to handle those payments. The \$36.5 billion bill for hurricane and wildfire relief released Tuesday by the House includes \$16 billion for the flood program and \$18.7 billion for FEMA.

The House fast-tracked a vote on the bill Thursday, and the measure passed easily. Now it will go to the Senate, which returns next week from a break.



After immediate disaster funding needs are taken care of, Congress should return quickly to flood insurance reform. The NFIP was set to expire Sept. 30 but got a short extension to Dec. 8. It will lapse then unless Congress acts.

That gives lawmakers less than two months to settle on revisions to the program. And part of that time includes Thanksgiving week, when members will be on break. So, they need to get focused on flood insurance.

The best options are two bills proposed in the Senate. Both of them include sensible changes to help strengthen the program financially, lower costs and provide stability for homeowners and businesses.

Louisiana Republican Sen. Bill Cassidy and Sen. Kirsten Gillibrand, a New York Democrat, introduced legislation in June to extend the flood insurance program for a decade. Their bill preserves grandfathered rates to protect existing policyholders from excessive rate increases, introduces private coverage options, increases funding for flood mitigation and includes high-tech mapping to more accurately assess risk.

Sen. John Kennedy, a Louisiana Republican, is a cosponsor on a bipartisan reform bill introduced by Sen. Bob Menendez, a New Jersey Democrat. That legislation would reauthorize the federal flood insurance program for six years. It would limit annual rate increases to 10 percent (which would be a decrease from current law), increase resources for mitigation, provide for high-tech mapping, limit compensation for companies that write flood premiums and reform the claims process.

Either bill or some combination of the two would improve the program.

The historic flooding in and around Houston during Hurricane Harvey increased attention on these issues. Only an estimated 20 percent of property owners in the flood were covered, yet the damages are putting a financial strain on the flood insurance program.

But Congress needs to take care in how it rewrites flood insurance rules.

In Louisiana, most of the coverage is for family homes of people who fuel our economy. The policies aren't held by wealthy investors but by fishers, oil and gas crews and other essential employees. According to statistics from the Coalition for Sustainable Flood Insurance, 62 percent of all NFIP policies are in counties with a median household income below the national average of \$53,889.

When Congress approved the Biggert-Waters Act in 2012 to rework the flood insurance program, there was no attention paid to whether policies would be affordable. When homeowners started getting hit with huge premium hikes in 2014, Congress reversed some unworkable provisions of Biggert-Waters to limit the increases.

More care should be taken on the front end this time. The flood insurance program needs to be financially sound, but the cost of policies shouldn't drive people from their homes or make it impossible for them to afford insurance.

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## **Letter To The Editor | Addressing The Looming Cost Of Rebuilding**

Virgin Islands Consortium, October 16, 2017

To the Editor:



Battered and bruised our communities have moved past back-to-back natural disasters and now face the rebuilding effort. Those we have lost, whether as a direct result of the storm or from stresses and events in the weeks following, are missed.

The quality of the decisions we individually and collectively make in the coming months will establish the trajectory of our recovery, our regional competitiveness and global relevance for the foreseeable future.

Physically rebuilding our community is one of the important tasks ahead. Critically important is how we go about that rebuilding effort. A good starting point is an accurate accounting of what was lost and what resources are available to assist.

The local press reports estimates of infrastructure and economic loss exceeding \$5 billion dollars. This is no small amount. If accurate it suggests that Irma and Maria, in a period of little more than 48 hours destroyed 584 days of economic productivity.

On October 12, the US House of Representatives passed a \$36.5 billion relief bill that provides hurricane and wildlife funding. The bill now goes to the US Senate for consideration.

The new measure authorizes \$4.9 billion in loans to Puerto Rico and the Virgin Islands. Both communities are already debt-beleaguered and this approach to assistance further exacerbates local financial problems. Governor Kenneth Mapp has requested \$5.5 billion of disaster relief.

The new legislation provides \$18.7 billion for FEMA's disaster relief fund from which the VI will receive some benefit. The National Flood Insurance Program receives debt forgiveness for \$16 billion it owes to the US Treasury.

The initial efforts at rebuilding our Virgin Islands will be supported by FEMA grants and loans, insurance proceeds, and charitable donations. Funding available from those sources will not address a \$5.5 billion need.

This year was a bumper year for natural disasters stretching from Northern California to the Gulf and Atlantic coasts and the US Caribbean communities. A parsimonious Congress and Administration will undoubtedly step back from doing more than is absolutely essential.

Last week the New York Times reported that the 2017 federal deficit was \$668 billion, \$82 billion more than the previous year. And, the Senate is set to vote on a budget blueprint designed to allow moving a tax bill that could further exacerbate that deficit by as much as \$1.5 trillion over the coming ten years.

Less than six weeks after the destruction of Irma and Maria some prominent national voices are already suggesting there are limits to what the federal government will do to see the recovery through to the level of expectation of affected communities.

Suggestions that a significant local bill for the reconstruction effort will not come due is counter productive to thinking critically about how we go about funding the rebuilding process. It supports



a narrative that the destruction caused by Irma and Maria will be the solution to the financial mess we were in prior to the recent hurricanes.

Unfortunately, few outside of government will have much influence on how government goes about rebuilding. Where we, individually, can make a difference is how we go about addressing our own rebuilding efforts.

Recovering from any disaster requires taking stock of what was lost and what needs replacing. What existed has served its purpose. What replaces it must address future need.

Taking time to think about what we want from that replacement is particularly critical. Few of us get to a desired end product accidentally. The end objective must be in focus throughout the planning, decision-making and implementation process. This requires coordination and direction.

Rebuilding communication and power generating systems requires knowing what the end objective is. Each component must contribute its share to the desired end result. The same can be said for rebuilding a public transportation network, service delivery facilities, first responder facilities and services, and the digital technology network critical to enhancing service delivery.

Rebuilding offers the opportunity to introduce innovation; the opportunity to move away from what was to what is more appropriate. Looking slightly afield for solutions employed by others can produce significant return.

Many non-US communities are implementing solutions relevant to the needs of small communities with limited resources.

European cities have succeeded at making public transportation within and between communities responsive and widely subscribed. Public, personal and service vehicles are more appropriately sized to the function they provide the areas served and the terrain navigated.

Asian, African and South American countries are deploying digital technology to build out communication networks avoiding the cost and physical vulnerability of wires and cable. Rural and remote communities receive essential government, educational and health services without the cost inherent to repetitive brick and mortar facilities and staffing.

Hand held devices and digital connectivity facilitate and reduce the cost of information transfer, security monitoring, diagnostic solutions, education and training, and government administrative services. Block chain protocols afford privacy and security.

We in the Virgin Islands are prone to the belief that our situation is unique and that our uniqueness justifies sticking to legacy practices and solutions. When money is readily available, there is limited incentive to change how things are done. Limited financial resources, however, has the positive advantage of promoting thinking outside of the box and finding ways to do what is needed more cost effectively.



Keeping climate change in mind throughout the planning process is a new yet important variable. Hardening infrastructure and facilities reduces the probability of substantial rebuilding subsequent to other natural disasters. Cities worldwide are building smart infrastructure responsive to this reality.

The National Aeronautics and Space Administration, the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration and the US Geological Survey provide a wealth of data that can be used in the planning process. Initiatives such as the Climate Resilience Toolkit and the US Global Change Research Program translate science findings into predictable consequences. Climate resiliency plans can guide the design of public and private facilities and open spaces, which can mitigate the damage caused by the event itself, the associated financial loss and loss of life,

Finally, managing the rebuilding effort requires an accurate assessment of professional capacity and capability. In the best of times there is limited room for careful planning, contractor selection and diligent monitoring of progress.

In our community even in the best of times substantial losses result from mismanagement. The recently released Inspector General's report on Public Finance Authority operations details some \$150 million of inappropriate practices and oversight.

Overseeing rebuilding in a concentrated time period imposes significant demand and stress on the best of organizations and capability.

The imperative, in a situation similar to what we face, understandably shifts to getting the job done expeditiously. It is, however, in exactly this kind of environment that considerable financial loss is more prone to occur, from those seeking to game the system for their own personal advantage to losses sustained from unintended inefficiencies and mismanagement.

Slowing the process down and implementing temporary fixes until the permanent can be appropriately implemented is important. Engaging competent professional assistance, whether on island or otherwise; eliminating issues of personality; enforcing accountability throughout the delivery chain; and making a commitment to transparency of spending are all essential elements of a successful effort.

Taking time to learn from the successes and errors related to completed projects ensures similar errors are not subsequently made. Accomplishing this requires a structured post mortem review and assessment process. Regardless of the effort expended to avoid mistakes, some will be inevitable. Failing to learn from these to improve on successive efforts is inexcusable.

Submitted on Monday by: Justin Moorhead Managing Director, Virgin Islands Capital Resources, Inc.

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END



<b>From:</b>	Arroyo, Maria </O=EXCHANGELABS/OU=EXCHANGE ADMINISTRATIVE GROUP (FYDIBOHF23SPDLT)/CN=RECIPIENTS/CN=1457D7C92C7E4172B0C5687D08BF339A-ARROYO, MAR>
<b>To:</b>	"DR-4339-PR All Hands </o=ExchangeLabs/ou=Exchange Administrative Group (FYDIBOHF23SPDLT)/cn=Recipients/cn=07089255a82f4e59886f6b742b6e66a0-DR-4339-PR>"
<b>Subject:</b>	FW: Media Analysis Report DR-4339-PR 10/19/17 (morning)
<b>Date:</b>	2017/10/19 11:58:57
<b>Priority:</b>	Normal
<b>Type:</b>	Note

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**From:** Simoneau, Grace

**Sent:** Thursday, October 19, 2017 11:56 AM

**Subject:** Media Analysis Report DR-4339-PR 10/19/17 (morning)

Please see attached for today's morning Media Analysis Report for DR-4339-PR.

Maria- please distribute to all-hands.





# *Media Analysis Report*

## **Puerto Rico - Hurricanes Irma/Maria DR-4336/4339-PR**

*Thursday, October 19, 2017, Morning Edition*

### **Hot Issues:**

- *Private hospitals fear FEMA will stop supplying diesel for generators*

### **News Clips Analysis / Trends:**

- Heavy emphasis continues on this week being a month since Maria struck: “Much of the U.S. territory of Puerto Rico still looks the way it did immediately after the hurricane.” Mayors complain to **FEMA**. Grim statistics dominate; “good news” quotes from survivors virtually non-existent.
- Lots of attention being paid to governor’s trip to the White House today; see evening media analysis for follow-up stories
- Seven-minute interview with FCO Michael Byrne on NPR this morning; link to audio in report below

### **Survivor News and Quotes:**

- Mr. Medina said that if his wife’s health were to begin to deteriorate, he knew that his neighbors would not hesitate to help him carry her across the river. Ms. Rivera chimed in. “We Puerto Ricans are fighters and hard workers,” she said. “My life depends on it.” – *New York Times*

### **News Clips Highlights/Summary:**

- NPR audio clip of interview with FCO
- Spanish - Primera Hora reports mayors complain to **FEMA** about lack of aid to survivors
- Spanish – Mayor of Guaynabo begs for tarps
- Governor meets with Trump at White House today, multiple stories
- In Washington Wednesday, demonstrators marched from Capitol Hill to **FEMA** headquarters to demand a bigger response from the government on hurricane relief for Puerto Rico -- as well as other U.S. locations hit by Hurricanes Irma and Harvey.
- Hurricane could worsen Puerto Rico economic and population decline that it had in the decade before Maria: The number of residents had plunged by 11 percent, the economy had shrunk by 15 percent, and the government had become unable to pay its bills.
- Several stories about ideas, technology and materials for restoring the power grid
- Government Executive is the latest publication to make note of congressional committee set to investigate potential abuse of federal funds and resources in municipalities, citing red flags raised by the FBI
- About 1,200 federal prisoners from Puerto Rico will be housed at the federal correctional facility in Yazoo City, Miss.
- Spanish - As of next week the **FEMA** may stop supplying diesel to the country's private hospitals, Primera Hora and El Nuevo Dia report
- Medical team has deployed from Langley Air Force Base



- Uber is having some success despite cell communication problems
- At Wapa Radio — AM 680 — advertising is up more than 300 percent since the storm. Companies are using the radio both to advertise and to communicate with employees who no longer have phones or are scattered over the island.
- Daily Kos wonders whether millions of Puerto-Ricans may-move to the mainland
- Edgar Garcia, now in Virginia, is one many Islanders now in the states with his family, hoping to protect them from the Hurricane Maria’s aftermath in Puerto Rico
- To contact family in Virginia, survivor who is now on mainland tells how he and some people from his neighborhood pooled gasoline and drove to San Juan, the island’s capital, “just to make a call ..., just to say, ‘Hey, we’re alive.’”
- CNN features veterans of the wars in Iraq and Afghanistan, who self-deployed to Mayaguez. When they see a need, they just go. Red tape frustrates them, especially when people are hurting and they can help. They took over abandoned airport in Mayaguez as their base.
- Wisconsin columnist: Mainland U.S. shortages of vital medical supplies manufactured in Puerto Rico could amount to karmic twists to the federal government’s lackadaisical initial response to the deadly destruction visited upon the U.S. Virgin Islands and Puerto Rico

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## FEMA

### **Audio: Weeks After Maria, FEMA Still Distributing Basic Needs To Puerto Rico (NPR)**

October 19, 2017 5:04 AM ET  
Heard on [Morning Edition](#)  
[National Public Radio](#)  
*Link includes 7:02 Audio*



Steve Inskip talks to **FEMA coordinator Michael Byrne** about the recovery effort in Puerto Rico as its governor is set to meet with President Trump. Byrne says more stores and gas stations are opening.

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## **Alcaldes Se Reúnen Con Directivo De FEMA (Primera Hora)**

By Rebecca Banuchi

October 19, 2017

[Primera Hora \(PRI\)](#).

**Almost a month after the emergency caused by Hurricane Maria, mayors ' complain about the assistance survivors have received from the federal government to FEMA directors, and would make them think that only a few days have passed since the powerful atmospheric phenomenon.**

A casi un mes de la emergencia provocada por el huracán María, las quejas de los alcaldes sobre la asistencia que han recibido del gobierno federal harían pensar que solo han pasado unos días desde pasó del potente fenómeno atmosférico.

La insuficiencia de suministros, la escasez de toldos y la logística en el recogido de escombros coparon este miércoles la agenda del encuentro que sostuvieron ocho alcaldes con el director de la Agencia Federal para el Manejo de Emergencias (**FEMA**, en inglés), Alejandro De La Campa.

“Te piden tanta información de las diferentes áreas que la coordinación, debe ser la correcta, y no es así”, dijo a este medio la alcaldesa de Ponce, María “Mayita” Meléndez, al concluir la reunión con el funcionario federal.

“Quiero que se coordine con los alcaldes, aquellas personas que están distribuyendo para no repetir las mismas áreas, y que aquellas áreas que no se hayan podido cubrir, se puedan cubrir finalmente... Había un desfase entre **FEMA** y **FEMA**. Entre ellos. Porque la información que le estaban dando a la región era incorrecta”, agregó la ejecutiva municipal.

A pesar de sus críticas, Meléndez manifestó estar satisfecha con los resultados preliminares de la reunión con De La Campa, y dijo que se atendieron sus preocupaciones respecto a los toldos y la distribución de alimentos y agua. Según la alcaldesa, Ponce recibía suministros en igual cantidad que los pueblos con 25,000 y 30,000 habitantes, a pesar que sus pobladores suman cerca de 160,000.

El encuentro se efectuó en el hotel Sheraton, ubicado a pasos del Centro de Convenciones, donde se ubica el Centro de Operaciones de Emergencia (COE), que está ocupado principalmente por empleados de **FEMA**. Además de Meléndez, participaron los alcaldes de Arecibo, Ciales, Adjuntas, Culebra, Maunabo, Dorado, Patillas y Arroyo. Para este viernes, fueron convocados ocho ejecutivos municipales adicionales.

El alcalde adjunteño, Jaime Barlucea, dijo que una de sus inquietudes principales es la falta de toldos suficientes para cubrir las necesidades de sus compueblanos sin techo. **FEMA** ha informado que, a raíz de los fenómenos atmosféricos que afectaron también a Estados Unidos, escasea el producto, aunque se espera un envío pronto a la isla.

Sin embargo, el principal malestar de Barlucea es con el titular de la Autoridad de Energía Eléctrica (AEE), Ricardo Ramos, quien estaba en el COE justo cuando se llevaba a cabo la reunión con De La Campa.

“En Adjuntas no ha habido presencia de la AEE”, dijo con cierta tirantez Barlucea, quien comentó que ya personal de su administración ha identificado las averías del sistema en el pueblo, pero no han recibido atención de la corporación pública.

“La AEE no ha hecho nada, le hemos dado la información, los detalles, el análisis, se lo estamos suministrando todo. Hace semana y media, hablé con el director ejecutivo por teléfono, y al día de hoy, no he recibido respuesta alguna”, añadió.



De La Campa no estuvo disponible ayer para entrevista, pero Delyris Aquino, portavoz de FEMA en la isla, destacó que las reuniones, programadas para lunes, miércoles y viernes, les dan la oportunidad a los alcaldes de conocer cómo operan las ayudas del gobierno federal, tanto para los individuos como para los gobiernos locales, y aclarar dudas sobre cómo funciona el financiamiento y el alcance de esa asistencia.

“Es importante escuchar al alcalde, que es quien trae a FEMA las necesidades de sus municipios. Nadie mejor que los alcaldes, que conocen los barrios y zonas afectadas, y el tipo de necesidad en esas zonas afectadas. Es una oportunidad para que nos mantengamos en esta comunicación, que estamos tratando de mantener abierta y directa, que los alcaldes se sientan en la libertad de comunicarnos lo que necesitan”, expresó Aquino.

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## **El Alcalde Ángel Pérez Espera Que Lleguen Más Toldos A Guaynabo (El Nuevo Día)**

[El Nuevo Día \(PRI\)](#), October 18, 2017

**The priority of the mayor of Guaynabo, Ángel Pérez, is to get more blue tarps to his people so that the hundreds of affected families can return to their homes.**

Guaynabo – La prioridad del alcalde de Guaynabo, Ángel Pérez, es que lleguen más toldos a su pueblo para que las cientos de familias damnificadas pueden regresar a sus hogares.

En este municipio, que, además del huracán María también se vio afectado por las lluvias que cayeron recientemente, aún quedan 70 personas refugiadas.

“El llamado primero es en cuanto a los toldos, porque una vez uno pueda ayudar con esto a las familias ellos pueden regresar a sus hogares, o aquellas pertenencias que pudieron salvar pues entonces no terminarán de perderlas”, sostuvo Pérez a este medio.

“Nosotros tenemos una solicitud de cerca de 3,000 toldos (a FEMA)”, dijo al mencionar que en ese municipio de 100,000 habitantes unas 2,700 familias perdieron parte o totalmente el techo de sus viviendas.

También hizo un llamado al gobierno federal a que agilice el proceso de investigar las pérdidas que tienen los ciudadanos.

“Hay que ver cómo este proceso de investigación que ellos tienen lo podemos agilizar para que las familias ya reciban su ayuda y puedan comenzar a rehabilitar sus casas o hacerle las mejoras necesarias”, indicó.

Además, reiteró un llamado que le hizo al administrador de la Agencia Federal para el Manejo de Emergencias (FEMA), Brock Long, y al presidente de los Estados Unidos, Donald Trump, a “que no mire una sustitución de un techo nuevamente de madera y zinc; que busquemos alternativas que sean permanentes”.

Dijo que él ve como una inversión el que se gaste un poquito más y se haga la estructura en cemento, “porque te vas a evitar en el futuro que estas familias estén pasando por lo mismo”.

“No seguir poniendo parches sino buscar soluciones permanentes”, sentenció.

Otra situación que está tratando de solucionar el ejecutivo municipal es el recogido de escombros.

Esta es una de las quejas principales de los ciudadanos.

Pérez, quien dijo que ya tiene al día el recogido de la basura doméstica, aceptó que sí hay un problema en este renglón.

“Ahora mismo estamos con las brigadas del municipio, que son cerca de once y con brigadas de tres contratistas privados recogiendo lo que es el material vegetativo, los escombros”, mencionó.

El director de Obras Públicas municipal, Wilfredo Martínez, estimó en un 75% la cantidad de escombros que aún están en las vías.



Anticipó que en unos dos meses la ciudad podría ya estar casi sin esa basura.

Mientras tanto, el alcalde inició una campaña de fumigación para evitar la propagación de mosquitos.

En Guaynabo, un 5% de los ciudadanos tendría luz.

“En cuanto a la luz eso varía mucho porque se nos está cayendo, prácticamente va y viene, pero aquí no hemos pasado de un 5%”, informó.

Respecto al suministro del agua, dijo que aunque “gran

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## **WHITE HOUSE / CONGRESS / POLITICS**

### **Audio: Puerto Rico's Governor Is In Washington To Meet With Trump (NPR)**

October 19, 2017 7:45 AM ET

Heard on [Morning Edition](#) – 3:35 audio at link below

[Adrian Florido](#)

[NPR](#)

- **Puerto Rico also mentioned on [NPR News Brief](#)**

Parts of Puerto Rico look as if the hurricane struck yesterday, not last month. Gov. Ricardo Rossello is in Washington to speak with members of Congress. He'll also meet with President Trump.

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### **Trump To Meet With Puerto Rican Governor In The Oval Office (NY Post)**

By Joe Tacopino

[New York Post](#), October 18, 2017

President Trump will meet with the governor of Puerto Rico at The White House on Thursday as the US territory struggles to recover in the aftermath of Hurricane Maria.

Trump will welcome Governor Ricardo Rosselló for a meeting in the Oval Office, according to a schedule released by administration.

“We will be welcoming Gov. Rosselló of Puerto Rico to the White House to talk about the ongoing recovery and rebuilding efforts,” press secretary Sarah Huckabee Sanders said at the daily briefing.

Trump has been critical of the island’s efforts to recover after the disaster.

In a tweet last week Trump said: “We cannot keep **FEMA**, the Military & the First Responders, who have been amazing (under the most difficult circumstances) in P.R. forever!”

Gov. Rosselló responded at the time: “The US citizens in Puerto Rico are requesting the support that any of our fellow citizens would receive across our Nation.”

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### **Dem Senators write DHS calling for accurate hurricane death counts (The Hill)**

By Olivia Beavers - 10/19/17 06:00 AM EDT [32](#)

[The Hill](#)

Top Democratic senators are calling on the Department of Homeland Security to accurately provide death counts in Puerto Rico following Hurricanes Maria and Irma.

“We urge you to provide all necessary resources to confirm that storm-related deaths are being counted correctly,” the senators wrote in the letter to DHS Acting Secretary Elaine Duke.



The senators argued for an accurate death toll, saying the current count at 48 does not take into account what media reports say are about 450 more people who have died since the hurricane as well as 69 people who have been reported missing.

"The need for an accurate death toll is especially important because President Trump seems to be using the number of fatalities to determine the quality of the disaster response," their letter continued.

"Given President Trump's recent threat to withdraw relief workers from Puerto Rico, it is crucial that he and the public not receive erroneously low fatality totals," the senators wrote.

Trump last week warned that this administration's response to hurricane-ravaged Puerto Rico cannot last "forever."

"We cannot keep [the **Federal Emergency Management Agency**], the Military & the First Responders, who have been amazing (under the most difficult circumstances) in P.R. forever!" Trump wrote in a series of tweets.

He added that the island territory's existing debt and infrastructure issues compounded problems.

The letter from Dems [echoed the calls](#) that Democratic House Reps. Nydia Velazquez (D-N.Y.) and Bennie Thompson (D-Miss.) sent to DHS last week.

Top upper chamber lawmakers, including Sens. [Elizabeth Warren](#) (D-Mass.), [Bernie Sanders](#) (I-Vt.), Richard Blumenthal (D-Conn.), [Dick Durbin](#) (D-Ill.), [Kamala Harris](#) (D-Calif.), and [Sherrod Brown](#) (D-Ohio), signed off on the letter.

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## **Puerto Rico leader to seek more relief funds in D.C. trip Thursday (UPI)**

**"Time is of the essence and we need quick action," Puerto Rican Gov. Ricardo Rosselló said.**

By [Danielle Haynes](#) | Oct. 19, 2017 at 5:00 AM

[UPI](#)

Oct. 19 (UPI) -- Puerto Rican Gov. Ricardo Rosselló said he plans to push Congress for relief for his debt-ridden, hurricane-ravaged island Thursday, during his first trip to Washington, D.C., since Hurricane Maria.

The Puerto Rican leader arrives in Washington one month after the Category 4 storm [hit the island](#), with plenty on his plate.

Rosselló said he plans to encourage Congress to pass a nearly \$5 billion [funding package](#), a loan President [Donald Trump](#) requested for the financially burdened government. The Senate also is considering a \$36.5 billion general [disaster relief package](#), passed by the House last week, that includes relief aid for Puerto Rico.

"Time is of the essence and we need quick action," Rosselló said in [an NBC News report](#) Wednesday.

The governor said he hopes to persuade federal lawmakers that the island, a U.S. territory, has the ability to manage recovery and rebuilding efforts after Hurricane Maria.

"If we are not considered in equal terms to Florida, the Virgin Islands, Texas and so forth, Congress will have to deal with a worsened humanitarian crisis, massive exodus from the island, healthcare problems and more," he said.

Trump spokeswoman Sarah Sanders confirmed the trip during a briefing with reporters Wednesday, saying Rosselló also will visit "the White House to talk about the ongoing recovery and rebuilding efforts." Rosselló said he will also meet with Homeland Security adviser Tom Bossert.

As of Wednesday, about 80 percent of Puerto Ricans -- roughly 3 million -- were [still without power](#) and one-third of homes don't have reliable drinking water.



On Tuesday, the Federal Emergency Management Agency said 1,700 personnel were in Puerto Rico and the U.S. Virgin Islands, in addition to 20,000 other federal workers.

In Washington Wednesday, demonstrators marched from Capitol Hill to FEMA headquarters to demand a bigger response from the government on hurricane relief for Puerto Rico -- as well as other U.S. locations hit by Hurricanes Irma and Harvey.

Sen. [Elizabeth Warren](#), D-Mass., told the people of Puerto Rico and the U.S. Virgin Islands, "we have not forgotten you.

"You are our brothers and sisters. You are our fellow U.S. citizens. And you are part of our hearts."

Some demonstrators at the rally criticized Trump, saying his reaction to Puerto Rico's plight wasn't on par with how he handled other recent disasters.

"With Puerto Rico, he didn't even try," Melissa Mark-Viverito, speaker of the New York City Council, told [The Washington Post](#). "He's shown a real disrespect for the people of Puerto Rico. It's like he is kicking us while we are down."

The president, who's visited the island, has voiced consistent support for the territory since the disaster -- but he's also taken some criticism for remarking about Puerto Rico's economic situation.

"The wonderful people of Puerto Rico, with their unmatched spirit, know how bad things were before the H's. I will always be with them!" Trump said in [a tweet](#) last week.

Rosselló and Trump have praised the federal government's response in Puerto Rico. On Monday, former FEMA Director [James Lee Witt](#), who ran the organization under President [Bill Clinton](#), said he would give the Trump administration an A-plus for its response.

"They've maxed out probably how many people they could put there," he said. "I know they're all working frantically, but sometimes that's not enough."

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## RESPONSE and RECOVERY

### Here Are the Disturbing Numbers on Puerto Rico One Month After Hurricane Maria (TIME)

[Joseph Hincks](#)

Oct 18, 2017

[TIME](#)

On Sept. 20 Hurricane Maria made landfall on Puerto Rico, leaving at least 48 people dead and decimating the island's already crumbling power grid.

Texas and Miami were also ravaged by severe weather, in the two hurricanes that preceded Maria, but relief efforts there quickly restored basic infrastructure. One month on, however, much of the U.S. territory of Puerto Rico still looks the way it did immediately after the hurricane receded northwest towards the Dominican Republic.

Here is a by-the-numbers account of how things on the island currently stand.

#### Provisions

- **More than a third of Puerto Rican households**, or about **1 million people**, still lack running water [according](#) to CNN.
- **FEMA** says it has distributed **23.6 million liters** (6.2 million gallons) of bottled and bulk water in Puerto Rico. That figure includes water for hospitals and dialysis centers
- These deliveries equate to only **9%** of the island's drinking water requirement, going by the World Health Organization's (WHO) assessment that each person needs at least **2.5 liters**



(2/3 of a gallon) per day. Some residents are so desperate for drinking water they have [broken into](#) polluted wells at industrial waste sites.

- • The shortfall is far greater when you consider the WHO also recommends **15 liters** per person per day for basic cooking and hygiene needs. Dirty water ups the risk of diseases like cholera and at least one person has died as a result of being unable to get to dialysis treatment on time, CNN [reports](#).
- • Some **86% of grocery stores** have re-opened. But they are not necessarily stocked.
- • FEMA says **60,000 homes** need roofing help. It has delivered **38,000 tarps**.

#### Power and Personnel

- • **Less than 20% of Puerto Rico's power grid** has been restored and around **3 million people** are still without power, says CNN
- • The news broadcaster adds that **75% of antennas** are down so even those able to charge phones are unlikely to have cellular service.
- • **All of the island's hospitals** are now up and running, with most using back-up systems, but only **a quarter** are being supplied with power from the grid, [says Axios](#)
- • According to CNN, FEMA has deployed **1,700 personnel** in Puerto Rico and the U.S. Virgin Islands, which were also ravaged by Hurricane Maria. That's **900 less** than the **2,600 FEMA personnel** reportedly still in Texas and Florida, but the agency told CNN that around **20,000 other federal staff and military** have been deployed in response to Maria.
- • Thousands of people have [donated money or volunteered](#) to help Puerto Rico. Among them, celebrity chef José Andrés says he's serving **100,000 meals a day** on the island.

#### Publicity and the President

- • **Five days after Maria made landfall**, the first Trump administration officials traveled to Puerto Rico to survey the damage. That evening Trump made his first tweets since the storm hit — [mentioning](#) the debt Puerto Rico owes Wall Street. He had spent the preceding days at his golf club in New Jersey.
- • It took a further **8 days**, almost **two weeks** after the hurricane hit, for Trump to visit Puerto Rico. The **five hours** he spent there were marked by him [tossing](#) paper towels, jump-shot style, into a crowd of residents.
- • Trump later [said](#) in a tweet that Puerto Rico's crushing **\$72 billion** in public debt should be "wiped out."
- • A tweet criticizing the mayor of San Juan ranked the **third least popular** of all Trump's tweet since he assumed office, according to a metric that pits comments against likes. The approval rating on his handling of hurricanes also [dropped 20%](#) in the wake of Maria.

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## 'Shrinking, shrinking, shrinking': Puerto Rico faces a demographic disaster (Standard Republic)

[October 18, 2017](#)

[Standard Republic](#)

Long before the winds of Hurricane Maria reached Puerto Rico, another disaster had been wrenching and scattering the lives of island residents.

During the decade before Maria, economic decline and depopulation, a slower-moving catastrophe, had been taking a staggering toll: The number of residents had plunged by 11 percent, the economy had shrunk by 15 percent, and the government had become unable to pay its bills.

It already ranked among the worst cycles of economic decline and depopulation in postwar American history, and projections indicated that the island's slide could continue for years.



Then came Maria.

Now, even as officials in Washington and Puerto Rico undertake the recovery, residents are expected to leave en masse, fueling more economic decline and potentially accelerating a vicious cycle.

“We are watching a real live demographic and population collapse on a monumental scale,” according to Lyman Stone, an independent migration researcher and an economist at the U.S. Department of Agriculture. The hurricane hit “might just be the kick in the pants Puerto Rico needs to really fall off this demographic cliff into total epochal-level demographic disaster.”

Whatever happens with Puerto Rico, moreover, will have far-reaching effects, because while the disaster is felt most keenly on the island, the accelerated exodus is already being felt on the mainland.

Cities popular with Puerto Ricans, such as Orlando, Hartford, Conn., and Springfield Mass., are bracing for more students, many of whom come from families living below the poverty level.

Politicians, meanwhile, are weighing the potentially significant electoral consequences of a wave of migrants who are expected to lean Democratic – especially in Florida. The swing state already boasts half a million residents who are Puerto Rican-born and more are expected in Maria’s aftermath.

Indeed, at a news conference last week, Puerto Rico Gov. Ricardo Rosselló warned that without significant help, “millions” could leave for the U.S. mainland.

“You’re not going to get hundreds of thousands of Puerto Ricans moving to the states — you’re going to get millions,” Rossello said. “You’re going to get millions, creating a devastating demographic shift for us here in Puerto Rico.”

Puerto Rico Treasury Secretary Raul Maldonado has warned, meanwhile, that without more aid, the government could suffer a shutdown by the end of the month.

Prolonged bouts of economic decline and depopulation have afflicted parts of the United States before. During seven years in the 1950s, the number of people living in West Virginia dropped by 8 percent. New York lost 4 percent of its population in the 1970s. And during one stretch in the 1950s, Arkansas shed a whopping 11 percent of its people.

But in depth, the cycle of economic decline and depopulation on the island of 3.4 million people may prove the most punishing.

“Even before Maria, you had what looked like a death spiral going on,” said Gregory Makoff, a bond researcher who worked on the Treasury Department’s Puerto Rico team and now is a senior fellow at the Centre for International Governance Innovation. “Now it’s no longer theoretical. In a week’s time, they’ve lost another huge chunk of the population.”

U.S. Army reserve soldiers, from Puerto Rico, attach an American flag to one of their vehicles, in an area with a sporadic electricity supply, on October 14 in Yauco, Puerto Rico.

For years before the economic slide, companies such as Merck, Johnson & Johnson and PepsiCo had saved tens of millions or more annually under a key tax break that gave U.S. companies an incentive to set up operations on the island.

But in 2006, the tax break was eliminated, taking away a key incentive for companies to operate there. It was one of many factors blamed for the island’s decline.

Among the others: The island’s electrical power system is outdated and saddles islanders with bills roughly double what they are on the mainland; an exodus of doctors has opened holes in the health-care system; and the economy’s most critical sector, manufacturing, has been shrinking even more rapidly than the rest of the economy, affected not just by the lost tax break but by global competition.

Only about 40 percent of people in Puerto Rico are employed or seeking work. By contrast, the U.S. figure for what economists call “labor force participation” is about 63 percent.

Finally, the government’s inability to pay off more than \$70 billion in debt has provoked a congressionally mandated oversight board and a new fiscal plan that calls for significant cuts to the



government and efforts to raise more taxes. Even with some optimistic assumptions, that plan predicted continuing shrinkage of the economy.

As a result, for Washington and Puerto Rican officials planning a recovery, the ongoing exodus poses a multifaceted dilemma

“They’ve got to start from the ground up,” Makoff said of any new scheme for the island.

In the short term, at least, the island is likely to see an economic boost; the rebuilding after a hurricane often injects a jolt of spending into local economies.

But according to recent research of 90 years of natural disasters in the United States, published as a National Bureau of Economic Research working paper, major natural disasters also have a range of unfavorable effects: They increase out-migration, lower home prices and raise poverty rates.

Like many on the island, Sergio M. Marxuach, policy director for the Center for a New Economy, a San Juan-based think tank, said a massive federal investment is necessary.

“We’re going to need some significant government intervention — essentially a big rescue package, not only to rebuild the economy but get it growing,” he said. “People are saying, ‘I don’t want my children to grow up in place where the economy is going to be devastated for the next 10 years.’ If enough people think that way, it’s going to be a self-reinforcing downward spiral.”

‘A lethal blow’

In addressing complaints about ongoing struggles on the island, President Trump noted this week that the disaster in Puerto Rico in many ways had begun years ago.

Puerto Rico “was in very poor shape before the hurricanes ever hit. Their electrical grid was destroyed before the hurricanes got there. It was in very bad shape, was not working, was in bankruptcy...”

Indeed, interviews with Puerto Rican business people indicated that even if the obstacles left by Maria can be overcome — most notably the widespread lack of electricity — a return to economic life as it was before the storm is untenable.

Take Frank Joseph Sugden, 51, the owner of an established family tuxedo and gown business in Bayamo. His company, Top Hat, once had three stores but now has just one. With the reductions over the years, he’s had to fire 10 employees.

Now, after Maria, weddings and other formal parties have been largely canceled through December, so his store is closed. Two of his remaining eight employees are considering leaving for good. His wife wants him to leave, too. To make up for the lost business, he’s started to do insurance work on the side.

He worries whether Puerto Rico is in a death spiral.

“I think so, yes, and I’m not too sure we’re going to come out of it,” Sugden said. “We’ve just been kind of shrinking, shrinking, shrinking, and this is kind of a lethal blow.”

Leo Aldridge, an attorney with offices in San Juan and New York, described the post-Maria migration from the island as the “Jet Blue revolution. People are buying a ticket and getting the hell out.”

But the trouble began long before the storm. After a law class he teaches at the University of Puerto Rico, he noted, his students frequently ask how they can arrange a bar exam and job on the mainland.

“All the time, kids come up to me to say, ‘What do I have to do to get off the island? What bar review do I have to take?’” Aldridge said. “This was all before the hurricane . . . People are leaving and leaving and leaving.”

Even those who evince optimism acknowledge that more difficult times lie ahead.

“We will move forward better than we were before,” said Joaquin Fernandez Quintero, the president of Telemedik, a tele-health company that employs about 400.



But he said that about 10 percent of the employees in his Mayaguez office will move to the states in the coming weeks, several of them “high-level” employees. And he’s not sure when they will be coming back.

“People are getting frustrated and depressed,” Fernandez Quintero said. “A lot of small and medium companies will be closing because they cannot maintain their operations. It will be a complicated process.”

Steven Mufson contributed to this report.

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## **Congress, FBI Already Investigating Potential Abuse Of Federal Funds In Puerto Rico’s Disaster Response (Government Executive)**

By Eric Katz

[Government Executive](#), October 18, 2017

A congressional committee is investigating potential abuse of federal funds and resources provided to local municipalities in Puerto Rico, citing red flags raised by the FBI.

The House Natural Resources Committee probed the **Federal Emergency Management Agency** and FBI regarding accusations of “mishandling and misappropriation of emergency supplies” provided by the federal government for the people of Puerto Rico. The letters from several Republican leaders on the panel came after Douglas Leff, the FBI special agent in charge for the San Juan Field Office, announced last week he was looking into accusations of abuse of federal funds.

“With so many residents still in grave need of basic supplies, it is essential that assistance from the federal government is provided in the most efficient and effective manner possible,” the lawmakers wrote in their letters. The allegations have stated that “mayors of local municipalities, or people associated with their offices, are giving their political supporters special treatment, goods they’re not giving to other people who need them,” the committee members said, citing Leff.

They added their committee “is very troubled by these allegations.”

The special agent’s public statement did not include any mention of mayors. President Trump has publicly feuded with the mayor of San Juan, Puerto Rico’s capital and largest city, blaming her for demonstrating “poor leadership” in response to the crisis and failing to coordinate with federal response efforts.

There are currently more than 20,000 federal personnel on the ground in Puerto Rico and Trump recently asked Congress for an emergency supplement of nearly \$13 billion to support those and other recovery efforts. Congress last month approved \$15 billion in emergency funding after Hurricane Harvey, which was split between **FEMA**’s disaster fund and Housing and Urban Development Community Block Development Grants.

The investigation has begun as initial response efforts are still underway, with 35 percent of households without drinking water and 80 percent of the island without power. Scott Amey, general counsel at the Project on Government Oversight, said the federal government has prioritized early oversight of disaster relief since Hurricane Katrina and the 2009 economic stimulus package. Katrina recovery was rife with fraud and abuse, with the Justice Department making charges in 1,300 cases in the aftermath of that storm. Justice has since established the National Center for Disaster Fraud, which is headquartered in Baton Rouge, Louisiana. Corey Admundson, the U.S. attorney who heads up that office, as well as Attorney General Jeff Sessions, have warned of potential fraud in the wake of hurricanes Harvey and Irma, though those warnings focused on abuses from contractors rather than local governments.

“It’s never too early,” Amey said of the oversight and investigatory efforts. “Already just between Harvey, Irma and Maria the federal government has awarded—just in contracts—over \$1.6



billion. It's not too early to start investigating fraud, waste and abuse when \$1.6 billion of taxpayer dollars has gone out the door."

By looking at potential fraud early in the process, he added, the government can send a message to anyone looking to take advantage of the victims.

"As tips are coming in, I hope the Justice department takes a serious look at them," Amey said. "There's a hope there's a deterrent effect if there's strong oversight and accountability from the outset."

The White House is also conscious of potential fraud, with Office of Management and Budget Director Mick Mulvaney sending a memorandum to agencies to be wary of anyone looking to abuse recovery dollars.

"Unfortunately, disasters can sometimes provide cover and opportunity for corrupt individuals to perpetrate fraud by targeting disaster survivors," Mulvaney said. "In the aftermath of a disaster, there are also frequently cases of waste and abuse, such as instances where benefits provided to survivors and communities have little nexus to recovery efforts, or where agencies continue to expend resources well beyond the period where it is reasonable to assume that recovery activities are continuing."

He added that the public's faith in government depended on an efficient disbursement of recovery funds.

"As you consider your agency costs, please keep in mind that such wasteful or fraudulent activities will not be tolerated; they ultimately undermine public trust in the federal government's ability to respond to disasters," the OMB director said. "We are counting on you to provide this diligent oversight up front and throughout the recovery process."

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## **POWER / INFRASTRUCTURE / COMMUNICATIONS**

### **New Mexico delegation: US labs can help rebuild Puerto Rico (AP)**

October 19, 2017 2:24 AM

[The Associated Press](#)

ALBUQUERQUE, N.M. -- Members of the state's congressional delegation are urging the Trump administration to tap the expertise of national laboratories in New Mexico to help with rebuilding efforts in Puerto Rico.

They sent a letter Wednesday to Energy Secretary Rick Perry and Elaine Duke, acting secretary of the Homeland Security Department.

The letter says the expertise and resources at Sandia and Los Alamos national laboratories can be leveraged to ensure the U.S. territory is better positioned to prepare for and recover from future natural disasters. They pointed to programs that could evaluate Puerto Rico's electrical grid needs and other critical infrastructure.

The territory was hit by back-to-back hurricanes. Much of the island remains without power, hundreds of thousands of people are without running water and nearly half of the island's 51 sewage treatment plants are still out of service.

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### **Anuncian Reparación De Termoeléctrica (El Vocero de Puerto Rico)**

By Laura M. Quintero

October 18, 2017

[El Vocero de Puerto Rico,](#)



**GE contract for Electrical Energy Authority (EEE) for the replacement of beams and columns of the boilers of the Central Palo Seco had been processed at the end of August, a few weeks after the onslaught of Irma and María. Yesterday La Fortaleza announced the start of the work for the amount of \$4.7 million, with a discount of the original cost that amounted \$7 million.**

El contrato a la compañía General Electric por parte de la Autoridad de Energía Eléctrica (AEE) para el reemplazo de vigas y columnas de las calderas de la Central Palo Seco se había tramitado a finales de agosto, a pocas semanas del embate de Irma y María. Ayer La Fortaleza anunció el inicio de los trabajos por la cantidad de \$4.7 millones, con un descuento del costo original que ascendía a \$7 millones.

El secretario de Asuntos Públicos de La Fortaleza, Ramón Rosario, mencionó que el gobierno persigue que “en lo que remediamos provisionalmente la generación en el norte, atendamos los problemas de infraestructura de Palo Seco que han impedido que muchas de sus unidades no estén en servicio en este período de emergencia”.

La respuesta del gobierno surge luego de que los expertos del Colegio de Ingenieros y Agrimensores y de la Unión de Trabajadores de la Industria Eléctrica y Riego (Utier) cuestionaron los motivos para mantener apagada la central, capaz de dar estabilidad a la generación eléctrica del área metropolitana con la producción de cerca de 602 megavatios por hora.

Tan reciente como el sábado, la Oficina de Prensa de La Fortaleza había insistido en la postura de mantener cerrada la planta al compartir un estudio realizado por Island Structures Engineering, PC, que advertía del peligro que representaba la corrosión significativa y las perforaciones en las unidades 1 a la 4.

Sin embargo, el presidente del Colegio de Ingenieros, Pablo Vázquez Ruiz, dijo a este diario que en ningún momento del informe se prohibía que la central estuviera en servicio mientras se trabajaba en las reparaciones. Además, los directivos de la Utier habían advertido que solo hacía falta reforzar las medidas de seguridad, sin necesidad de cerrar la operación.

“Esperaron a la crisis”

El presidente de la Utier, Ángel Figueroa Jaramillo, aseguró que el sindicato había acordado comenzar los trabajos de reparación en noviembre de 2016. La propuesta se había discutido con el jefe de planta en aquel momento, Norberto Jiménez, con quien se acordó que el sindicato conseguiría los soldadores y el gobierno aportaría los materiales.

Incluso, indicó que la Junta de Gobierno de la AEE autorizó al director ejecutivo, Ricardo Ramos, en abril de este año a comenzar los trabajos en reparaciones de las columnas y vigas enmohecidas. “Volvieron una vez más a esperar la crisis. Esperar a que el País estuviese desesperado para entregar otro contrato más, cuando nosotros podíamos haber hecho gran parte de ese trabajo”, denunció Figueroa Jaramillo.

Cuando en agosto se informó el contrato de General Electric, la Utier puso el grito en el cielo. “Le cuestionamos el contrato, porque nosotros podíamos hacer el trabajo”, afirmó el líder sindical.

“Va a tomar tiempo”

Por su parte, el titular de Asuntos Públicos de La Fortaleza negó que se vaya a encender la planta de Palo Seco previo a que se completen las reparaciones de las unidades apagadas. Reconoció que la reparación “va a tomar un tiempo”.

Explicó que la empresa Whitefish trabaja en la reparación de las líneas de transmisión de 230,000 voltios desde la central Cambalache, en Arecibo, hasta el área metropolitana. El director de operación y distribución de la AEE, Edgardo Rivera Alvarado, había comentado a este diario -hace una semana- que al momento se habían logrado conectar las líneas de 230,000 voltios hasta Manatí.

De otra parte, Rosario dijo que con los \$128 millones aportados por la Agencia Federal para el Manejo de Emergencias (FEMA), la AEE se encargará de ordenar los materiales para que las

compañías contratadas para reparar el sistema energético -PowerSecure y Whitefish- puedan operar. Ha trascendido que esta última empresa opera a capacidad limitada ya que dependen de los materiales y de los equipos de la AEE.

Mientras, **FEMA** informó que los generadores para las turbinas de gas de Palo Seco llegaron el 13 de octubre y se proyecta el comienzo de operación para el 25 de octubre.

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## **Rosselló Reafirma Que Su Plan Es Restablecer El Sistema Eléctrico (El Nuevo Día)**

[El Nuevo Día \(PRI\)](#), October 18, 2017

**Facing the financial and operational collapses of the Power Authority (EEE) and the fiscal inability of the government of Puerto Rico, the ravages caused by Hurricane Maria to the island's electrical system have become an invoice for the FEMA and Corps of Engineers that round-for the moment-the \$1,680,000.**

Ante el colapso financiero y operacional de la Autoridad de Energía Eléctrica (AEE) y la incapacidad fiscal del gobierno de Puerto Rico, los estragos causados por el huracán María al sistema eléctrico de la isla se han convertido en una factura para la Agencia Federal de Manejo de Emergencias (**FEMA**, en inglés) y el Cuerpo de Ingenieros del Ejército de los Estados Unidos (Usace, en inglés) que ronda -por el momento- los \$1,680 millones.

Esta cifra de nueve dígitos, que surgió ayer durante una entrevista con el gobernador Ricardo Rosselló Nevares, no es parte de la línea de crédito por \$4,700 millones que el gobierno puertorriqueño solicitó a **FEMA** para lidiar con su crisis de liquidez.

En la entrevista, el mandatario reconoció que la falta prolongada del servicio eléctrico podría complicar considerablemente la recuperación de la economía puertorriqueña que ya atravesaba una profunda crisis antes del ciclón.

“Cuando lo dije (el plan que contempla restaurar el 95% de la energía para mediados de diciembre) me acusaban de ser agresivo (ambicioso), y lo cierto es que lo es”, dijo Rosselló Nevares.

La semana pasada, El Nuevo Día citó estimados del Instituto Nacional de Energía y Sostenibilidad Isleña (Inesi), en la Universidad de Puerto Rico en Mayagüez, que estima que producir energía con generadores eléctricos podría costar a las familias y comercios unos 70 centavos el kilovatio hora. La cifra es casi cuatro veces el costo promedio del kilovatio hora que la AEE cobra a los abonados.

“Entiendo las dificultades. Primero, cuesta muchísimo correr un negocio en diésel, en un generador. Segundo, verdad, se supone que sea temporero, pero, ya bien sea por el costo o porque los generadores no están diseñados para operar para siempre, se van a caer”, dijo el gobernador cuando El Nuevo Día le indicó que cientos de negocios y miles de familias no tienen dinero suficiente para esperar tres meses por la restauración del sistema eléctrico.

Acto seguido, Rosselló Nevares se mostró confiado en que el 30% de los abonados tendrán electricidad antes de que termine el mes.

Agregó que trabaja en alternativas con la Administración federal de Pequeños Negocios, varios programas bajo **FEMA** y otros como el Community Development Block Grant para que los negocios puedan hacer contrapeso al impacto que supone la pérdida de electricidad en sus operaciones.

Levantar la red es primero

De acuerdo con Rosselló Nevares, el restablecimiento del sistema eléctrico debe ganar intensidad en las próximas semanas.

Hasta ayer, 380 brigadas trabajaban para restablecer el sistema, y el mandatario dijo que deben alcanzar el millar.



La mayor parte de la mano de obra pertenece a la AEE y a ese esfuerzo se han unido 40 brigadas de Jacksonville Power Authority y casi un centenar de Whitefish Energy, la firma con sede en el estado de Montana y que habría sido la única en aceptar trabajar para restaurar el sistema eléctrico de la isla a pedidos de la AEE.

Otras 200 brigadas del USACE también trabajan en la restauración del sistema.

Partiendo de los esquemas de Rosselló Nevares, si la red eléctrica de Puerto Rico fuera a dividirse en dos, el Usace tiene a su cargo la parte sureste de la isla, donde cayeron las líneas de transmisión de energía que proveen electricidad a la zona norte.

En tanto, el personal de Whitefish Energy y otros contratistas como Kobra -acuerdo que todavía se finiquitaba ayer- tendría a su cargo restablecer la electricidad en el mitad oeste de la isla para energizar la zona sur, las áreas de Mayagüez y Arecibo, así como líneas secundarias.

Además, según el gobernador, la contratación de la empresa tejana Fluor Corporation por parte de la Usace debe contribuir a agilizar los trabajos. Dicho contrato ronda los \$240 millones.

De otra parte, Rosselló Nevares señaló que, tras la contratación de General Electric para reparar las unidades de Palo Seco, ese trabajo tomará de cuatro a seis meses, por lo que, en el plazo inmediato, se contempla energizar la zona norte, utilizando los generadores de gran tamaño contratados por el Usace y todavía en proceso de instalación.

Factura a los federales

En mano de obra, dijo el gobernador, se necesitarán en un plazo de dos meses, unos \$490 millones y otros \$740 millones para materiales y equipos. A esa cuantía, se agregan casi \$450 millones en fondos provistos por el Usace.

Así las cosas y tal como anticipó hace una semana El Nuevo Día, levantar la red eléctrica solo será posible por el rescate financiero que provee FEMA y el Usace a raíz de la devastación causada por el ciclón. En esta primera etapa, costará \$1,680 millones.

Rosselló Nevares indicó que el análisis de las pérdidas en la AEE continúa, pero dijo que los daños rebasan por mucho la primera factura que pagará el gobierno federal.

Rosselló Nevares reconoció que, a futuro, Puerto Rico tendrá que recabar más apoyo del gobierno federal para asegurar que Puerto Rico cuente con una red energética más eficiente y capaz de resistir un huracán como María.

“Se van a necesitar esos fondos, esas apropiaciones federales, pero también colaboración del sector privado, en la generación, en la participación, en buscar sistemas innovadores”, dijo Rosselló Nevares al agregar que buscará hacer un balance entre los fondos que persigue a nivel federal y la entrada de entidades privadas al mercado energético de la isla.

Respaldo a las renovables

Según Rosselló Nevares, el colapso de la red eléctrica ha abierto la puerta para evaluar la forma en que se ha gestionado la energía en Puerto Rico hasta la fecha.

Entre esos proyectos que podrían reevaluarse, figura la plataforma de gas para la zona sur identificada como el Aguirre Gasport, dijo el gobernador.

“Ahoratenemos la oportunidad de repensarlo todo”, indicó.

A principios de la semana, Rosselló Nevares informó que su administración ha recibido tres propuestas de energía, entre las que se incluye una nueva planta de generación eléctrica con gas en el norte que impulsa Puma Energy. La multinacional Puma confirmó a El Nuevo Día que, desde el 2014, tiene entre sus asesores a World Professional Group, firma que cuenta entre sus integrantes al exdirector de campaña del gobernador Rosselló Nevares y exrepresentante suyo ante la Junta de Supervisión Fiscal, Elías Sánchez Sifonte.

Respaldo a las renovables

A preguntas de El Nuevo Día en torno a por qué perpetuar el modelo de plantas generadoras de gran escala que utilizan fuentes fósiles y no dar paso a la generación con renovables, Rosselló aseguró que, bajo su administración, se logrará elevar la generación eléctrica con sol o viento. Al

presente, el 2% de la energía que vende la AEE proviene de renovables, muy por debajo del objetivo de 15% que establece la ley en Puerto Rico.

“Este es el momento”, dijo Rosselló Nevares. “Nuestra expectativa es subir (la generación con fuentes renovables) entre 15% a 20%. Eso sería un salto significativo en Puerto Rico”.

Según el mandatario, además de las renovables, bajo su plan, se prevé aumentar la generación en el norte, para evitar la pérdida de eficiencia en transmisión desde el sur, e incursionar en las llamadas microrredes y redes inteligentes.

Habrá transparencia

A preguntas de El Nuevo Día en torno a cómo su administración evitará la existencia de conflictos de interés o el despilfarro de fondos en proyectos innecesarios, Rosselló Nevares dijo que también toma cartas en el asunto.

“Vamos a crear una estructura para darle coherencia y transparencia al uso de todos los fondos. No queremos caer en una situación como la de (el huracán) Katrina que, por la falta de claridad y por la falta de ejecución, se perdieron billones de dólares”, indicó.

La estructura, explicó, tendrá dos niveles de transparencia: uno para el gobierno federal para asegurar el repago de reembolsos, y, la segunda, para los ciudadanos.

“Es importante establecer que todos estos proyectos responden a un fin del bien público y que no se han decidido a espaldas del pueblo o por distintos actores”, dijo.

“Ese dinero va a ser para construir la plataforma del futuro. Voy a asegurar que exista diligencia y transparencia”, subrayó.

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## **Puerto Rico's capital of San Juan to be powered by APR Energy's turbines** (Fox Business)

October 18, 2017

[Fox Business/Yahoo Finance](#)

It has been one month since Hurricane María charged through the Caribbean towards Puerto Rico, wiping out the island's power grid and much of its infrastructure.

As of Tuesday, only 18% of electric utility customers actually have access to power while others are dependent on diesel-fueled generators.

APR Energy says it will have the lights back on in the capital city of San Juan very quickly through its mobile power plants.

“We've already placed them on the site in a place called Palo Seco which is a power plant in San Juan,” APR Energy CEO and Chairman John Campion told FOX Business' Ashley Webster.

The U.S. Army Corps of Engineers has hired the Jacksonville, Florida-based company to deliver two electricity-producing turbines. The APR turbine rentals, built by General Electric (NYSE:GE), will produce up to 60 megawatts of electricity to power 300,000 homes.

Campion said assessing the impact of Hurricane María on the transmission lines that power San Juan delayed the shipment of the turbines.

“Part of the problem is San Juan's power, a lot of that comes from the south and that's transmission lines coming over the mountains, and those transmissions were pretty much wiped out,” he said.

APR Energy is working very closely with the Army Corps of Engineers, General Electric, local utility companies and government officials to turn the lights back on in Puerto Rico.

“We won't solve the full problem, but we will solve part of the problem and then we will bring more machines on and solve more of the problems,” Campion said.

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## **Repairing Puerto Rico's Power Grid a Major Challenge (Latin America Herald Tribune)**

Oct. 18

[Latin America Herald Tribune](#)

SAN JUAN – The task of restoring electricity to Puerto Rico in the wake of Hurricane Maria will demand an investment of hundreds of millions of dollars, a senior US Army Corps of Engineers official told EFE on Tuesday.

The island faces “a grave situation,” Jose Sanchez said in an interview, noting that the powerful Category 4 storm damaged 80 percent of Puerto Rico’s infrastructure.

Nearly a month after the hurricane struck on Sept. 20, state-owned utility AEE is generating less than 18 percent of its pre-Maria output.

The Puerto Rico Chamber of Commerce warned weeks ago that many small and medium-sized businesses may go under if the pace of power restoration does not increase, raising the prospect of more pain for an economy that has been in recession for a decade.

And Gov. Ricardo Rossello has said repeatedly that a protracted period of diminished economic activity due to the lack of electricity is likely to spur an increase in the number of Puerto Ricans – who are US citizens – relocating to the mainland United States.

The US commonwealth has lost 10 percent of its population since 2007.

In the days after Maria slammed into Puerto Rico, AEE chief Ricardo Ramos suggested that some areas of the island could wait as long as nine months to get their power back.

“We are working hard,” Sanchez said Tuesday, referring to the efforts of his team and AEE’s roughly 1,000 employees.

He said that it was impossible to give a date certain for full restoration of electricity due to the many variables at play.

Asked about Rossello’s recent statement that nearly 90 percent of AEE customers would have power by mid-December, Sanchez said only that the governor had established “a very aggressive goal.”

Explaining the scale of the challenge, Suarez said that 200 transmission towers and as many as 50,000 electric poles were down, while 10,000 kilometers (6,000 miles) of lines require repair or replacement.

“There are logistics problems in getting equipment and specialists” to the places where they are needed, Suarez said.

The Army Corps of Engineers awarded the Fluor Corporation a \$240 million contract to help rebuild AEE’s transmission and distribution system, while Ramon Rosario, the chief spokesman for the Rossello administration, announced Tuesday that the government signed a \$4.7 million accord with General Electric for repairs to the Palo Seco power plant near San Juan.

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## **Puerto Rico To Get Two Turbines From Florida Firm To Help Restore Power (Miami Herald)**

By Carli Teproff

[Miami Herald](#), October 18, 2017

Power is on the way for hurricane-ravaged Puerto Rico in the form of two giant fuel-powered generators.

APR Energy, a Jacksonville-based firm, has shipped two turbines to the island nation, which means thousands of customers will have their power restored within weeks, said Ed Patricoff, a partner in the law firm Shutts & Bowen, which is representing the company.



“This is an immediate solution,” said Patricoff, adding the turbines at the Palo Seco power plant, just outside of San Juan, arrived late last week. “It’s a stop-gap measure.”

Patricoff said APR was contacted by the governor of Puerto Rico, Ricardo Rosello, days after Hurricane Maria moved through Sept. 20, leaving the island without power. About 85 percent of the island is still without lights.

Shutts & Bowen negotiated the \$35-million contract with the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers.

The turbines are capable of producing about 50 megawatts of power by using natural gas, which will turn the lights on for about 5,600 households and businesses, Patricoff said. What they will also do, he said, is help stabilize a damaged grid, which means about 50,000 people will soon have their power restored

Patricoff said the company also secured a contract with the U.S. Virgin Islands to provide a turbine.

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## **Washington Must Help Puerto Rico Rebuild Its Electric Grid (RealClear Energy)**

By [Silvestre Reyes](#)

October 16, 2017

[RealClear Energy](#)

Hurricane Maria hit the island of Puerto Rico almost like a nuclear bomb, and I believe the responses from both the Congress and the Trump administration have been lacking. Can you imagine if New York, Washington or Texas was in the current state that the Commonwealth of Puerto Rico currently finds itself? The victims in Puerto Rico are American citizens, but English is not their first language, and for this reason, I believe that they are being treated like second-class citizens.

After Hurricane Maria swept through Puerto Rico, millions of people were cut off from the rest of the world. Residents were left with no cellphones, water or power and roads had been completely washed away leaving millions isolated from their friends, families and jobs.

The death toll on the island has reached 45 people, and access to clean water is still scarce and nearly 90 percent of the island remains dark for millions of residents. Medical officials continue to warn that the island’s healthcare system is desperately struggling to perform its most critical and basic services. The injured and ill are dying due to the lack of power and difficulty transporting patients. Grocery stores are running low on food, and people are waiting in line for hours to get gas to power their generators.

The damage to the island’s power grid is so extensive that officials still cannot predict when power will return, and many residents are facing a harsh reality: That it could be many months before they get electric service. Which brings me to the thesis of this piece: Congress and the Administration must use this situation as an opportunity to rebuild the energy grid as quickly as possible, spurring both government investment and public/private partnerships – whatever it takes to get the job done.

The Puerto Rico Electric Power Authority, also known as PREPA, currently manages Puerto Rico’s electric grid. PREPA is a government-owned, electric power company responsible for electricity generation, power transmission and power distribution on the island. Now is not the time to point fingers or place blame, but by all accounts, even before Hurricane Maria, PREPA was struggling to get the job done. In fact, PREPA was \$9 billion in debt when it declared bankruptcy in July of 2017. Its equipment was already “degraded, unsafe, and unreliable” according to a [draft fiscal report](#) the company filed in April of 2017. Making matters worse, PREPA charged customers around 50% more for power than the average customer on the mainland of the United States pays.



Now is an opportunity to try and rebuild the grid in Puerto Rico and create a better system than currently exists. This means keeping in mind the importance of energy diversification to avoid recreating the same recovery problems that the island is now facing. In 2016, 47% of Puerto Rico's electricity came from petroleum, 34% from natural gas, 17% from coal, and 2% from renewable energy, according to the [U.S. Energy Information Administration](#). Moving forward, it would make sense to expand the renewable portion, allowing the renewable producers to compete for the opportunity to create an infrastructure that will last and best service the Puerto Rican people. The situation in Puerto Rico has already attracted the attention of renewable energy companies and investors.

Congress and the White House must also seek opportunities to incentivize private investment in the grid, so the restoration of the grid can accelerate faster than its current pace, which is painfully slow. As of now, PREPA is only working with a single private contractor to restore the grid and is woefully inadequate.

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## **El Cuerpo De Ingenieros Coloca 505 Barreras De Cemento En Guajataca (El Nuevo Día)**

[El Nuevo Día \(PRI\)](#), October 18, 2017

**The Corps of Engineers already placed 505 concrete barriers and 300 bags of sand with stone in the Guajataca dam, in Quebradillas, as part of the work of mitigation that they carry out to prevent the water from leaving by the Pourer.**

El Cuerpo de Ingenieros del Ejército de los Estados Unidos (USACE) ya colocó 505 barreras de concreto y 300 bolsas de arena con piedra en la represa Guajataca, en Quebradillas, como parte del trabajo de mitigación que realizan para evitar que el agua se salga por el vertedor.

El próximo paso consistirá en colocar 1,300 bolsas adicionales de arena con piedra para luego instalar bombas de agua y, de esta forma, bajar el nivel del agua, explicó el director de operaciones de contingencia y seguridad nacional del USACE, José Sánchez.

“Las bolsas de arena y piedra ahora –como no está vertiendo el agua por el vertedor–, pues me permite usar camiones para colocarlas”, explicó Sánchez, quien ha dicho que después de este trabajo, la represa requiere de una reparación permanente.

Preguntado sobre cuánto tiempo tomará concluir con los trabajos de mitigación, Sánchez dijo “unas cuantas semanas”.

“También estamos tratando de ayudar a que haya agua en los canales (contiguos) que suplen agua potable. Ya el canal está limpio y ahora vamos a poner unas tuberías para hacer un bypass de esa agua y llenar el canal”, afirmó.

“Estamos también instalando unas bombas para ayudar a bajar un poco el nivel de la represa y así bajar la presión”, agregó.

El USACE ya recibió dos bombas para hacer ese trabajo. Sánchez dijo que espera por la llegada de ocho bombas adicionales, “para seguir en el proceso de quererle dar más estabilización a los niveles de la represa”, aseveró el ingeniero sobre el trabajo cuyo costo no se ha precisado, pero es cubierto por la Agencia Federal para el Manejo de Emergencias.

El alcalde de Quebradillas, Heriberto Vélez, dijo que según le explicaron, se instalarán bombas de agua en el río Guajataca para suplir los canales, que quedaron afectados por los escombros y la basura que los cubrió tras el huracán.

“La tubería que lleva agua a los canales se rompió”, dijo.

“Quebradillas no se ha afectado tanto. Más se han afectado Isabela, Aguada, Aguadilla, San Sebastián, y esos pueblos que no reciben agua del río Guajataca sino de la represa”, explicó el alcalde.



Tras el huracán, se dio a conocer que la represa tenía una fisura de 24 pulgadas. Sin embargo, el USACE, luego de una evaluación, dio a conocer que no se trataba de una rotura sino que la gran cantidad de agua que recibió la represa socavó una de sus paredes del aliviadero.

La emergencia hizo necesario el trabajo de mitigación de la USACE y que se desalojaran cientos de personas que residen cercanas a la represa. El alcalde de Quebradillas no precisó la cantidad, pero aseguró que la cifra sobrepasa el centenar. “A las familias se les avisó. Hay unas que viven fuera de sus hogares y otras que van y vienen”, afirmó.

También, unidades de Purificación de Agua de la Reserva del Ejército de Estados Unidos realizan el proceso de purificación en el lago Guajataca para distribuirla a comunidades aledañas.

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## **Municipios Recogerán Escombros En Vías Estatales (El Vocero)**

By Laura M. Quintero

[El Vocero de Puerto Rico](#), October 18, 2017

### **Municipalities will pick up debris in state road.**

La dirección regional de la Agencia Federal para el Manejo de Emergencias (**FEMA**) está buscando que su sede en Washington DC le conceda mayor flexibilidad ante la emergencia que vive Puerto Rico tras el paso del huracán María, de modo que se pueda rembolsar a los municipios por recoger escombros en las carreteras que son jurisdicción del gobierno central.

La directora de la división de infraestructura de **FEMA**, Ana Morales, confirmó ayer a este diario que hicieron la solicitud a las oficinas centrales de la agencia dado a que la regulación establece que solo la entidad con jurisdicción legal sobre la infraestructura puede hacer la reclamación para obtener reembolso de gastos por las labores de limpieza.

El pedido provino de los propios alcaldes con interés y recursos para despejar las vías estatales, a las que el Departamento de Transportación y Obras Públicas (DTOP) o la Guardia Nacional no han podido llegar.

“Estamos trabajando con el coordinador federal (de **FEMA** en la Isla), Mike Byrne, para que se autorice que los municipios que tienen la necesidad y la urgencia de que se saquen los escombros de carreteras estatales, por razones de salud y emergencia, reciban el desembolso por los gastos incurridos”, mencionó Morales.

La funcionaria reconoció que los escombros en las vías públicas representan un riesgo a la seguridad, pues pueden servir de obstáculo a los conductores y ocasionar accidentes de tránsito.

“Tenemos una buena comunicación con la sede y el coordinador federal apoya la decisión. Entiendo que la decisión (de la capital federal) va a ser favorable”, afirmó Morales sobre la respuesta que espera baje esta misma semana.

**FEMA** ya ha asignado \$336.2 millones a entidades públicas para reparaciones de infraestructura, de los cuales \$12.5 millones han sido para el recogido de escombros.

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## **Mississippi To Take In 1,200 Prisoners From Hurricane-scarred Puerto Rico (USA Today)**

[USA Today](#), October 18, 2017

YAZOO CITY, Miss. — About 1,200 federal prisoners from Puerto Rico will be housed at the federal correctional facility in Yazoo City.

U.S. Court Clerk Arthur Johnston for the Southern District of Mississippi confirmed that Mississippi agreed to house the prisoners in the aftermath of the devastation in Puerto Rico from Hurricane María.



Johnston said U.S. Supreme Court Chief Justice John Roberts asked federal judges to be available to help if needed on any of the prisoners' cases, but the cases will remain in the jurisdiction of Puerto Rican judges.

"Other jurisdictions helped when we had Hurricane Katrina," Johnston said. "We are delighted to return the favor."

Puerto Rico is home to one federal prison with about 1,400 inmates. The territory also has capacity for about 12,000 state prisoners.

Johnston said he was almost certain the federal prisoners were already in Mississippi. However, he said no federal judge in Mississippi has begun to handle any case yet.

Clay Chandler, Gov. Phil Bryant's spokesman, said Wednesday that he couldn't confirm federal prisoners from Puerto Rico were in Mississippi or on their way here.

Bryant released a statement saying, "I would not be in favor of accepting anyone's dangerous prisoners."

Last month, the Federal Bureau of Prisons said in a statement on its website: "As conditions on the island of Puerto Rico continued to deteriorate, creating difficulties in securing supplies and maintaining power, the Bureau felt it prudent to reduce the inmate population at MDC Guaynabo.

"We have begun the process of reducing the population at MDC Guaynabo and continue to assess damage and conditions at the facility. Given the large number of inmates that need to be relocated, the movement will take several days to complete."

The Metropolitan Detention Center Guaynabo in 1993 became the first federal prison facility built outside the continental United States. Its primary mission is to house pretrial and holdover inmates as a service to the U.S. District Courts and the U.S. Marshals Service for the Districts of Puerto Rico and the U.S. Virgin Islands, according to Bureau of Prisons information.

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## HEALTH / DEATHS / ENVIRONMENTAL

### FEMA Dejaría De Vender Diésel A Los Hospitales (Primera Hora)

[Primera Hora \(PRI\)](#), October 18, 2017

**As of next week the FEMA may stop supplying diesel to the country's private hospitals. The possibility was discussed at a meeting on Saturday at the Emergency Operations Centre (COE), which has caused great consternation in the hospital industry. Four weeks after the passage of Hurricane Maria on the island, when the national emergency still prevails.**

A partir de la semana que viene la Agencia federal para el Manejo de Emergencias (**FEMA**, por sus siglas en inglés) podría dejar de suplirle diésel a los hospitales privados del País. La posibilidad fue discutida en una reunión el sábado en el Centro de Operaciones de Emergencia (COE), lo que ha causado gran consternación en la industria hospitalaria. Esto, a cuatro semanas del paso del Huracán María por la Isla, cuando aún prevalece la emergencia nacional.

Según datos del gobierno, hasta ayer en la tarde solo 17.70% de los clientes de la Autoridad de Energía Eléctrica (AEE) contaban con este servicio, mientras 34.57% de los abonados de la Autoridad de Acueductos y Alcanta-rillados (AAA) continúan sin agua potable.

"Necesitamos que **FEMA** nos siga brindando este servicio, independientemente de que la organización de salud tenga

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## **Hospitales Le Requieren Diésel A FEMA (El Nuevo Dia)**

[El Nuevo Día \(PRI\)](#), October 18, 2017

**The Association of Hospitals warned yesterday that FEMA contemplates the possibility of suspending the supply of diesel to hospital institutions that still operate through electricity generators**

La Asociación de Hospitales alertó ayer que la Agencia Federal para el Manejo de Emergencias (**FEMA**, por sus siglas en inglés) contempla la posibilidad de suspender el suministro de diésel a las instituciones hospitalarias que aún operan mediante generadores de electricidad.

Jaime Plá, presidente ejecutivo de la Asociación, que representa a los 69 hospitales del país, dijo que gran parte de las instituciones que representa han podido mantener operaciones durante las cuatro semanas que van desde el paso del huracán María gracias a los generadores eléctricos, y que aún hoy necesitan del diésel.

Plá indicó que ayer, cuando más del 80% de la isla permanecía sin servicio de energía eléctrica, había 44 hospitales.

Necesaria la electricidad

Plá relató que, debido a la intermitencia del servicio eléctrico, crearon un grupo de trabajo para establecer un sistema más fluido de diésel a hospitales, Centros 330 y Centros de Diagnóstico y Tratamiento (CDT) mediante un contacto más directo con los proveedores de diésel, especialmente con las compañías más grandes: Puma, Total, Peerless y American Petroleum.

“Pero, mientras continúe la emergencia, necesitamos que **FEMA** siga supliendo diésel a los hospitales”, insistió.

“Hay una intención de ellos (**FEMA**) de poner otras prioridades, pero nosotros le hicimos la salvedad de que quien ha estado llevando la carga de salud son las instituciones privadas, que incluye una gama amplia de servicios, no solo hospitales, sino médicos, laboratorios, rayos X y Centros 330, entre otros”, señaló.

Plá reclamó, además, que estos servicios han continuado brindándose aun cuando no han podido facturar a los planes médicos por los problemas con las telecomunicaciones y la electricidad.

“El diésel requería dinero, una liquidez rápida, y aun así los hospitales han seguido dando servicio, muchos sin poder facturar (a los planes médicos por los servicios brindados) al no tener sistemas (de conexión de internet), especialmente los hospitales fuera del área metropolitana”, dijo.

Cruz, por su parte, relató que, incluso cuando en el Hospital de Niños San Jorge ha vuelto la energía eléctrica, necesitan de los generadores porque las constantes interrupciones del servicio ponen en riesgo la atención a sus pacientes.

Dijo que el servicio de energía eléctrica ha estado más estable esta semana que la anterior, cuando, dijo, necesitaron del apoyo de su generador para no interrumpir los servicios.

Por su parte, el administrador del Hospital del Maestro, Jorge Torres, relató una experiencia similar, y dijo que, aunque ya tienen servicio de energía que “va y viene”, continúan apoyándose en su generador cuando lo necesitan.

“**FEMA** solo nos sirvió 1,000 galones (de diésel) al principio, por el cual nos van a facturar en algún momento. Pero, básicamente, hemos corrido (con el suministro de diésel) a nivel privado. Hubo mucho assessment (evaluación) de ellos (**FEMA**), pero se quedaba ahí”, dijo.

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## **Langley Medics Deploy To Puerto Rico (Newport News Daily Press)**

By Hugh Lessig

[Newport News \(VA\) Daily Press](#), October 18, 2017



A medical team has deployed from Langley Air Force Base to provide help for hurricane victims in Puerto Rico.

Nearly 90 airmen from the 633rd Medical Group will set up and operate a 25-bed field hospital unit, according to a news release. They left Langley in three flights, starting Oct. 15 and ending Wednesday.

The Langley team will command additional airmen from Eglin AFB in Florida and Nellis AFB in Nevada. All gathered at Langley to fly to Puerto Rico together. The team will establish an acute care clinic in Aguadilla in northwest Puerto Rico.

The team was put on standby about three weeks ago, said Col. Patricia Tate, a senior nurse with the 633rd.

The Expeditionary Medical Support field hospital can handle surgery, primary and dental care, and prepare casualties to be evacuated. It is designed to be set up quickly.

During a training exercise at Langley held one year ago, members of the 633rd set up their operation and treated airmen who needed annual exams or who had minor ailments. It added a dose of realism to the exercise.

They practiced teamwork, communication and noticed little things, such as a wheeled stool set on uneven ground. It may sound trivial, but it could become a distraction over the course of a long day.

In Puerto Rico, the Langley airmen will support the broader effort undertaken by the **Federal Emergency Management Agency**, according to Col. Jeffrey Lewis.

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## **BUSINESS**

### **She was 92, stranded in Puerto Rico nursing home. Her rescue: an Uber sent from Miami (Miami Herald)**

By Douglas Hanks

October 19, 2017 7:00 AM

[Miami Herald](#)

The good news out of San Juan came in a hurry for Natascha Otero-Santiago but it wouldn't last long: Her mother's 92-year-old friend, stranded on the fifth floor of a nursing home with no power, finally had a seat waiting for her on a private jet. It was leaving in 90 minutes.

Otero-Santiago, stuck in her office in Fort Lauderdale, had to find the elderly woman a ride and fast. So she pulled out her cellphone. And hailed an Uber.

"I was really surprised it was working," the public relations executive said, recalling the Oct. 4 rescue. "I got a driver right away."

Nearly a month after Hurricane Maria [wiped out most of Puerto Rico's electricity and cellular service](#), Uber has emerged as an app-based barometer for the most modern of recoveries. The ride-hailing service is operating at only about 20 percent of its capacity before the storm, largely confined to the San Juan area and its enclave of cell towers that at least offer spotty service.

"I've been busy," said Giovanni Gonzalez, an Uber driver in San Juan who went back to work about two weeks ago. With long gas lines, Gonzalez said many residents opted to hire a driver instead of using their own car. And Maria left driving a mess: Missing traffic signals worsen gridlock as police step in to direct traffic, he said, and rains can all but shut down a road.

"It rains for 10 minutes, and it's already flooded because everything is saturated," he said.



Another problem for Gonzalez is spotty cellular service. While phones are working enough for customers to hail him, Gonzalez said he can't count on a connection lasting long enough to record his full fare.

"When you have no cell service, it takes Uber a long time to end the trip," he said during a telephone interview. "There are some rides when I had to tell them: I did this ride, but it didn't record the trip."

Uber spokeswoman Julie Robinson said the company secured about 10,000 gallons of fuel for drivers to combat shortages, but that a lack of cellular service has idled almost the entire fleet. Robinson said only about 15 percent of the company's drivers were connected to the system last weekend.

Electricity is out for about 80 percent of the island. [An Oct. 18 report from the Federal Communications Commission](#) said 71 percent of the island's cellular towers are out of service.

San Juan's numbers look much better on the FCC report, with just 45 percent of its towers out of service — the lowest outage number for any area in the U.S. territory. Gonzalez said he's taken riders to Walmart for groceries, restaurants and shops. His most recent fare: a trip to a San Juan mall.

Still, Gonzalez said business hasn't been brisk enough for him to make it. He expects his trip to the mall to be his last as an Uber driver in Puerto Rico. The 29-year-old conducted a phone interview from the city's airport, where he was waiting for a flight to take him to a friend's home in Seattle.

"It's very difficult here," he said.

Nearly a month after Hurricane Maria wiped out most of Puerto Rico's electricity and cellular service, Uber has emerged as an app-based barometer for the most modern of recoveries.

Uber's skeleton fleet in San Juan was key to getting Margarita Berga de Lema to Miami two weeks after Maria hit. The 92-year-old retired airline executive was stranded without power in a nursing home, relying on daily food deliveries from staff.

Her best friend, Chia Otero, 89, was already in the Miami area when Maria hit, part of a long-planned visit with her daughter, Otero-Santiago. After the storm, the two were desperate to get Berga de Lema out of San Juan, especially after Maria left her without running water in the early days of recovery.

Otero-Santiago, director of digital strategy at Latin 2 Latin in Fort Lauderdale, grew up in Puerto Rico and had been part of the South Florida relief effort shuttling supplies to the island and helping residents flee to the mainland. Her volunteer work connected Otero-Santiago with the operator of an air ambulance leaving San Juan on October 4, with a last-minute opening for a seat.

"We called Margarita, because we knew we had to get her out of there as soon as possible," said Otero, who was in her daughter's office when news arrived about the open seat.

Berga de Lema got the call at 4 p.m. for a flight leaving 90 minutes later. She thought she could get to the airport herself. "She said, 'I'm calling my nephew,'" Otero recalled. "My daughter said, 'No, you're not calling anybody. We're sending you an Uber. He's on his way.'"

After tossing some clothes in a bag, Berga de Lema walked down five flight of steps to meet her driver, a man that Otero-Santiago's phone only identifies as Moises.

"He told me, 'Don't worry, lady,'" Berga de Lema said in an interview Wednesday from Miami. Traffic was bad, and Otero-Santiago's Uber app showed the car seeming to stop on its way to San Juan as the mother-and-daughter team followed the progress from Fort Lauderdale.

At one point, the pair in Florida had the pair in Puerto Rico on parallel phone conversations: the mother talking to Berga de Lema and the daughter to Moises. The driver drove his passenger to the private jet terminal, checking various runways until he found the waiting plane with the right tail numbers, completing the \$40 trip.

"Moises," Otero-Santiago said, "got five stars."

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## **Without power, Puerto Rico turns to radio for information - and company in the dark (Miami Herald)**

By Jim Wyss

October 17, 2017 5:13 PM

[Miami Herald](#)

SAN JUAN, Puerto Rico -- For several hours after Hurricane Maria slammed into the island of Puerto Rico, Jorge Blanco had an unexpected monopoly.

His station, Wapa Radio, was the only broadcaster — radio or television — still transmitting after the storm raked the U.S. territory with 110-mph winds.

Three weeks later, most media outlets are up and running again, and trying to feed the insatiable appetite for news post-Maria. But even now that the winds have died down, it's clear that the hurricane has dramatically changed the media landscape.

With 82 percent of the island still without electricity and many without cellphone service, radio has, once again, become a dominant player.

At Wapa Radio — AM 680 — Blanco said advertising is up more than 300 percent since the storm. Companies are using the radio both to advertise and to communicate with employees who no longer have phones or are scattered over the island.

Across Puerto Rico, people sit in their cars and huddle around battery-powered radios to find out where food distribution centers are, or in hopes of hearing from loved ones on call-in radio shows.

When Hurricane Mari hit Puerto Rico, it crippled the island's infrastructure. More than three weeks later, fewer than 20 percent of the population have power and that's changed the way people are getting their news. In this hard hit section of Toa Baja, locals said that radio was their only source of information.

Jim Wyss

Blanco is grateful for the new rush of advertisers but that doesn't mean his business is running without a hitch. Since the hurricane made landfall Sept. 20, he's been on a non-stop loop around the island trying to keep 10 generators full of diesel and functioning. And he fears he's one breakdown away from losing his ability to broadcast, as well as his advertisers.

"These are generators that are designed to work for days and weeks, not three or four months," he said. "I don't know how long they will last."

The government says it will have 95 percent of the power restored by Dec. 15, but many fear that goal is optimistic on a island that needs to replace at least 50,000 electricity poles and more than 6,500 miles worth of cable.

While radio is thriving, other media outlets haven't been as lucky. One of the island's largest newspapers, El Nuevo Dia, is warning staff members to prepare for layoffs blamed on declining ad sales after Maria, employees said.

Manuel Rodriguez, the lawyer and spokesman for the newspaper's labor union, said the paper was being short-sighted. The country needs print media more than ever right now, and storm-rattled employees need their jobs, he said.

"This is an incredibly complicated moment," Rodriguez said. "This is not the time to be threatening layoffs."

Also this week, Sistema TV — a channel that began broadcasting in the 1980s and focuses on public education — announced that it was closing its doors because of Maria.

Sajo Ruiz, the chief creative officer at the Sajo Garcia Alcazar advertising agency, said his company has lost at least \$2 million in business since the storm hit. Clients who had ad campaigns designed for television and online have pulled their business.



Social media campaigns have also ground to a halt amid the island's limited cellphone service. Ruiz said radio ads and truck-mounted loudspeakers have, once again, become viable and attractive options.

"We've been pushed back in time several decades," he said. "We have to reinvent the way we deliver messages."

Puerto Rico has been trapped in a decade-long recession and, even before the storm, unemployment was running in excess of 10 percent. And it's likely that some advertisers may not survive this latest hardship.

"We're hoping that the electrical grid can come back up in the metropolitan area," Ruiz said. "But it needs to happen fast or we're going to start seeing massive layoffs and companies are going to have to go out of business."

As both a television presenter and a radio host, Rafael Lenin López, has seen both sides of Maria. On his morning news show, on Radio Isla, the commercial breaks have grown from about four minutes pre-Maria to about eight minutes now, as advertisers pile in.

"Contrary to predictions and global trends in the industry, radio proved itself in this circumstance to be vital," López said. "It became something of a first responder and the first line of help."

Indeed, local government relied on Wapa Radio to send out emergency information after the storm, with the governor's office buying fuel for the station's generators in those initial hours.

There were two reasons the station managed to stay on the air, Blanco said. One was because the station's 10 employees dropped everything they were doing and volunteered their energy and time, some of them working 36 hours straight. The second reason was because the station has maintained its old, outdated technology. Other stations went off the air when their fiber optic cables were severed. But Wapa had backup microwave transmitters, he said.

López, the anchorman, said the power of radio hit him the day after the storm, when he turned the dial and found only dead air.

"It gave you a feeling of desolation," he said of the silent airwaves. "And it made you realize how important radio is just to make you feel like you have some company."

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## **Despite Hurricane Maria Damage, Puerto Rico Plans for a Merry Christmas (Travel Market)**

by [Richard D'Ambrosio](#) / October 16, 2017

### **[Travel Market](#)**

With nine out of ten homes still without electricity, and first responders packing San Juan hotels, you might think that Puerto Rico would feel the Grinch stole their Christmas.

But the country's tourism industry, battered and bruised but still standing, is staking a claim for its future – setting its sights on welcoming any and all visitors by Christmas.

Jose Izquierdo, executive director at the Puerto Rico Tourism Company, noted how San Juan withstood Hurricane Maria's Category 5 winds. "San Juan is a very sturdy city. We were pretty much unscathed throughout the storm, and after a full assessment, the outlook is positive."

The tourism agency has been participating in the three phases of recovery. The first – relief – ended Oct. 5, focusing mostly on providing rapid assistance to residents and the tourism industry. This included helping coordinate volunteer efforts with hotels, airlines and cruise lines.

Currently, Puerto Rico is engaged in the rebuilding phase, including taking an inventory of all of the major tourism venues and attractions like the marketplaces and beaches. This phase should last until Thanksgiving.

**Airlines, many hotels, some attractions operating**



The Luis Muñoz Marín International Airport (SJU) is fully operational with scheduled domestic and international flights. Rafael Hernández Airport (Aguadilla), Mercedita Airport (Ponce), José Aponte de la Torre Airport (Ceiba), Fernando Luis Ribas Dominicci Airport (Isla Grande) and the Antonio Rivera Rodríguez Airport (Vieques) are operational and offering limited service.

San Juan Harbor is open and resumed homeport operations this past weekend with the departure of Royal Caribbean Cruise Line's Adventure of the Seas. Over two thousand travelers are expected to travel in and out of San Juan to embark on these journeys and more than 45 cruise departures are already scheduled from San Juan in the coming weeks.

The Mall of San Juan and Plaza Las Américas are open for shoppers, and the Puerto Rico Museum of Art in Santurce and the Ponce Museum of Art are open for visitors. Bacardi tours are expected to begin welcoming guests Nov. 1, and El Morro and other San Juan historic sites are expected to open in the coming weeks.

Eighty-four hotels are open with most taking new reservations. For a full list of the status of hotels, travel agents can visit the [Puerto Rico Now website](#).

Most of these hotels are already taking reservations for future vacations, or will be by Oct. 31, Izquierdo said. "FEMA, first responders, and volunteers with the NGOs are packing the hotels," he said. "Even bed and breakfasts are putting their rooms available for relief."

Izquierdo acknowledged that there was some erosion on San Juan's beaches, and he has been posting pictures of the waterfront and other popular venues through his Twitter handle to demonstrate how the city is getting back to normal. "By Dec. 20th, leisure travelers will be sure to enjoy our beaches," Izquierdo said.

#### **El Yunque sustained severe damage**

The news is not so good for tourism outside San Juan. "In the far west, I've seen some pictures. It will take some time."

An initial inventory has been conducted on natural attractions, like the 28,400-acre El Yunque National Forest, said Izquierdo.

A [Washington Post story](#) described the rainforest, the only one in the United States outside of Hawaii, as being decimated.

The U.S. Department of Agriculture's Forest Service web site currently says: "El Yunque National Forest will remain closed until further notice."

A Post reporter described how "ferns and palms have been stripped of their fronds, and hardwood trees snapped in half like twigs. What was once a blanket of emerald green draped across the mountainous landscape is now a brown pile of detritus."

"The slow return of these island gems could impact reopening timelines for those ultra-luxury properties dependent on their proximity to the parks," Izquierdo said.

#### **Positive outlook for the future**

The final pillar in Puerto Rico's plan is recovery, Izquierdo said, which he described as a "gradual restart to business as usual for tourism," including marketing to generate future visits.

During this phase, "our messaging has to be a little less than 'despacito,'" Izquierdo said, borrowing from the popular song that this year invigorated locals and tourists alike with the Puerto Rican zest for life. "Our message will be more about our resilience, that tourism is up and running."

Izquierdo called the Dec. 20th target date for this phase as "conservative."

#### **Voluntourism and acts of kindness**

Mainland travel agencies could be interested in the voluntourism packages that are increasingly popular, Izquierdo said. "It's becoming a thing here. We've seen some of our hotels working on packages to do that, coordinating with NGOs on the ground to invite travelers in to assist in the rebuilding."

One market that has been open to these trips has been what the island calls the "Diaspora," Puerto Ricans who moved to the mainland but still have family and friends on the island.



One local operator, Local Guest, has set up a [web page on Indiegogo](#), “to provide relief and volunteers to hard-hit communities.”

“We’re not only working locally with tour operators, but also at the corporate level, with the major flags down here, Marriott and Hilton, to work on packages,” said Izquierdo, who feels optimistic in part due to one of the core strengths of the island, its hospitality.

A [Washington Post reporter](#) who was trapped on the island with his family during the hurricane, wrote a story about his experience, praising the locals for how they protected his family throughout the ordeal.

“There are so many positive stories, acts of kindness, rising out of this struggle, that we will carry with us as we rebuild,” Izquierdo. “These experiences will make us stronger.”

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## **SURVIVOR’ STORIES**

### **Maria survivors discuss Puerto Rico's recovery (Winchester Star)**

By ONOFRIO CASTIGLIA

Oct 18, 2017

[Winchester, Va., Star](#)

WINCHESTER — Yanni Collazo and his fiancée, Ivelisse Velez, had been planning to come to the U.S. mainland from their native Puerto Rico for some time, but on their own terms, after finishing school; still, for the time being, they’re happy to be away from the devastation successive hurricanes have wrought on their home island.

“Every day you wake up and there is a different task, and it’s not like you go to [a job] ..., it’s just to try and survive the day,” said Collazo, 22. To contact family in Virginia, he and some people from his neighborhood pooled gasoline and drove to San Juan, the island’s capital, “just to make a call ..., just to say, ‘Hey, we’re alive.’”

Puerto Rico is a U.S. territory with a population of about 3.4 million. After sustaining damage during Hurricane Irma in mid-September, the island took a direct hit from Hurricane Maria two weeks later, which left the island without electricity and in a shambles. Gov. Ricardo Rosselló has called the situation the “biggest catastrophe” in the island’s history.

Four weeks later, most of the island still does not have food, water, power or phone service. In many cases, degraded homes are insufficient in providing shelter for children or the elderly. Relief and assistance have arrived on the island, but anger and resentment are mounting over the stated insufficiency of the response and the dismissive messages of President Donald Trump.

“If we are not considered in equal terms to Florida, the Virgin Islands, Texas and so forth, Congress will have to deal with a worsened humanitarian crisis, massive exodus from the island, health care problems and more,” Rosselló said in a recent statement, referring to other U.S. lands hit by recent hurricanes.

Collazo is from Canovanas, a mountain municipality east of San Juan. Velez, 21, is from Vega Baja, a town near the ocean east of San Juan. He was studying mathematics at college and was three classes away from graduating when Maria came; she was studying biomedical science and had a few semesters left.

On Wednesday evening, the couple relaxed together in a Frederick County apartment belonging to Velez’s brother, who is a manager at the local Kraft Foods plant and has lived here for about five years. Velez’s stepfather and mother, who is receiving cancer treatments, are also in Winchester. The family has been reunited here since Saturday.



“People got desperate in the first week,” Collazo said, referring to water and power needs. He recalled weathering the storm at Velez’s family home in Vega Baja — the roads turned to rivers and the back deck on the house ripped off during the storm.

“It felt like the whole house is going down,” Velez said. “We got really scared then.”

But the house made it, albeit badly damaged. After that it was patching together a survival strategy to carry the family beyond the canned food and bottled water they had managed to get at the store before the rains came.

“We waited five hours to get gas,” Velez said, recalling the armed police and military guarding the gas stations. Everything had to be purchased with cash, a problem for some families. The most immediate work came in clearing the roads as best they could, so people could move around. Collazo said his car was pretty much destroyed by fallen trees.

In their time following the hurricane, the family did not see any relief efforts reach them, Collazo said, though they heard helicopters passing overhead. “We managed by ourselves.”

Once non-military flights started leaving the island again, Velez’s brother managed to get them plane tickets at a good price and they left. They have no plans to go back.

“I’m worried,” Velez said of her grandparents, who live in a cement home and at least have a gasoline-powered generator, which they use sparingly. There’s also the millions of islanders (most of the population) who don’t live in coastal metro areas, but small towns deep in the island’s mainland — most of them probably don’t have generators, or anything else. “They don’t even have basic needs near them.”

Basic needs and related logistics are a problem on the rugged island.

Katie Williams, a 1999 graduate of James Wood High School who works in San Juan (she declined to name her employer), said in a phone call from Puerto Rico that resources on the island fluctuate. On Wednesday about 17 percent of the island had power — “but that’s generation, not distribution,” she said. “I don’t know anyone, personally, who has power at their house. ... Nobody has drinkable water.”

One problem compounds another, Williams said. For example, a Boil Water Advisory is in effect island-wide, but “how do you boil water without power?” Similarly the lack of communications logistics keeps the government from effectively getting the message to boil water out to residents. “There’s a lot of old folks who are suffering.”

There are resources on the ground, Williams said. “It’s just not happening fast enough” beyond the big coastal cities, where only a fraction of the people live.

Williams said she knows of misinformation on the mainland and political cat-fighting surrounding the crisis. Trump has been heavily criticized for his response, which has included a series of tweets blaming the island for much of its own misfortune and suggesting that federal aid will have to end altogether.

“It just makes you crazy,” Williams said, adding that consistently witnessing the trauma on the island takes a mental toll on mainland workers there; one of her co-workers had an emotional breakdown this week. “I feel like people just don’t understand, and maybe it’s the same with [Trump]... how bad it is here.”

Williams said she likes to think about the resilience of the Puerto Rican people.

“Everyone is getting tired, but there’s still that little hope.”

Resilience and brotherhood are also a pleasant topic for Macy Guthridge, a Middletown resident who has, since January, been living on the Coast Guard base in Aguadilla on Puerto Rico’s northwestern tip.

“It was like an apocalyptic movie,” Guthridge, a 25-year-old Sherando High School graduate, said of the sights following the hurricane.

Guthridge — who called Puerto Rico her “favorite place” — is scheduled to start boot camp soon; her husband, Travis Guthridge, U.S. Army, is stationed in Aquadilla and she will be as well.

On Wednesday, she was home in Middletown with her two children, ages 5 and 6, who were sent to stay with grandparents after the hurricane; she goes back this coming Wednesday.

At the base, they do not have water or power, Guthridge said. There are generators, which she knows most islanders don't have.

Travis Guthridge is a mechanic and recently could not fix a vehicle meant to carry water to an inland area — so he used his personal four-cylinder Toyota Tacoma to get a pallet of bottled water and a “water buffalo” (a large water tank) to the people.

“The people in the mountains ... they are stuck,” Macy Guthridge said. She worries about malnourishment in children and a lack of medicines to control disease.

“Last time I was there they had one hospital up and running on the whole island.”

At the airports, crowds of people are trying to leave, hoping to get commercial tickets at “\$2,500 a pop,” Guthridge said. “My family, being military, we wouldn't be able to afford [that].”

Guthridge also said she knows of misinformation on the mainland.

“Some people say wrong things when they don't know full situations.” But she stressed the coming together among people on the island. “There wasn't a ‘side,’ there wasn't a ‘we,’ there wasn't a ‘you,’ there was an ‘us.’”

Guthridge said the devastation runs deep; even when the infrastructure is rebuilt, people's businesses and livelihoods are gone. “They have nothing.” Still, she is optimistic the island will pull through. “Day-by-day, little-by-little, it does get better.”

Collazo and Velez say they are enthusiastic about their future and ready to work hard to complete their educations. To get on their feet, he has applied for a job at Costco and she has started training to work at Victoria's Secret in the Apple Blossom Mall. And they are ready for civic engagement as well. One of the first things they did after getting to the mainland was register to vote.

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## **Stranded by Maria, Puerto Ricans Get Creative to Survive (NY Times – English & Spanish)**

**Three weeks after Hurricane Maria devastated Puerto Rico, people across the island, especially those in remote areas, are improvising ways to stay alive.**

By CAITLIN DICKERSON

OCT. 16, 2017

[New York Times](#)

- [Same story, Spanish version](#)

CHARCO ABAJO, Utuado, P.R. — When Hurricane Maria swept away the bridge that led in and out of Charco Abajo, a remote village in the mountainous inland of Puerto Rico, Carlos Ocasio and Pablo Perez Medina decided that they could not wait for help to arrive.

When the wind and rain calmed, the welder and the retired handyman climbed off the edge of the bridge and jumped down onto a pile of debris. They crossed the Vivi River, whose waters had risen to their chests, and walked several miles to a hardware store, where they bought a cable, a metal harness and wheels.

They built a pulley that now spans the gap where the bridge once was, and attached a shopping cart, after removing its legs and wheels, which they have been using to transfer food, water and supplies across the divide. Though aid groups began to arrive a week later, the two men, both 60 years old, raised a sign to describe how it felt in Charco Abajo immediately after the storm. It reads “Campamento de los Olvidados,” Spanish for “Camp of the Forgotten.”

Nearly a month after Maria devastated this island commonwealth, life remains a struggle. Even as some assistance has arrived, residents have learned to improvise without power or running water,



especially those who live in remote areas, who waited the longest for help from emergency responders and for whom recovery is the furthest off.

The winding roads that once paved a lush, tree-lined route from San Juan, the capital, to Utuado now appear post-apocalyptic. Leafless, branchless trees, denuded by Maria's winds, are tangled around one another and spill out into the highway. Rock formations, once covered with vegetation, have been stripped bare. Permanently windblown palm trees look like half-shaven heads. And houses that were once tucked neatly into the hills are now roofless, irreparably damaged wrecks sliding down the sides of them.

All that remains of the many wooden, one-room houses that once dotted the hills here are tall and narrow three-sided concrete structures that were built to protect bathroom plumbing, and which are now surrounded by piles of rubble.

Examples of the creativity of people living in the mountains are on display across the countryside. All day and night, people who live in the mountains cluster along roadways to bathe and do laundry in places where locals have redirected water from higher up that spews out of PVC pipes. They fill empty bottles and buckets, which they use to clean their homes and flush toilets.

But for some, the situation is more fragile than it is for others.

More than 100 bridges in Puerto Rico were damaged by Maria and 18 have been closed indefinitely, according to Ivonne Rosario, a spokeswoman for Puerto Rico's transportation department. An unknown number collapsed during the storm, leaving entire communities like Charco Abajo stranded.

Down a series of dirt roads that are still covered with mangled trees, fallen power lines and fiber-optic cables, Charco Abajo is home to about 120 people, mostly adults who are retired or unemployed, and a few children.

At 47, Lilia Rivera hobbles at the pace of someone decades older. She speaks in a whisper because her vocal cords are partly paralyzed. And she is hypersensitive to allergens — the slightest whiff of smoke, chemicals or perfume can cause her throat to close.

Her remote location and health problems, caused by exposure to pesticides, have made her doubly vulnerable to Hurricane Maria's destruction.

"At the beginning, I was asked if I wanted to leave," she said, sitting with her cane resting in her lap in her light-filled living room on a rural hillside in the Utuado municipality. "But wherever I go, the environment needs to be controlled. That doesn't exist in a shelter."

Despite having been trapped in their homes for three weeks and subsisting on dwindling reserves of bottled water and ready-to-eat military meals, some residents are surprisingly at ease. On the day they were visited by a reporter, they were quick to point out that other Puerto Ricans were living in worse circumstances, though it was hard to imagine whom they could have been talking about.

Marilyn Luciano, who has taken on the unofficial role of village secretary, went door-to-door to check on her neighbors. She chatted casually about her son who lives in Florida and was recently married. Ms. Luciano said that the laid-back spirit of people who live in the mountains of Puerto Rico was helping them weather the storm. "This is what we do," she said. "It's who we are."

Even Ms. Rivera and her family were hesitant to complain. She, her husband, three children and one grandchild all live together and were born and raised in Utuado.

Her husband, Leonardo Medina, a retired distribution worker in the pharmaceutical industry, was busy chopping fallen trees outside their home when they were visited by a reporter. After the family lost power, he connected Ms. Rivera's oxygen tank to a car battery, which is now powering it through an inverter.

Mr. Medina said that if his wife's health were to begin to deteriorate, he knew that his neighbors would not hesitate to help him carry her across the river. Ms. Rivera chimed in. "We Puerto Ricans are fighters and hard workers," she said. "My life depends on it."



A version of this article appears in print on October 17, 2017, on Page A18 of the New York edition with the headline: Stranded by a Hurricane, Creative Puerto Ricans Improvise to Stay Alive.

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## EMIGRATION

### ['Millions' of Puerto Ricans may move to the mainland in hurricane's wake](#)

(Daily Kos)

[By Laura Clawson](#)

Wednesday Oct 18, 2017 · 11:29 AM SAWST

[Daily Kos](#)

Puerto Rico continues to face disaster and desperation without adequate support from the federal government. Even the [official death toll](#) shows neglect—officially 48 people have died, but a Vox investigation put the number [closer to 450](#). Even as supplies, from **FEMA** and from private donations, become more available on Puerto Rico, getting them to every household remains a challenge. The mayor of the town of Aguas Buenas is [going door to door](#) distributing food and water, but:

The town still needs more tarps to replace roofs ripped off by the storm. Thunderstorms and downpours this week have made that need even more acute.

As for what else he will find and what else he will need, that's hard to know. While more than 8,000 homes have been checked on, Mayor Garcia has about 1,500 more to go.

The devastation from the hurricane, following years of economic crisis, will likely [lead to a mass exodus](#). That will make Puerto Rico's recovery still more difficult—the island already faces a shortage of medical personnel, for instance, which will only get worse as the people who can leave do so—and it will have an effect on the cities and states that Puerto Ricans move to:

Cities popular with Puerto Ricans, such as Orlando, Hartford, Conn., and Springfield Mass., are bracing for more students, many of whom come from families living below the poverty level. Politicians, meanwhile, are weighing the potentially significant electoral consequences of a wave of migrants who are expected to lean Democratic — particularly in Florida, which already boasts half a million residents who are Puerto Rican-born.

At a news conference last week, Puerto Rico Gov. Ricardo Rosselló warned that without significant help, “millions” could leave for the U.S. mainland. Those leaving are most likely to end up in Florida, Texas and Pennsylvania, which have been the most popular destinations for Puerto Ricans in recent years.

You'd think that electoral concern might shake loose some Republican votes for more significant government aid, but apparently contempt for Puerto Ricans (and possibly confidence in voter suppression tactics) is winning the day.

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### **Father leaves Puerto Rico to protect his family (WUSA)**

**Puerto Ricans are leaving the island -- by the thousands.**

Stephanie Ramirez, WUSA 11:28 PM. EDT October 18, 2017

[WUSA, CBS, Washington DC](#)

WASHINGTON (WUSA9) - It's almost as if he's a refugee, in his own country.



"A week ago I decided to look for a safe haven for them, for my mother and for my family. That's why we're here," said Edgar Garcia.

Relying on relatives, Edgar is one many Islanders now in the states with his family, hoping to protect them from the Hurricane Maria's aftermath in Puerto Rico.

Garcia says he couldn't be more grateful for the supplies and donations, but almost a month later, he still says "Inland, we're not receiving it."

"It's like a terror movie," Garcia said, describing the past few weeks.

He showed WUSA9 the photos, which included the cement wall to his family's home on the ground.

Garcia called his Hamburger restaurant in Guaynabo, Puerto Rico a total loss. He also says his finance's hair salon in San Juan suffered damage.

The couple decided to enroll their son in school in Florida, where they can stay with family.

On Wednesday, WUSA9 spoke to Garcia as he was visiting his brother in Virginia.

Also in the state tonight, was a "Virginia is United for Puerto Rico" fundraiser. It was hosted by Virginia's First Lady, Dorothy McAuliffe.

Virginia's First Lady says money raised is going towards the fund Puerto Rico's First Lady created. It's called, Unidos por Puerto Rico or United for Puerto Rico.

Wilson Hardware Kitchen and Bar gave its space for the event, along with 25% of its food and drink proceeds.

"The main problem is the level of devastation. We never before got more than 80% of the Island without power. We still have 80% of the Island without power. At this time, less than 50% of the Island is with running water. Communications are on the verge of a collapse again," said the Congresswoman to Puerto Rico Congresswoman, Jenniffer González-Colón.

"When you see families struggling with clean water, you can't imagine that in American 2017, this is what we're seeing," said Mrs. McAuliffe.

At the Arlington fundraiser is where WUSA9 also found Garcia. His facial expression looked like one of exhaustion and despair as he looked down at the restaurant table.

Earlier, Garcia said, "it's more than hard. I got here a week ago, making arrangements to keep my family safe here. And I cannot sleep. I just can't wait to get back. It's a feeling of, that I do not belong here."

"I have to go back and work," said Garcia, "I have to get back, I will be back. Yes it's very, very difficult feeling."

Garcia says once his family is situated in Florida, he will return to Puerto Rico to help rebuild. He does not want to bring his immediate family back until that happens.

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## EDUCATION

### **A Month After Hurricane Maria, Puerto Rico Misses 'Ambitious Target' for Reopening Schools (The 74)**

By [Mark Keierleber](#) | October 18, 2017

#### [The 74](#)

A month after Hurricane Maria devastated much of Puerto Rico, public schools on the island are slowly beginning to reopen — though classes haven't resumed. Instead, the facilities are being used as community centers and shelters.

Puerto Rico's education department had initially set a goal of having a majority of schools up and running by Monday, but that plan has now been scrapped.



In a column [published Tuesday in The Hill](#), Puerto Rico's education secretary, Julia Keleher, called a Monday reopening an "ambitious target," noting that 167 schools had reopened so far. But many of the island's 1,113 schools, which served roughly 350,000 students before the storm hit, were damaged beyond repair. Flocks of Puerto Rican children and educators [have fled in recent weeks](#) to the U.S. mainland.

"Despite scarce water and electricity, Puerto Rican students have been eager to get back to learning," Keleher wrote.

By Wednesday, however, she acknowledged that her ambitious target was not attainable, the [Associated Press](#) reported, and the official start date for Puerto Rico's schools was pushed back to Oct. 30 at the earliest.

On Wednesday, the number of schools opened as community centers was bumped up to 190, and an additional 99 buildings were being used as shelters for families displaced by the storm. For school buildings to reopen, they [must be deemed structurally sound](#) and have running water. Working electricity isn't required.

After more than a month of missed school days following Hurricanes Irma and Maria, the academic calendar has been extended from May 31 to July 15, and additional changes, including a lengthened school day, are under consideration.

"We must seize this opportunity to re-envision the future for Puerto Rico's youth," Keleher wrote in The Hill. "I am determined to see how we can not only get Puerto Rican children back on track, but also open up new opportunities for them along the way. I am committed to see how our educational system can build back better so that we make smart investments in the next generation."

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## **CHARITY / HUMAN INTEREST / VOLUNTEER EFFORTS**

### **Video: Bringing Safe Water To The Families Of Puerto Rico (Operation Blessing International)**

Oct. 18, 2017

[Operation Blessing International](#)

Many may think that the worst is now over for the people of Puerto Rico after they were struck by Hurricane Maria. But the truth is that the residents of this island have a long road ahead of them on their way back to normalcy. The biggest need on the island right now is access to safe water. That's where Operation Blessing steps in. We are utilizing all of our expertise and repertoire of tools to get safe, potable water to the families of Puerto Rico. Watch the video to learn more.

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### **Veterans deploy themselves to help Puerto Rico relief (CNN)**

#### **Warfighter Disaster Response Team fights red tape**

By BILL WEIR AND RACHEL CLARKE , CNN

Posted: 12:23 AM, October 19, 2017 Updated: 1:54 AM, October 19, 2017

[CNN NewsSource](#)

MAYAGUEZ, Puerto Rico (CNN) - The cavalry is here, at an abandoned airport in the far west of Puerto Rico.

Not a traditional military unit, but a bunch of guys who call themselves the Warfighter Disaster Response Team.



They're veterans of the wars in Iraq and Afghanistan, and when they see a need, they just go. Red tape frustrates them, especially when people are hurting and they can help, so they deploy themselves -- for free.

They've made an abandoned airport in Mayaguez their base, bedding down here and using it to collect aid and work out how to get it to remote communities.

Eric Carlson, one of the volunteer first responders, gauges the impact they have had so far.

"I think we're up to 30,000 meals, 35,000 meals," he says. "And that just with the small trucks we have and by hook and by crook getting supplies."

Collecting food, water and medical resources, and getting them out to people is still a tall order in this remote part of the island so devastated by Hurricane Maria four weeks ago.

Mudslides are visible from the air all over this mountainous region. Roads have been washed away and, with little hope of repair crews coming any time soon, residents are doing what they can to build their own bridges.

So when Carlson and his comrades turn up to help, villagers remember them.

"They were beautiful people," says Jose Rodriguez with a smile. "They purified the water. They were drinking it right there."

Carlson isn't picking a fight with the Federal Emergency Management Agency (**FEMA**) or anyone trying to help, he just feels there are some simple, practical, sensible ways to do more.

"There is a lot of stuff getting done but it could've been done so much better if they just brought the National Guard," he says.

Rotate in guardsmen who are already committed to a two-week training deployment, he suggests; put them in planes flown by the Air National Guard that also has to get its hours in.

Just give the orders: "All you guys are getting on planes in rotations and going down to Puerto Rico, 15,000 at a time. Water purification units, construction units, engineers, you guys are all coming down every two weeks."

But in a nearby community -- across one of those treacherous mudslides -- we find a man with a different point of view.

Justo Hernandez, **FEMA's** deputy federal coordinating officer for this recovery, says he has no need for such reinforcements.

He says 4,500 National Guardsmen are coming in. And while the military presence in this US territory will be just a fraction of what the United States sent to Haiti after its devastating earthquake, any more could actually be damaging.

"We have all hands on deck at this time," Hernandez says. "I don't know how much more we can bring without impacting the economy of Puerto Rico."

"If I keep flooding the place with food and water, when are the local neighbors going to open the supermarkets?"

Still, he pledges that **FEMA** will be in Puerto Rico and the Virgin Islands for as long as the recovery takes.

Back at the abandoned Mayaguez airport, suddenly things are humming.

Alongside the veterans are troops in more traditional uniforms. These are some of the National Guardsmen **FEMA's** Hernandez was talking about. Five hundred men who've been sitting at home in Tennessee and Kentucky for two weeks, just waiting for the call to grab their bags and get here.

More are coming, they say, as they unload supplies and get things organized.

This airport had already been commandeered, but now much-needed reinforcements are here too. Many people are waiting and relying on them.

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## HURRICANE SEASON

### **If It Quacks Like A Hurricane: Time To Rethink ‘Post-tropical Cyclone’ Terminology** (Washington Post)

By Bryan Norcross

[Washington Post](#), October 18, 2017

The author, Bryan Norcross, is senior hurricane specialist at The Weather Channel and author of “My Hurricane Andrew Story.”

Hurricane-force winds from the freakishly strong Atlantic storm called Ophelia raked Ireland on Monday. At least three people died, roofs were ripped off and businesses and transportation shut down across the country. The Irish Meteorological Service had been talking about the storm for days, so residents and public officials were well-informed that an unusually strong windstorm was coming.

As Ophelia was on final approach to Ireland, the storm merged with a cold front and a robust upper-atmospheric disturbance, morphing into a strong so-called post-tropical cyclone with an atmospheric structure like a powerful nor'easter.

The National Hurricane Center dutifully changed the storm's name to Post-Tropical Cyclone Ophelia in its advisories, acknowledging the meteorological transition. According to the meteorological dictionary, Ophelia was indeed a post-tropical cyclone — an organized low-pressure system that originated in the tropics, but no longer had tropic characteristics, scientifically speaking.

We are confronted with the obvious question, however: Is Post-Tropical Cyclone Ophelia really the best name for a weather system that is forecast to hit land with hurricane-force winds? No. And this is not a theoretical question for us.

In 2012, Hurricane Sandy technically morphed into Post-Tropical Cyclone Sandy before it hit land and wreaked havoc on the most populated part of the United States.

At the Weather Channel, where I work, we thought that post-tropical felt too much like “post-danger,” so we switched the name to Superstorm Sandy the moment that the meteorologically accurate but innately less threatening-sounding post-tropical nomenclature took effect.

The Irish and the Brits handled Ophelia somewhat differently. This type of storm — though not as potent as Ophelia — frequently has an impact on the British Isles in the fall and winter. To elevate and coordinate public communications, the British and Irish meteorological services got together a couple of years ago and came up with a naming scheme for potentially disruptive storms. A typical version of this storm would have been called Storm Brian had it not been born out of Hurricane Ophelia. In these situations, the naming system wisely calls for carrying on with the tropical name. Brian was pushed onto the next storm, which is due over the weekend.

Some media outlets in Britain referred to the system as Storm Ophelia, adopting their standard winter-storm-naming paradigm. The government weather services generally called it Ex-Hurricane Ophelia, which elevated the threat above a typical winter storm — a smart move. Some Irish and British media went with the full Monty and used simply Hurricane Ophelia, aligning the name with the hurricane-force winds that were forecast.

To be clear, whenever a post-tropical cyclone has posed a threat to land, the National Hurricane Center's advisories and discussions have accurately and fully highlighted the danger. Most people, however, never see those bulletins, and increasingly the headline is the message. With the decline of websites and television — except in rare extreme events — and the ascent of mobile-phone apps as the platform of choice for public consumption of weather information, it has become increasingly important that the salient point of any weather alert is succinct, clear and fits on a mobile-phone screen.

The fact is, when Hurricane Ophelia linguistically morphed into Post-Tropical Cyclone Ophelia in National Hurricane Center bulletins, the intrinsic colloquial message was that the storm had been



downgraded. The meteorological dictionary might say otherwise, but that's what people thought, and will always think.

Words matter. And if the words imply a message that is not intended, they need to be reevaluated.

The solution is to separate the nomenclature used to label a storm from its technical meteorological status. Currently, the name of the storm describes the bucket in which the weather system resides. Those buckets are differentiated by the strength of the strongest winds in the storm, the organization of the circulation, and the energy source by which the storms run — tropical and northern storms run off different meteorological processes. When a storm moves from one meteorological bucket to another, the name changes, even though the threat to land may not. Therein lies the issue.

A more modern system, which takes into account the short-form nature of mobile-phone communications, would be to retain the hurricane label through a transition to technical post-tropical-cyclone status if the storm still presents the threat of hurricane conditions on land. The meteorological transition would be noted in the text of the bulletin, of course, allowing for verification after the fact, but the unintended consequence of renaming a storm with a continuing hurricane-wind hazard to something that sounds less threatening would be removed.

Hurricane Ophelia would have remained Hurricane Ophelia until there was no longer a threat to land from hurricane-force winds. Hurricane Sandy would have remained Hurricane Sandy through landfall.

While it seems obvious that maintaining the hurricane label fits the Ophelia and Sandy scenarios, there are other situations that are less clear. Mother Nature's storms don't always fit nicely into our buckets. But the underlying premise is an important rule for modern communications. The name and the headline must substantially convey the threat from the storm to a user without an understanding of the meteorological technicalities. Otherwise, the weather alerts will be blunted at best and probably misunderstood.

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## OPINION

### **Mike Tighe: Another reason to help Puerto Ricans: Our lives depend on them** (LaCrosse Tribune)

By Mike Tighe

Oct. 19, 2017

[LaCrosse \(Wis\) Tribune](#)

Now that more of the truth is out, let the record show that Puerto Ricans aren't just slugs waiting for federal handouts but rather, they are an industrious sort who produce a lot of medical supplies to keep mainland Americans alive and kicking.

Indeed, mainland U.S. shortages of vital medical supplies manufactured in Puerto Rico could amount to karmic twists to the federal government's lackadaisical initial response to the deadly destruction visited upon the U.S. Virgin Islands and Puerto Rico from hurricanes Irma and Maria just two weeks apart last month.

Many attributed the initial foot-dragging aid to the fact that many mainlanders didn't even know that the Caribbean islanders are, indeed, Americans — even those who had ventured there for sun-kissed vacation.



Others suggested that racism was at the root of the less enthusiastic response to help Puerto Ricans and Virgin Islanders than, for instance, the rushes of assistance to Texas, Louisiana or Florida, based on the assumption that the islands' populations are predominantly black.

Actually, 80.5 percent of the residents of Puerto Rico are white, mostly of Spanish origin; 8 percent are black; 0.4 percent, Amerindian; 0.2 percent Asian; and 10.9 percent other. That statistic flips for the Virgin Islands, with 76 percent black, 15.7 percent white, 1.4 percent Asian, 2.1 percent mixed and 4.9 percent other.

Still others, including the president of the Virgin Islands, blamed the victims for their own plight, with President Donald Trump stating flatly in a tweet on Sept. 30: "They want everything to be done for them when it should be a community effort."

At the time, "they" were struggling to survive with no electricity, little water and even less food to sustain them as they went about helping each other get by in a community effort.

Although recovery efforts have redoubled since then, the two U.S. territories remain mired as death tolls mount and relief supplies have yet to get to many rural areas and otherwise inaccessible areas.

Isn't it ironic, then, that mainland hospitals are facing increasing shortages of saline IV bags, on top of deficits that existed for several years even before the hurricanes raked the islands?

The Food and Drug Administration announced on Friday that it is working with Baxter International, a pharmaceutical company headquartered in Deerfield, Ill., to "prevent a significant shortfall of production of Baxter's sodium chloride 0.9% injection bags from its Puerto Rico facility."

In response to my request for comment, a Baxter official responded in an email that the company's production has not been the culprit for the previous dearth of IV bags. Baxter's three Puerto Rican facilities manufacture smaller bags than those, he said.

Going forward, though, Hurricane Maria's effect on Baxter plants' production may become part of the problem, although the company is trying to make it part of the solution.

In a release, Baxter said its Puerto Rican plants sustained minimal structural damage from Maria, and limited production resumed within a week of the storm. That production, however, relies on diesel generators because Puerto Rico's electricity grid remains largely ineffective, with sporadic service.

A majority of Baxter's more than 2,000 employees in Puerto Rico have returned to work, and the Baxter Foundation and employees have donated more than \$3.5 million toward recovery efforts not only in Puerto Rico but also in other hurricane-afflicted areas in southern and eastern states on the continent, according to the company.

In advance of the hurricane, Baxter moved finished products off of the island to secure storage on the mainland, the company said. It also has received temporary regulatory discretion from the FDA allowing it to import some products from Baxter facilities in Ireland and Australia to buoy its U.S. supplies.

The potential shortage is a concern for local hospitals.

Although the falling dominoes haven't affected the supply cabinets at Mayo Clinic Health System-Franciscan Healthcare in La Crosse and its affiliates, "We are aware of what is taking place, and we have been monitoring" the situation, a spokesman said.

Mayo-Franciscan officials are working with Mayo Clinic Health System headquarters in Rochester, Minn., to develop contingency plans, he said. They also have adjusted clinical practices to minimize any impact on patients if supplies become pinched.

In addition to concerns about and efforts to contain health threats on the islands from stagnant, dirty water and the fact that some residents are drinking contaminated water, the FDA also sounded the alarm about the potential for shortages of critical medicines in Puerto Rican plants.

“The medical product industry has a large presence in Puerto Rico, with dozens of drug and device manufacturing facilities that are responsible for the production of products — like cancer drugs, immunosuppressants used by transplant patients and devices needed for people with diabetes,” according to a statement from FDA Commissioner Scott Gottlieb.

“We have undertaken swift and extensive efforts to prevent or limit the loss or shortage of multiple drugs critical to American patients due to the challenges related to refrigeration, storage and transportation,” he said.

The FDA continues efforts to “help avoid catastrophic drug shortages,” Gottlieb insisted.

It’s not too late for us to acknowledge that, instead of being freeloaders, residents of the Virgin Islands and Puerto Rico are true, blue Americans who fly the same flag hoisted above federal, state and local buildings throughout the U.S. — not to mention NFL stadiums, NHL hockey rinks, NASCAR tracks and sundry other venues.

Let’s assume that Trump’s lip slipped when he told the Values Voter Summit in Washington last weekend: “I will tell you, I left Texas, and I left Florida, and I left Louisiana and I went to Puerto Rico — and I met with the president of the Virgin Islands.”

This meme is circulating on the internet as a joke about President Donald Trump's verbal slip in saying he had talked to the president of the U.S. Virgin Islands about hurricane damage. He actually is the Virgin Islands president, by virtue of his being president of the United States.

Surely, he was referring to Virgin Islands Gov. Kenneth Mapp, instead of implying that he was meeting with himself, as internet memes suggest and, indeed, as he indicated during the campaign that one of his main consultants is none other than himself.

Let’s also assume that we need the islanders as much for life as they need us for recovery. Maybe that will ramp up our concern and assistance, eh?

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## **Trump can’t stop complaining about Puerto Rico. And it shows in his policies.** (Washington Post)

### **The island doesn't need new loans. It needs competent hurricane relief.**

By Armando Valdés Prieto October 19 at 6:00 AM

#### [Washington Post](#)

Armando Valdés Prieto is a lawyer and political consultant and a former director of the Commonwealth of Puerto Rico's Office of Management and Budget. In that capacity, he was also the governor's authorized representative to the Federal Emergency Management Authority.

President Trump’s approach to Puerto Rico since Hurricane Maria has been coherently inhumane. He has called some Puerto Rican leaders “politically motivated ingrates,” made insensitive references to how much federal money is being spent on recovery, refused to support equitable health-care access for the island’s 3.5 million U.S. citizens, bemoaned on Twitter how federal personnel could not be in the commonwealth after the hurricane “forever” and this week complained from the Rose Garden that the military is distributing food, “something that really they shouldn’t have to be doing.”

Only one notable deviation from this narrative stands out. While on his official trip to the island, Trump told Fox News correspondent Geraldo Rivera that Puerto Rican governments “owe a lot of money to your friends on Wall Street, and we’re going to have to wipe that out. You can say goodbye to that.” Hours later, the White House was back on track: “I wouldn’t take it word for word,” said Mick Mulvaney, director of the Office of Management and Budget.

A week later, congressional Republicans unveiled a relief plan that would only add to the island’s debt load.



The disjointed thread of off-the-cuff commentary Trump has issued in real time and on social media since the storm reveals either the president's profound ignorance or his deep-seated prejudices. He seems fully unaware of the United States' history of involvement in Puerto Rico; the nation took the island as booty after the Spanish-American War in 1898 and made us citizens without consulting our forebears in 1917, just one month before the country's entry into World War I. For decades, the U.S. military was here — seemingly forever — using two small but inhabited islands as live ordnance ranges for the Navy. Trump, however, seems to believe that Puerto Rico is a foreign jurisdiction and hence, in his mind, U.S. tax dollars should not be spent to prop up the island's fragile health-care system nor to save lives and rebuild in the aftermath of a major hurricane.

But if he is in fact aware of our standing as citizens — which he certainly should be — then perhaps he is simply treating Puerto Ricans as he has women, other Latinos, African Americans, Muslims, people with disabilities and any number of other groups.

Unfortunately, the administration's actions have been entirely consistent with the president's disdainful remarks. The federal government's response has been lethargic. Last week, I interviewed the Aqueduct and Sewer Authority president on San Juan radio station NotiUno. He informed me that of 150 backup generators he had requested from the Federal Emergency Management Agency on the day of the storm to keep potable water flowing into homes, only 17 had been installed in the 20 days that followed. So never mind [Trump's statement on Monday](#) that "Puerto Rico now has more generators, I believe, than any place in the world. There are generators all over the place."

Worst of all is how Washington is adding to Puerto Rico's debt burden, even after Trump's confounding remarks about it. Congress is moving to approve legislation that, although it does provide some money for recovery, includes a [\\$4.9 billion loan](#) to shore up the island's liquidity. Otherwise, due to long-standing fiscal problems and the near-total collapse of the economy since the hurricane, the commonwealth and some local governments are expected to run out of money in the next few weeks.

Nonetheless, even with the loan, Puerto Rico's nonvoting representative in Congress, Jennifer González-Colón (R), stated that the government would only be able to sustain its operations through the end of this year. So while the money is needed, the fact that it must eventually be paid back and that it is only a very short-term fix complicates future prospects and ignores deep-seated problems that need careful attention now. With over \$70 billion in debt, no reasonable means to pay it down, a dwindling population, a devastated economy and a shrinking tax base, sending this loan our way is like throwing a drowning man a gallon of water and expecting him to use it as a flotation device.

Sadly, that is what Puerto Rico has become: an island drowning in an ocean — "a very big ocean," to quote the president — of debt, incompetence and indifference.

Armando Valdés Prieto is a lawyer and political consultant and a former director of the Commonwealth of Puerto Rico's Office of Management and Budget. In that capacity, he was also the governor's authorized representative to the Federal Emergency Management Authority.

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## **Hurricane Maria's Effects on Young Children in Puerto Rico (Center for American Progress)**

By Cristina Novoa

October 16, 2017, 9:00 am

[Center for American Progress](#)

Puerto Rico is home to nearly 175,000 U.S. citizen children aged birth to 4 years old. More than half of these children live below the federal poverty level. Much like in the rest of the United States, young children in Puerto Rico are most likely to live in families that are barely able to meet their basic needs. Early childhood is a critical period of development. However, without access to

nutritious food, safe housing, and quality medical care, young children living in poverty can quickly fall behind their more economically advantaged peers.

Regardless of family income, all children in Puerto Rico find themselves in the aftermath of Hurricane Maria—the strongest storm to hit the island in a lifetime. The effects of poverty, combined with the trauma of living through a natural disaster, will not fade away easily: The experiences that Puerto Rico’s young children have now will directly influence their long-term physical, cognitive, and emotional development.

This column describes four critical areas of government support on which many Puerto Rican children depend.

### **Food assistance and security**

Nutritious food is a basic need, providing the fuel that young brains and bodies require to develop. Poor nutrition and hunger are especially devastating to infants and toddlers, often leading to developmental delays in areas like language and motor skills; social and behavioral acuity; and educational advancement.

Puerto Rico imports 85 percent of its food, making food security tenuous even in the best of circumstances.

Although, in recent years, Puerto Rico has made efforts to boost food security—increasing agriculture production by 24 percent—Hurricane Maria wiped out the majority of crops overnight.

In response to Hurricane Maria, the U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA) is increasing flexibility for the Special Supplemental Nutrition Program for Women, Infants and Children (WIC), which provides nutrition assistance to infants and toddlers. In 2015, 165,042 Puerto Rican women and their children participated in WIC. Threats to WIC jeopardize children’s health; future academic achievement; and long-term health and economic outcomes.

The U.S. Department of Defense reports that clean water is becoming scarce; 55 percent of Puerto Ricans lack clean drinking water, a week after the storm.

### **Housing**

Children need safe and stable housing to thrive. Housing instability and homelessness in early childhood are associated with poorer outcomes in language, literacy, and social-emotional development. Unfortunately, Puerto Rico’s housing stock has been devastated.

Prior to Hurricane Maria, 31 percent of Puerto Rican children lived in households with a high housing burden—households that spent at least one-third of income on housing. When housing consumes one-third or more of a family’s income, it becomes less likely that the family will be able to meet all of its children’s basic needs, and it increases the threat of eviction.

Emerging reports paint a grim picture of housing conditions in Puerto Rico after the storm. Photos show entire communities with roofs torn off; news reports profile high rates of homelessness and displacement; and satellite images show widespread power outages.

Whether due to Hurricane Maria or earlier housing instability, threats to housing are devastating for children’s health. Housing insecurity is associated with poor health, lower weight, and developmental risk among infants and toddlers.

### **Health and medical care**

Regular medical care and developmental screenings help children stay healthy. Unfortunately, severe damage to Puerto Rico’s medical facilities—paired with the federal government’s historical underinvestment in Medicaid—has limited children’s access to the care they need. The situation demands immediate action.

As of June 2015, almost half of Puerto Rico’s population was enrolled in Medicaid or the Children’s Health Insurance Program (CHIP). Children depend on this coverage for health screenings and treatment, which will be crucial to hurricane recovery efforts.

### **Early education**



High-quality early education can help children develop critical skills like social-emotional regulation and communication, which promote lifelong learning. In post-disaster settings, returning to school can represent a return to order and familiarity. The re-establishment of schools and child care programs—including Early Head Start and Head Start centers—is one of the practices that is most highly endorsed by humanitarian agency leaders with disaster experience.

As of 2015, 7,900 Puerto Rican children had child care subsidies. Yet without homes or centers, these are useless; families won't be able to return to work without first rebuilding infrastructure.

Puerto Rico is home to 39 Head Start and 44 Early Head Start programs, which, together, provide quality child care and early education to 35,093. In the wake of Hurricane Maria, these centers will need to be rebuilt.

In the short term, Congress should provide resources to implement home-based Head Start and Early Head Start programs, which deliver services to children where they are living. This can be a crucial way in which it can expand service. In 2016, only 5 percent of Puerto Rican children under age 3 had access to Early Head Start, and only 46 percent of children ages 3 to 5 had access to Head Start.

Head Start has a precedent of addressing mental health needs in the face of disaster. In the aftermath of Superstorm Sandy, the Office of Head Start worked with Head Start and Early Head Start directors in order to identify the mental health needs impacting children, families, and the community.

#### Conclusion

As days turn into weeks since Hurricane Maria made landfall in Puerto Rico, it is important to remember that delaying aid has serious consequences for young children during a critical developmental period. We know what children need; it is up to Congress and the current administration to take action.

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## Helping Puerto Rico in both the short and long term (The Hill and AEI)

[Benjamin Zycher](#)

October 17, 2017 | [The Hill](#)

[AEI and The Hill](#)

Given the severe fiscal pressures facing Puerto Rico — about \$72 billion in debt — and the destruction wrought by Hurricane Maria, it is absolutely appropriate that substantial federal aid be defined and delivered by policymakers in Washington.

Accordingly, on Oct. 12, the House passed a [bill](#) including a federal loan of \$4.9 billion for Puerto Rico as part of \$36.5 billion in hurricane and wildfire relief for several states. The Senate is expected to pass the bill this week.

At the same time, policymaking is political, and the temptation to use legislation and its implementation to transfer wealth is powerful. Aid can be structured in different ways, and the longer-term effects of alternative loan provisions in particular are likely to yield very different impacts in the context of the future creditworthiness of the commonwealth and the incentives for crucial policy reforms.

Witness the recent [argument](#) from President Trump that the massive debts owed by the commonwealth will have to be “wipe[d] out.”

The president does not have the authority to effect that sort of outcome, but it is possible that the legislation eventually emerging from Congress might subordinate existing debts to the forthcoming federal loan; or the procedural implementation of the loan by federal agencies might have that effect as a practical matter.



A young girl looks back after getting her shoe stuck in the mud while carrying supplies delivered by soldiers working with a 101st Airborne Division “Dustoff” unit during recovery efforts following Hurricane Maria in Jayuya, Puerto Rico, October 5, 2017. Picture taken October 5, 2017. REUTERS/Lucas Jackson

Those threats have been directed at Wall Street, but the [reality](#) is that the creditors include retirement funds invested in Puerto Rico bonds, including tens of thousands of investors living on the island.

Subordination would be an enormous mistake imposing substantial adverse effects upon the commonwealth itself over the longer term. Consider the Puerto Rico Electric Power Authority (PREPA), the bonded debt of which is about \$9 billion.

If the legislation eventually to be enacted subordinates Puerto Rico’s existing bondholders, that outcome would not be very different from the treatment of the [General Motors and Chrysler creditors](#) in 2009, when the Chrysler secured creditors were coerced into accepting not only far less than their legitimate claims, but fewer cents on the dollar than the GM secured creditors and the pension plans of the United Auto Workers, unsecured but vastly more favored politically.

Such subordination would be perverse in several dimensions. First, it would ignore the recent history of concessions made by the PREPA creditors, who reached a restructuring agreement with two different administrations of the Puerto Rico government.

That agreement provided debt relief of \$1.7 billion over the first five years and at least \$2 billion in the first 10 years. That deal was three years in the making, but in the end was scuttled by commonwealth officials.

As the devastation from Maria unfolded, [the creditors offered](#) a \$1-billion loan in exchange for some assurance that a portion of the debt would be paid, an offer angrily rejected by the Puerto Rico government even as the electric grid remained inoperative for almost the entire island.

Incentives for future creditors to make concessions during periods of fiscal stringency are unlikely to be strengthened by preemptive assaults on their positions.

Even before Maria, PREPA faced very large needs for capital investment for new generating plants, improved transmission and distribution networks and tightened environmental requirements. Those investment needs will require access to capital markets on terms that are affordable for future PREPA ratepayers

But that longer-term goal is inconsistent with the recent demands for ever-greater concessions from the PREPA creditors, and now with the “kiss that money goodbye” rhetoric emanating from the White House and elsewhere.

Because congressional action was required to overcome political constraints in the commonwealth, a compromise in 2016 between Congress and the Obama administration — the Puerto Rico Oversight, Management and Economic Stability Act (PROMESA) — created an oversight board with debt-restructuring powers and a formal legal process to deal with emerging disputes between the creditors and commonwealth debtors.

Subordination of existing debts would shunt these procedural safeguards aside, with future effects in terms of market expectations and incentives that cannot be salutary.

No one denies that PREPA has been [mismanaged](#) for many years. Accounts receivables practices are widely acknowledged to be dismal. PREPA gives vast amounts of power to local government agencies essentially at no charge, yielding enormous waste and upward pressure on rates for the remaining ratepayers.

Incentives to correct such practices will not be strengthened if debt service becomes easier, rather than harder to avoid, and an implementation of a subordination provision would do precisely that.

That mismanagement seems to have afflicted the PREPA response to Maria as well. Department of Energy [Situation Reports](#) on six previous hurricanes (Harvey, Irene, Irma, Katrina, Matthew and



Sandy), as well as other data, show that the average number of days needed to restore power to 90 percent of customers was 10 days.

For PREPA after Maria, about 5 percent of customers were restored after 10 days, and only 10 percent of customers after 15 days. Governor Ricardo A. Rosselló recently [expressed](#) an “expectation” for 25 percent within a month.

Perhaps conditions on the island fundamentally are more adverse than in the other afflicted regions. To the extent that that is true, it is [unclear](#) why PREPA chose not to accept aid from the American Public Power Association, the normal process for such emergencies.

Instead, PREPA [hired](#) a little-known outside contractor with limited relevant experience to restore the power lines. Whatever the realities on the ground, subordination of existing Puerto Rico debts would reduce the willingness of the capital market to invest in modernization, for PREPA and for the commonwealth more generally.

The U.S. Senate and the Trump administration should resist this temptation in Puerto Rico’s long-term interest.

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<b>Sender:</b>	Arroyo, Maria </O=EXCHANGELABS/OU=EXCHANGE ADMINISTRATIVE GROUP (FYDIBOHF23SPDLT)/CN=RECIPIENTS/CN=1457D7C92C7E4172B0C5687D08BF339A-ARROYO, MAR>
<b>Recipient:</b>	"DR-4339-PR All Hands </o=ExchangeLabs/ou=Exchange Administrative Group (FYDIBOHF23SPDLT)/cn=Recipients/cn=07089255a82f4e59886f6b742b6e66a0-DR-4339-PR>"
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**FEMA**

## ***Media Analysis Report*** **Puerto Rico - Hurricanes Irma/Maria** **DR-4336/4339-PR**

***Thursday, October 19, 2017, Morning Edition***

### ***Hot Issues:***

- ***Private hospitals fear FEMA will stop supplying diesel for generators***

### **News Clips Analysis / Trends:**

- Heavy emphasis continues on this week being a month since Maria struck: “Much of the U.S. territory of Puerto Rico still looks the way it did immediately after the hurricane.” Mayors complain to **FEMA**. Grim statistics dominate; “good news” quotes from survivors virtually non-existent.
- Lots of attention being paid to governor’s trip to the White House today; see evening media analysis for follow-up stories
- Seven-minute interview with FCO Michael Byrne on NPR this morning; link to audio in report below

### **Survivor News and Quotes:**

- Mr. Medina said that if his wife’s health were to begin to deteriorate, he knew that his neighbors would not hesitate to help him carry her across the river. Ms. Rivera chimed in. “We Puerto Ricans are fighters and hard workers,” she said. “My life depends on it.” – *New York Times*

### **News Clips Highlights/Summary:**

- NPR audio clip of interview with FCO
- Spanish - Primera Hora reports mayors complain to **FEMA** about lack of aid to survivors
- Spanish – Mayor of Guaynabo begs for tarps
- Governor meets with Trump at White House today, multiple stories
- In Washington Wednesday, demonstrators marched from Capitol Hill to **FEMA** headquarters to demand a bigger response from the government on hurricane relief for Puerto Rico -- as well as other U.S. locations hit by Hurricanes Irma and Harvey.
- Hurricane could worsen Puerto Rico economic and population decline that it had in the decade before Maria: The number of residents had plunged by 11 percent, the economy had shrunk by 15 percent, and the government had become unable to pay its bills.
- Several stories about ideas, technology and materials for restoring the power grid
- Government Executive is the latest publication to make note of congressional committee set to investigate potential abuse of federal funds and resources in municipalities, citing red flags raised by the FBI

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- About 1,200 federal prisoners from Puerto Rico will be housed at the federal correctional facility in Yazoo City, Miss.
- Spanish - As of next week the **FEMA** may stop supplying diesel to the country's private hospitals, Primera Hora and El Nuevo Dia report
- Medical team has deployed from Langley Air Force Base
- Uber is having some success despite cell communication problems
- At Wapa Radio — AM 680 —advertising is up more than 300 percent since the storm. Companies are using the radio both to advertize and to communicate with employees who no longer have phones or are scattered over the island.
- Daily Kos wonders whether millions of Puerto-Ricans may-move to the mainland
- Edgar Garcia, now in Virginia, is one many Islanders now in the states with his family, hoping to protect them from the Hurricane Maria's aftermath in Puerto Rico
- To contact family in Virginia, survivor who is now on mainland tells how he and some people from his neighborhood pooled gasoline and drove to San Juan, the island's capital, "just to make a call ..., just to say, 'Hey, we're alive.'"
- CNN features veterans of the wars in Iraq and Afghanistan, who self-deployed to Mayaguez. When they see a need, they just go. Red tape frustrates them, especially when people are hurting and they can help. They took over abandoned airport in Mayaguez as their base.
- Wisconsin columnist: Mainland U.S. shortages of vital medical supplies manufactured in Puerto Rico could amount to karmic twists to the federal government's lackadaisical initial response to the deadly destruction visited upon the U.S. Virgin Islands and Puerto Rico

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## FEMA

### **Audio: Weeks After Maria, FEMA Still Distributing Basic Needs To Puerto Rico (NPR)**

October 19, 2017 5:04 AM ET  
 Heard on Morning Edition  
[National Public Radio](#)



### ***Link includes 7:02 Audio***

Steve Inskeep talks to **FEMA** coordinator **Michael Byrne** about the recovery effort in Puerto Rico as its governor is set to meet with President Trump. Byrne says more stores and gas stations are opening.

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## **Alcaldes Se Reúnen Con Directivo De FEMA (Primera Hora)**

By Rebecca Banuchi

October 19, 2017

[Primera Hora \(PRI\)](#),

**Almost a month after the emergency caused by Hurricane Maria, mayors ' complain about the assistance survivors have received from the federal government to FEMA directors, and would make them think that only a few days have passed since the powerful atmospheric phenomenon.**

A casi un mes de la emergencia provocada por el huracán María, las quejas de los alcaldes sobre la asistencia que han recibido del gobierno federal harían pensar que solo han pasado unos días desde pasó del potente fenómeno atmosférico.

La insuficiencia de suministros, la escasez de toldos y la logística en el recogido de escombros coparon este miércoles la agenda del encuentro que sostuvieron ocho alcaldes con el director de la Agencia Federal para el Manejo de Emergencias (**FEMA**, en inglés), Alejandro De La Campa.

“Te piden tanta información de las diferentes áreas que la coordinación, debe ser la correcta, y no es así”, dijo a este medio la alcaldesa de Ponce, María “Mayita” Meléndez, al concluir la reunión con el funcionario federal.

“Quiero que se coordine con los alcaldes, aquellas personas que están distribuyendo para no repetir las mismas áreas, y que aquellas áreas que no se hayan podido cubrir, se puedan cubrir finalmente... Había un desfase entre **FEMA** y **FEMA**. Entre ellos. Porque la información que le estaban dando a la región era incorrecta”, agregó la ejecutiva municipal.

A pesar de sus críticas, Meléndez manifestó estar satisfecha con los resultados preliminares de la reunión con De La Campa, y dijo que se atendieron sus preocupaciones respecto a los toldos y la distribución de alimentos y agua. Según la alcaldesa, Ponce recibía suministros en igual cantidad que los pueblos con 25,000 y 30,000 habitantes, a pesar que sus pobladores suman cerca de 160,000.

El encuentro se efectuó en el hotel Sheraton, ubicado a pasos del Centro de Convenciones, donde se ubica el Centro de Operaciones de Emergencia (COE), que está ocupado principalmente por empleados de **FEMA**. Además de Meléndez, participaron los alcaldes de Arecibo, Ciales, Adjuntas, Culebra, Maunabo, Dorado, Patillas y Arroyo. Para este viernes, fueron convocados ocho ejecutivos municipales adicionales.

El alcalde adjunteño, Jaime Barlucea, dijo que una de sus inquietudes principales es la falta de toldos suficientes para cubrir las necesidades de sus compueblanos sin techo. **FEMA** ha informado que, a raíz de los fenómenos atmosféricos que afectaron también a Estados Unidos, escasea el producto, aunque se espera un envío pronto a la isla.

Sin embargo, el principal malestar de Barlucea es con el titular de la Autoridad de Energía Eléctrica (AEE), Ricardo Ramos, quien estaba en el COE justo cuando se llevaba a cabo la reunión con De La Campa.

“En Adjuntas no ha habido presencia de la AEE”, dijo con cierta tirantez Barlucea, quien comentó que ya personal de su administración ha identificado las averías del sistema en el pueblo, pero no han recibido atención de la corporación pública.

“La AEE no ha hecho nada, le hemos dado la información, los detalles, el análisis, se lo estamos suministrando todo. Hace semana y media, hablé con el director ejecutivo por teléfono, y al día de hoy, no he recibido respuesta alguna”, añadió.

De La Campa no estuvo disponible ayer para entrevista, pero Delyris Aquino, portavoz de **FEMA** en la isla, destacó que las reuniones, programadas para lunes, miércoles y viernes, les dan la oportunidad a los alcaldes



de conocer cómo operan las ayudas del gobierno federal, tanto para los individuos como para los gobiernos locales, y aclarar dudas sobre cómo funciona el financiamiento y el alcance de esa asistencia.

“Es importante escuchar al alcalde, que es quien trae a **FEMA** las necesidades de sus municipios. Nadie mejor que los alcaldes, que conocen los barrios y zonas afectadas, y el tipo de necesidad en esas zonas afectadas. Es una oportunidad para que nos mantengamos en esta comunicación, que estamos tratando de mantener abierta y directa, que los alcaldes se sientan en la libertad de comunicarnos lo que necesitan”, expresó Aquino.

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## **El Alcalde Ángel Pérez Espera Que Lleguen Más Toldos A Guaynabo (El Nuevo Día)**

[El Nuevo Día \(PRI\)](#), October 18, 2017

**The priority of the mayor of Guaynabo, Ángel Pérez, is to get more blue tarps to his people so that the hundreds of affected families can return to their homes.**

Guaynabo – La prioridad del alcalde de Guaynabo, Ángel Pérez, es que lleguen más toldos a su pueblo para que las cientos de familias damnificadas pueden regresar a sus hogares.

En este municipio, que, además del huracán María también se vio afectado por las lluvias que cayeron recientemente, aún quedan 70 personas refugiadas.

“El llamado primero es en cuanto a los toldos, porque una vez uno pueda ayudar con esto a las familias ellos pueden regresar a sus hogares, o aquellas pertenencias que pudieron salvar pues entonces no terminarán de perderlas”, sostuvo Pérez a este medio.

“Nosotros tenemos una solicitud de cerca de 3,000 toldos (a FEMA)”, dijo al mencionar que en ese municipio de 100,000 habitantes unas 2,700 familias perdieron parte o totalmente el techo de sus viviendas.

También hizo un llamado al gobierno federal a que agilice el proceso de investigar las pérdidas que tienen los ciudadanos.

“Hay que ver cómo este proceso de investigación que ellos tienen lo podemos agilizar para que las familias ya reciban su ayuda y puedan comenzar a rehabilitar sus casas o hacerle las mejoras necesarias”, indicó.

Además, reiteró un llamado que le hizo al administrador de la Agencia Federal para el Manejo de Emergencias (FEMA), Brock Long, y al presidente de los Estados Unidos, Donald Trump, a “que no mire una sustitución de un techo nuevamente de madera y zinc; que busquemos alternativas que sean permanentes”.

Dijo que él ve como una inversión el que se gaste un poquito más y se haga la estructura en cemento, “porque te vas a evitar en el futuro que estas familias estén pasando por lo mismo”.

“No seguir poniendo parches sino buscar soluciones permanentes”, sentenció.

Otra situación que está tratando de solucionar el ejecutivo municipal es el recogido de escombros.

Esta es una de las quejas principales de los ciudadanos.

Pérez, quien dijo que ya tiene al día el recogido de la basura doméstica, aceptó que sí hay un problema en este renglón.

“Ahora mismo estamos con las brigadas del municipio, que son cerca de once y con brigadas de tres contratistas privados recogiendo lo que es el material vegetativo, los escombros”, mencionó.

El director de Obras Públicas municipal, Wilfredo Martínez, estimó en un 75% la cantidad de escombros que aún están en las vías.

Anticipó que en unos dos meses la ciudad podría ya estar casi sin esa basura.

Mientras tanto, el alcalde inició una campaña de fumigación para evitar la propagación de mosquitos.

En Guaynabo, un 5% de los ciudadanos tendría luz.

“En cuanto a la luz eso varía mucho porque se nos está cayendo, prácticamente va y viene, pero aquí no hemos pasado de un 5%”, informó.

Respecto al suministro del agua, dijo que aunque “gran

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## WHITE HOUSE / CONGRESS / POLITICS

### Audio: Puerto Rico's Governor Is In Washington To Meet With Trump (NPR)

October 19, 2017 7:45 AM ET

Heard on Morning Edition – 3:35 audio at link below

Adrian Florido

[NPR](#)

- **Puerto Rico also mentioned on [NPR News Brief](#)**

Parts of Puerto Rico look as if the hurricane struck yesterday, not last month. Gov. Ricardo Rossello is in Washington to speak with members of Congress. He'll also meet with President Trump.

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### Trump To Meet With Puerto Rican Governor In The Oval Office (NY Post)

By Joe Tacopino

[New York Post](#), October 18, 2017

President Trump will meet with the governor of Puerto Rico at The White House on Thursday as the US territory struggles to recover in the aftermath of Hurricane Maria.

Trump will welcome Governor Ricardo Rosselló for a meeting in the Oval Office, according to a schedule released by administration.

“We will be welcoming Gov. Rosselló of Puerto Rico to the White House to talk about the ongoing recovery and rebuilding efforts,” press secretary Sarah Huckabee Sanders said at the daily briefing.

Trump has been critical of the island’s efforts to recover after the disaster.

In a tweet last week Trump said: “We cannot keep **FEMA**, the Military & the First Responders, who have been amazing (under the most difficult circumstances) in P.R. forever!”

Gov. Rosselló responded at the time: “The US citizens in Puerto Rico are requesting the support that any of our fellow citizens would receive across our Nation.”

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### Dem Senators write DHS calling for accurate hurricane death counts (The Hill)

By Olivia Beavers - 10/19/17 06:00 AM EDT 32

[The Hill](#)

Top Democratic senators are calling on the Department of Homeland Security to accurately provide death counts in Puerto Rico following Hurricanes Maria and Irma.

“We urge you to provide all necessary resources to confirm that storm-related deaths are being counted correctly,” the senators wrote in the letter to DHS Acting Secretary Elaine Duke.

The senators argued for an accurate death toll, saying the current count at 48 does not take into account what media reports say are about 450 more people who have died since the hurricane as well as 69 people who have been reported missing.

“The need for an accurate death toll is especially important because President Trump seems to be using the number of fatalities to determine the quality of the disaster response,” their letter continued.

“Given President Trump’s recent threat to withdraw relief workers from Puerto Rico, it is crucial that he and the public not receive erroneously low fatality totals,” the senators wrote.

Trump last week warned that this administration's response to hurricane-ravaged Puerto Rico cannot last “forever.”

“We cannot keep [**the Federal Emergency Management Agency**], the Military & the First Responders, who have been amazing (under the most difficult circumstances) in P.R. forever!” Trump wrote in a series of tweets.



He added that the island territory's existing debt and infrastructure issues compounded problems.

The letter from Dems echoed the calls that Democratic House Reps. Nydia Velazquez (D-N.Y.) and Bennie Thompson (D-Miss.) sent to DHS last week.

Top upper chamber lawmakers, including Sens. Elizabeth Warren (D-Mass.), Bernie Sanders (I-Vt.), Richard Blumenthal (D-Conn.), Dick Durbin (D-Ill.), Kamala Harris (D-Calif.), and Sherrod Brown (D-Ohio), signed off on the letter.

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## **Puerto Rico leader to seek more relief funds in D.C. trip Thursday (UPI)**

**"Time is of the essence and we need quick action," Puerto Rican Gov. Ricardo Rosselló said.**

By Danielle Haynes | Oct. 19, 2017 at 5:00 AM

[UPI](#)

Oct. 19 (UPI) -- Puerto Rican Gov. Ricardo Rosselló said he plans to push Congress for relief for his debt-ridden, hurricane-ravaged island Thursday, during his first trip to Washington, D.C., since Hurricane Maria.

The Puerto Rican leader arrives in Washington one month after the Category 4 storm hit the island, with plenty on his plate.

Rosselló said he plans to encourage Congress to pass a nearly \$5 billion funding package, a loan President Donald Trump requested for the financially burdened government. The Senate also is considering a \$36.5 billion general disaster relief package, passed by the House last week, that includes relief aid for Puerto Rico.

"Time is of the essence and we need quick action," Rosselló said in an NBC News report Wednesday.

The governor said he hopes to persuade federal lawmakers that the island, a U.S. territory, has the ability to manage recovery and rebuilding efforts after Hurricane Maria.

"If we are not considered in equal terms to Florida, the Virgin Islands, Texas and so forth, Congress will have to deal with a worsened humanitarian crisis, massive exodus from the island, healthcare problems and more," he said.

Trump spokeswoman Sarah Sanders confirmed the trip during a briefing with reporters Wednesday, saying Rosselló also will visit "the White House to talk about the ongoing recovery and rebuilding efforts." Rosselló said he will also meet with Homeland Security adviser Tom Bossert.

As of Wednesday, about 80 percent of Puerto Ricans -- roughly 3 million -- were still without power and one-third of homes don't have reliable drinking water.

On Tuesday, the **Federal Emergency Management Agency** said 1,700 personnel were in Puerto Rico and the U.S. Virgin Islands, in addition to 20,000 other federal workers.

In Washington Wednesday, demonstrators marched from Capitol Hill to **FEMA** headquarters to demand a bigger response from the government on hurricane relief for Puerto Rico -- as well as other U.S. locations hit by **Hurricanes Irma and Harvey**.

Sen. Elizabeth Warren, D-Mass., told the people of Puerto Rico and the U.S. Virgin Islands, "we have not forgotten you.

"You are our brothers and sisters. You are our fellow U.S. citizens. And you are part of our hearts."

Some demonstrators at the rally criticized Trump, saying his reaction to Puerto Rico's plight wasn't on par with how he handled other recent disasters.

"With Puerto Rico, he didn't even try," Melissa Mark-Viverito, speaker of the New York City Council, told The Washington Post. "He's shown a real disrespect for the people of Puerto Rico. It's like he is kicking us while we are down."

The president, who's visited the island, has voiced consistent support for the territory since the disaster -- but he's also taken some criticism for remarking about Puerto Rico's economic situation.

"The wonderful people of Puerto Rico, with their unmatched spirit, know how bad things were before the H's. I will always be with them!" Trump said in a tweet last week.



Rosselló and Trump have praised the federal government's response in Puerto Rico. On Monday, former FEMA Director James Lee Witt, who ran the organization under President Bill Clinton, said he would give the Trump administration an A-plus for its response.

"They've maxed out probably how many people they could put there," he said. "I know they're all working frantically, but sometimes that's not enough."

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## RESPONSE and RECOVERY

### Here Are the Disturbing Numbers on Puerto Rico One Month After Hurricane Maria (TIME)

Joseph Hincks

Oct 18, 2017

[TIME](#)

On Sept. 20 Hurricane Maria made landfall on Puerto Rico, leaving at least 48 people dead and decimating the island's already crumbling power grid.

Texas and Miami were also ravaged by severe weather, in the two hurricanes that preceded Maria, but relief efforts there quickly restored basic infrastructure. One month on, however, much of the U.S. territory of Puerto Rico still looks the way it did immediately after the hurricane receded northwest towards the Dominican Republic.

Here is a by-the-numbers account of how things on the island currently stand.

#### Provisions

- **More than a third of Puerto Rican households**, or about **1 million people**, still lack running water according to CNN.
- **FEMA** says it has distributed **23.6 million liters** (6.2 million gallons) of bottled and bulk water in Puerto Rico. That figure includes water for hospitals and dialysis centers
- These deliveries equate to only **9%** of the island's drinking water requirement, going by the World Health Organization's (WHO) assessment that each person needs at least **2.5 liters** (2/3 of a gallon) per day. Some residents are so desperate for drinking water they have **broken into** polluted wells at industrial waste sites.
- The shortfall is far greater when you consider the WHO also recommends **15 liters** per person per day for basic cooking and hygiene needs. Dirty water ups the risk of diseases like cholera and at least one person has died as a result of being unable to get to dialysis treatment on time, CNN reports.
- Some **86% of grocery stores** have re-opened. But they are not necessarily stocked.
- **FEMA** says **60,000 homes** need roofing help. It has delivered **38,000 tarps**.

#### Power and Personnel

- **Less than 20% of Puerto Rico's power grid** has been restored and around **3 million people** are still without power, says CNN
- The news broadcaster adds that **75% of antennas** are down so even those able to charge phones are unlikely to have cellular service.
- **All of the island's hospitals** are now up and running, with most using back-up systems, but only a **quarter** are being supplied with power from the grid, says **Axios**
- According to CNN, **FEMA** has deployed **1,700 personnel** in Puerto Rico and the U.S. Virgin Islands, which were also ravaged by Hurricane Maria. That's **900 less** than the **2,600 FEMA personnel** reportedly still in Texas and Florida, but the agency told CNN that around **20,000 other federal staff and military** have been deployed in response to Maria.



- Thousands of people have [donated money or volunteered](#) to help Puerto Rico. Among them, celebrity chef José Andrés says he's serving **100,000 meals a day** on the island.

#### **Publicity and the President**

- **Five days after Maria made landfall**, the first Trump administration officials traveled to Puerto Rico to survey the damage. That evening Trump made his first tweets since the storm hit — [mentioning](#) the debt Puerto Rico owes Wall Street. He had spent the preceding days at his golf club in New Jersey.
- It took a further **8 days**, almost **two weeks** after the hurricane hit, for Trump to visit Puerto Rico. The **five hours** he spent there were marked by him [tossing paper towels, jump-shot style](#), into a crowd of residents.
- Trump later said in a tweet that Puerto Rico's crushing **\$72 billion** in public debt should be "wiped out."
- A tweet criticizing the mayor of San Juan ranked the **third least popular** of all Trump's tweet since he assumed office, according to a metric that pits comments against likes. The approval rating on his handling of hurricanes also **dropped 20%** in the wake of Maria.

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### **‘Shrinking, shrinking, shrinking’: Puerto Rico faces a demographic disaster**

(Standard Republic)

October 18, 2017

[Standard Republic](#)

Long before the winds of Hurricane Maria reached Puerto Rico, another disaster had been wrenching and scattering the lives of island residents.

During the decade before Maria, economic decline and depopulation, a slower-moving catastrophe, had been taking a staggering toll: The number of residents had plunged by 11 percent, the economy had shrunk by 15 percent, and the government had become unable to pay its bills.

It already ranked among the worst cycles of economic decline and depopulation in postwar American history, and projections indicated that the island's slide could continue for years.

Then came Maria.

Now, even as officials in Washington and Puerto Rico undertake the recovery, residents are expected to leave en masse, fueling more economic decline and potentially accelerating a vicious cycle.

"We are watching a real live demographic and population collapse on a monumental scale," according to Lyman Stone, an independent migration researcher and an economist at the U.S. Department of Agriculture. The hurricane hit "might just be the kick in the pants Puerto Rico needs to really fall off this demographic cliff into total epochal-level demographic disaster."

Whatever happens with Puerto Rico, moreover, will have far-reaching effects, because while the disaster is felt most keenly on the island, the accelerated exodus is already being felt on the mainland.

Cities popular with Puerto Ricans, such as Orlando, Hartford, Conn., and Springfield Mass., are bracing for more students, many of whom come from families living below the poverty level.

Politicians, meanwhile, are weighing the potentially significant electoral consequences of a wave of migrants who are expected to lean Democratic — especially in Florida. The swing state already boasts half a million residents who are Puerto Rican-born and more are expected in Maria's aftermath.

Indeed, at a news conference last week, Puerto Rico Gov. Ricardo Rosselló warned that without significant help, "millions" could leave for the U.S. mainland.

"You're not going to get hundreds of thousands of Puerto Ricans moving to the states — you're going to get millions," Rossello said. "You're going to get millions, creating a devastating demographic shift for us here in Puerto Rico."



Puerto Rico Treasury Secretary Raul Maldonado has warned, meanwhile, that without more aid, the government could suffer a shutdown by the end of the month.

Prolonged bouts of economic decline and depopulation have afflicted parts of the United States before. During seven years in the 1950s, the number of people living in West Virginia dropped by 8 percent. New York lost 4 percent of its population in the 1970s. And during one stretch in the 1950s, Arkansas shed a whopping 11 percent of its people.

But in depth, the cycle of economic decline and depopulation on the island of 3.4 million people may prove the most punishing.

“Even before Maria, you had what looked like a death spiral going on,” said Gregory Makoff, a bond researcher who worked on the Treasury Department’s Puerto Rico team and now is a senior fellow at the Centre for International Governance Innovation. “Now it’s no longer theoretical. In a week’s time, they’ve lost another huge chunk of the population.”

U.S. Army reserve soldiers, from Puerto Rico, attach an American flag to one of their vehicles, in an area with a sporadic electricity supply, on October 14 in Yauco, Puerto Rico.

For years before the economic slide, companies such as Merck, Johnson & Johnson and PepsiCo had saved tens of millions or more annually under a key tax break that gave U.S. companies an incentive to set up operations on the island.

But in 2006, the tax break was eliminated, taking away a key incentive for companies to operate there. It was one of many factors blamed for the island’s decline.

Among the others: The island’s electrical power system is outdated and saddles islanders with bills roughly double what they are on the mainland; an exodus of doctors has opened holes in the health-care system; and the economy’s most critical sector, manufacturing, has been shrinking even more rapidly than the rest of the economy, affected not just by the lost tax break but by global competition.

Only about 40 percent of people in Puerto Rico are employed or seeking work. By contrast, the U.S. figure for what economists call “labor force participation” is about 63 percent.

Finally, the government’s inability to pay off more than \$70 billion in debt has provoked a congressionally mandated oversight board and a new fiscal plan that calls for significant cuts to the government and efforts to raise more taxes. Even with some optimistic assumptions, that plan predicted continuing shrinkage of the economy.

As a result, for Washington and Puerto Rican officials planning a recovery, the ongoing exodus poses a multifaceted dilemma

“They’ve got to start from the ground up,” Makoff said of any new scheme for the island.

In the short term, at least, the island is likely to see an economic boost; the rebuilding after a hurricane often injects a jolt of spending into local economies.

But according to recent research of 90 years of natural disasters in the United States, published as a National Bureau of Economic Research working paper, major natural disasters also have a range of unfavorable effects: They increase out-migration, lower home prices and raise poverty rates.

Like many on the island, Sergio M. Marxuach, policy director for the Center for a New Economy, a San Juan-based think tank, said a massive federal investment is necessary.

“We’re going to need some significant government intervention — essentially a big rescue package, not only to rebuild the economy but get it growing,” he said. “People are saying, ‘I don’t want my children to grow up in place where the economy is going to be devastated for the next 10 years.’ If enough people think that way, it’s going to be a self-reinforcing downward spiral.”

‘A lethal blow’

In addressing complaints about ongoing struggles on the island, President Trump noted this week that the disaster in Puerto Rico in many ways had begun years ago.

Puerto Rico “was in very poor shape before the hurricanes ever hit. Their electrical grid was destroyed before the hurricanes got there. It was in very bad shape, was not working, was in bankruptcy...”

Indeed, interviews with Puerto Rican business people indicated that even if the obstacles left by Maria can be overcome — most notably the widespread lack of electricity — a return to economic life as it was before the storm is untenable.

Take Frank Joseph Sugden, 51, the owner of an established family tuxedo and gown business in Bayamo. His company, Top Hat, once had three stores but now has just one. With the reductions over the years, he's had to fire 10 employees.

Now, after Maria, weddings and other formal parties have been largely canceled through December, so his store is closed. Two of his remaining eight employees are considering leaving for good. His wife wants him to leave, too. To make up for the lost business, he's started to do insurance work on the side.

He worries whether Puerto Rico is in a death spiral.

"I think so, yes, and I'm not too sure we're going to come out of it," Sugden said. "We've just been kind of shrinking, shrinking, shrinking, and this is kind of a lethal blow."

Leo Aldridge, an attorney with offices in San Juan and New York, described the post-Maria migration from the island as the "Jet Blue revolution. People are buying a ticket and getting the hell out."

But the trouble began long before the storm. After a law class he teaches at the University of Puerto Rico, he noted, his students frequently ask how they can arrange a bar exam and job on the mainland.

"All the time, kids come up to me to say, 'What do I have to do to get off the island? What bar review do I have to take?'" Aldridge said. "This was all before the hurricane . . . People are leaving and leaving and leaving."

Even those who evince optimism acknowledge that more difficult times lie ahead.

"We will move forward better than we were before," said Joaquin Fernandez Quintero, the president of Telemedik, a tele-health company that employs about 400.

But he said that about 10 percent of the employees in his Mayaguez office will move to the states in the coming weeks, several of them "high-level" employees. And he's not sure when they will be coming back.

"People are getting frustrated and depressed," Fernandez Quintero said. "A lot of small and medium companies will be closing because they cannot maintain their operations. It will be a complicated process."

Steven Mufson contributed to this report.

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## **Congress, FBI Already Investigating Potential Abuse Of Federal Funds In Puerto Rico's Disaster Response (Government Executive)**

By Eric Katz

[Government Executive](#), October 18, 2017

A congressional committee is investigating potential abuse of federal funds and resources provided to local municipalities in Puerto Rico, citing red flags raised by the FBI.

The House Natural Resources Committee probed the **Federal Emergency Management Agency** and FBI regarding accusations of "mishandling and misappropriation of emergency supplies" provided by the federal government for the people of Puerto Rico. The letters from several Republican leaders on the panel came after Douglas Leff, the FBI special agent in charge for the San Juan Field Office, announced last week he was looking into accusations of abuse of federal funds.

"With so many residents still in grave need of basic supplies, it is essential that assistance from the federal government is provided in the most efficient and effective manner possible," the lawmakers wrote in their letters. The allegations have stated that "mayors of local municipalities, or people associated with their offices, are giving their political supporters special treatment, goods they're not giving to other people who need them," the committee members said, citing Leff.

They added their committee "is very troubled by these allegations."

The special agent's public statement did not include any mention of mayors. President Trump has publicly feuded with the mayor of San Juan, Puerto Rico's capital and largest city, blaming her for demonstrating "poor leadership" in response to the crisis and failing to coordinate with federal response efforts.



There are currently more than 20,000 federal personnel on the ground in Puerto Rico and Trump recently asked Congress for an emergency supplement of nearly \$13 billion to support those and other recovery efforts. Congress last month approved \$15 billion in emergency funding after Hurricane Harvey, which was split between FEMA's disaster fund and Housing and Urban Development Community Block Development Grants.

The investigation has begun as initial response efforts are still underway, with 35 percent of households without drinking water and 80 percent of the island without power. Scott Amey, general counsel at the Project on Government Oversight, said the federal government has prioritized early oversight of disaster relief since Hurricane Katrina and the 2009 economic stimulus package. Katrina recovery was rife with fraud and abuse, with the Justice Department making charges in 1,300 cases in the aftermath of that storm. Justice has since established the National Center for Disaster Fraud, which is headquartered in Baton Rouge, Louisiana. Corey Admundson, the U.S. attorney who heads up that office, as well as Attorney General Jeff Sessions, have warned of potential fraud in the wake of hurricanes Harvey and Irma, though those warnings focused on abuses from contractors rather than local governments.

"It's never too early," Amey said of the oversight and investigatory efforts. "Already just between Harvey, Irma and Maria the federal government has awarded—just in contracts—over \$1.6 billion. It's not too early to start investigating fraud, waste and abuse when \$1.6 billion of taxpayer dollars has gone out the door."

By looking at potential fraud early in the process, he added, the government can send a message to anyone looking to take advantage of the victims.

"As tips are coming in, I hope the Justice department takes a serious look at them," Amey said. "There's a hope there's a deterrent effect if there's strong oversight and accountability from the outset."

The White House is also conscious of potential fraud, with Office of Management and Budget Director Mick Mulvaney sending a memorandum to agencies to be wary of anyone looking to abuse recovery dollars.

"Unfortunately, disasters can sometimes provide cover and opportunity for corrupt individuals to perpetrate fraud by targeting disaster survivors," Mulvaney said. "In the aftermath of a disaster, there are also frequently cases of waste and abuse, such as instances where benefits provided to survivors and communities have little nexus to recovery efforts, or where agencies continue to expend resources well beyond the period where it is reasonable to assume that recovery activities are continuing."

He added that the public's faith in government depended on an efficient disbursement of recovery funds.

"As you consider your agency costs, please keep in mind that such wasteful or fraudulent activities will not be tolerated; they ultimately undermine public trust in the federal government's ability to respond to disasters," the OMB director said. "We are counting on you to provide this diligent oversight up front and throughout the recovery process."

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## **POWER / INFRASTRUCTURE / COMMUNICATIONS**

### **New Mexico delegation: US labs can help rebuild Puerto Rico (AP)**

October 19, 2017 2:24 AM

[The Associated Press](#)

ALBUQUERQUE, N.M. -- Members of the state's congressional delegation are urging the Trump administration to tap the expertise of national laboratories in New Mexico to help with rebuilding efforts in Puerto Rico.

They sent a letter Wednesday to Energy Secretary Rick Perry and Elaine Duke, acting secretary of the Homeland Security Department.

The letter says the expertise and resources at Sandia and Los Alamos national laboratories can be leveraged to ensure the U.S. territory is better positioned to prepare for and recover from future natural disasters. They pointed to programs that could evaluate Puerto Rico's electrical grid needs and other critical infrastructure.



The territory was hit by back-to-back hurricanes. Much of the island remains without power, hundreds of thousands of people are without running water and nearly half of the island's 51 sewage treatment plants are still out of service.

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## **Anuncian Reparación De Termoeléctrica (El Vocero de Puerto Rico)**

By Laura M. Quintero

October 18, 2017

[El Vocero](#) de Puerto Rico,

**GE contract for Electrical Energy Authority (EEE) for the replacement of beams and columns of the boilers of the Central Palo Seco had been processed at the end of August, a few weeks after the onslaught of Irma and María. Yesterday La Fortaleza announced the start of the work for the amount of \$4.7 million, with a discount of the original cost that amounted \$7 million.**

El contrato a la compañía General Electric por parte de la Autoridad de Energía Eléctrica (AEE) para el reemplazo de vigas y columnas de las calderas de la Central Palo Seco se había tramitado a finales de agosto, a pocas semanas del embate de Irma y María. Ayer La Fortaleza anunció el inicio de los trabajos por la cantidad de \$4.7 millones, con un descuento del costo original que ascendía a \$7 millones.

El secretario de Asuntos Públicos de La Fortaleza, Ramón Rosario, mencionó que el gobierno persigue que “en lo que remediamos provisionalmente la generación en el norte, atendamos los problemas de infraestructura de Palo Seco que han impedido que muchas de sus unidades no estén en servicio en este período de emergencia”.

La respuesta del gobierno surge luego de que los expertos del Colegio de Ingenieros y Agrimensores y de la Unión de Trabajadores de la Industria Eléctrica y Riego (Utier) cuestionaron los motivos para mantener apagada la central, capaz de dar estabilidad a la generación eléctrica del área metropolitana con la producción de cerca de 602 megavatios por hora.

Tan reciente como el sábado, la Oficina de Prensa de La Fortaleza había insistido en la postura de mantener cerrada la planta al compartir un estudio realizado por Island Structures Engineering, PC, que advertía del peligro que representaba la corrosión significativa y las perforaciones en las unidades 1 a la 4.

Sin embargo, el presidente del Colegio de Ingenieros, Pablo Vázquez Ruiz, dijo a este diario que en ningún momento del informe se prohibía que la central estuviera en servicio mientras se trabajaba en las reparaciones. Además, los directivos de la Utier habían advertido que solo hacía falta reforzar las medidas de seguridad, sin necesidad de cerrar la operación.

“Esperaron a la crisis”

El presidente de la Utier, Ángel Figueroa Jaramillo, aseguró que el sindicato había acordado comenzar los trabajos de reparación en noviembre de 2016. La propuesta se había discutido con el jefe de planta en aquel momento, Norberto Jiménez, con quien se acordó que el sindicato conseguiría los soldadores y el gobierno aportaría los materiales.

Incluso, indicó que la Junta de Gobierno de la AEE autorizó al director ejecutivo, Ricardo Ramos, en abril de este año a comenzar los trabajos en reparaciones de las columnas y vigas enmohecidas. “Volvieron una vez más a esperar la crisis. Esperar a que el País estuviese desesperado para entregar otro contrato más, cuando nosotros podíamos haber hecho gran parte de ese trabajo”, denunció Figueroa Jaramillo.

Cuando en agosto se informó el contrato de General Electric, la Utier puso el grito en el cielo. “Le cuestionamos el contrato, porque nosotros podíamos hacer el trabajo”, afirmó el líder sindical.

“Va a tomar tiempo”

Por su parte, el titular de Asuntos Públicos de La Fortaleza negó que se vaya a encender la planta de Palo Seco previo a que se completen las reparaciones de las unidades apagadas. Reconoció que la reparación “va a tomar un tiempo”.



Explicó que la empresa Whitefish trabaja en la reparación de las líneas de transmisión de 230,000 voltios desde la central Cambalache, en Arecibo, hasta el área metropolitana. El director de operación y distribución de la AEE, Edgardo Rivera Alvarado, había comentado a este diario -hace una semana- que al momento se habían logrado conectar las líneas de 230,000 voltios hasta Manatí.

De otra parte, Rosario dijo que con los \$128 millones aportados por la Agencia Federal para el Manejo de Emergencias (**FEMA**), la AEE se encargará de ordenar los materiales para que las compañías contratadas para reparar el sistema energético -PowerSecure y Whitefish- puedan operar. Ha trascendido que esta última empresa opera a capacidad limitada ya que dependen de los materiales y de los equipos de la AEE.

Mientras, **FEMA** informó que los generadores para las turbinas de gas de Palo Seco llegaron el 13 de octubre y se proyecta el comienzo de operación para el 25 de octubre.

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## **Rosselló Reafirma Que Su Plan Es Restablecer El Sistema Eléctrico (El Nuevo Día)**

[El Nuevo Día](#) (PRI), October 18, 2017

**Facing the financial and operational collapses of the Power Authority (EEE) and the fiscal inability of the government of Puerto Rico, the ravages caused by Hurricane Maria to the island's electrical system have become an invoice for the FEMA and Corps of Engineers that round-for the moment-the \$1,680,000.**

Ante el colapso financiero y operacional de la Autoridad de Energía Eléctrica (AEE) y la incapacidad fiscal del gobierno de Puerto Rico, los estragos causados por el huracán María al sistema eléctrico de la isla se han convertido en una factura para la Agencia Federal de Manejo de Emergencias (**FEMA**, en inglés) y el Cuerpo de Ingenieros del Ejército de los Estados Unidos (Usace, en inglés) que ronda -por el momento- los \$1,680 millones.

Esta cifra de nueve dígitos, que surgió ayer durante una entrevista con el gobernador Ricardo Rosselló Nevares, no es parte de la línea de crédito por \$4,700 millones que el gobierno puertorriqueño solicitó a **FEMA** para lidiar con su crisis de liquidez.

En la entrevista, el mandatario reconoció que la falta prolongada del servicio eléctrico podría complicar considerablemente la recuperación de la economía puertorriqueña que ya atravesaba una profunda crisis antes del ciclón.

“Cuando lo dije (el plan que contempla restaurar el 95% de la energía para mediados de diciembre) me acusaban de ser agresivo (ambicioso), y lo cierto es que lo es”, dijo Rosselló Nevares.

La semana pasada, El Nuevo Día citó estimados del Instituto Nacional de Energía y Sostenibilidad Islaña (Inesi), en la Universidad de Puerto Rico en Mayagüez, que estima que producir energía con generadores eléctricos podría costar a las familias y comercios unos 70 centavos el kilovatio hora. La cifra es casi cuatro veces el costo promedio del kilovatio hora que la AEE cobra a los abonados.

“Entiendo las dificultades. Primero, cuesta muchísimo correr un negocio en diésel, en un generador. Segundo, verdad, se supone que sea temporero, pero, ya bien sea por el costo o porque los generadores no están diseñados para operar para siempre, se van a caer”, dijo el gobernador cuando El Nuevo Día le indicó que cientos de negocios y miles de familias no tienen dinero suficiente para esperar tres meses por la restauración del sistema eléctrico.

Acto seguido, Rosselló Nevares se mostró confiado en que el 30% de los abonados tendrán electricidad antes de que termine el mes.

Agregó que trabaja en alternativas con la Administración federal de Pequeños Negocios, varios programas bajo **FEMA** y otros como el Community Development Block Grant para que los negocios puedan hacer contrapeso al impacto que supone la pérdida de electricidad en sus operaciones.

Levantar la red es primero

De acuerdo con Rosselló Nevares, el restablecimiento del sistema eléctrico debe ganar intensidad en las próximas semanas.

Hasta ayer, 380 brigadas trabajaban para restablecer el sistema, y el mandatario dijo que deben alcanzar el millar.

La mayor parte de la mano de obra pertenece a la AEE y a ese esfuerzo se han unido 40 brigadas de Jacksonville Power Authority y casi un centenar de Whitefish Energy, la firma con sede en el estado de Montana y que habría sido la única en aceptar trabajar para restaurar el sistema eléctrico de la isla a pedidos de la AEE.

Otras 200 brigadas del USACE también trabajan en la restauración del sistema.

Partiendo de los esquemas de Rosselló Nevares, si la red eléctrica de Puerto Rico fuera a dividirse en dos, el Usace tiene a su cargo la parte sureste de la isla, donde cayeron las líneas de transmisión de energía que proveen electricidad a la zona norte.

En tanto, el personal de Whitefish Energy y otros contratistas como Kobra -acuerdo que todavía se finiquitaba ayer- tendría a su cargo restablecer la electricidad en el mitad oeste de la isla para energizar la zona sur, las áreas de Mayagüez y Arecibo, así como líneas secundarias.

Además, según el gobernador, la contratación de la empresa tejana Fluor Corporation por parte de la Usace debe contribuir a agilizar los trabajos. Dicho contrato ronda los \$240 millones.

De otra parte, Rosselló Nevares señaló que, tras la contratación de General Electric para reparar las unidades de Palo Seco, ese trabajo tomará de cuatro a seis meses, por lo que, en el plazo inmediato, se contempla energizar la zona norte, utilizando los generadores de gran tamaño contratados por el Usace y todavía en proceso de instalación.

Factura a los federales

En mano de obra, dijo el gobernador, se necesitarán en un plazo de dos meses, unos \$490 millones y otros \$740 millones para materiales y equipos. A esa cuantía, se agregan casi \$450 millones en fondos provistos por el Usace.

Así las cosas y tal como anticipó hace una semana El Nuevo Día, levantar la red eléctrica solo será posible por el rescate financiero que provee **FEMA** y el Usace a raíz de la devastación causada por el ciclón. En esta primera etapa, costará \$1,680 millones.

Rosselló Nevares indicó que el análisis de las pérdidas en la AEE continúa, pero dijo que los daños rebasan por mucho la primera factura que pagará el gobierno federal.

Rosselló Nevares reconoció que, a futuro, Puerto Rico tendrá que recabar más apoyo del gobierno federal para asegurar que Puerto Rico cuente con una red energética más eficiente y capaz de resistir un huracán como María.

“Se van a necesitar esos fondos, esas apropiaciones federales, pero también colaboración del sector privado, en la generación, en la participación, en buscar sistemas innovadores”, dijo Rosselló Nevares al agregar que buscará hacer un balance entre los fondos que persigue a nivel federal y la entrada de entidades privadas al mercado energético de la isla.

Respaldo a las renovables

Según Rosselló Nevares, el colapso de la red eléctrica ha abierto la puerta para evaluar la forma en que se ha gestionado la energía en Puerto Rico hasta la fecha.

Entre esos proyectos que podrían reevaluarse, figura la plataforma de gas para la zona sur identificada como el Aguirre Gasport, dijo el gobernador.

“Ahoratenemos la oportunidad de repensarlo todo”, indicó.

A principios de la semana, Rosselló Nevares informó que su administración ha recibido tres propuestas de energía, entre las que se incluye una nueva planta de generación eléctrica con gas en el norte que impulsa Puma Energy. La multinacional Puma confirmó a El Nuevo Día que, desde el 2014, tiene entre sus asesores a World Professional Group, firma que cuenta entre sus integrantes al exdirector de campaña del gobernador Rosselló Nevares y exrepresentante suyo ante la Junta de Supervisión Fiscal, Elías Sánchez Sifonte.

Respaldo a las renovables

A preguntas de El Nuevo Día en torno a por qué perpetuar el modelo de plantas generadoras de gran escala que utilizan fuentes fósiles y no dar paso a la generación con renovables, Rosselló aseguró que, bajo su



administración, se logrará elevar la generación eléctrica con sol o viento. Al presente, el 2% de la energía que vende la AEE proviene de renovables, muy por debajo del objetivo de 15% que establece la ley en Puerto Rico.

“Este es el momento”, dijo Rosselló Nevares. “Nuestra expectativa es subir (la generación con fuentes renovables) entre 15% a 20%. Eso sería un salto significativo en Puerto Rico”.

Según el mandatario, además de las renovables, bajo su plan, se prevé aumentar la generación en el norte, para evitar la pérdida de eficiencia en transmisión desde el sur, e incursionar en las llamadas microrredes y redes inteligentes.

Habrà transparencia

A preguntas de El Nuevo Día en torno a cómo su administración evitará la existencia de conflictos de interés o el despilfarro de fondos en proyectos innecesarios, Rosselló Nevares dijo que también toma cartas en el asunto.

“Vamos a crear una estructura para darle coherencia y transparencia al uso de todos los fondos. No queremos caer en una situación como la de (el huracán) Katrina que, por la falta de claridad y por la falta de ejecución, se perdieron billones de dólares”, indicó.

La estructura, explicó, tendrá dos niveles de transparencia: uno para el gobierno federal para asegurar el repago de reembolsos, y, la segunda, para los ciudadanos.

“Es importante establecer que todos estos proyectos responden a un fin del bien público y que no se han decidido a espaldas del pueblo o por distintos actores”, dijo.

“Ese dinero va a ser para construir la plataforma del futuro. Voy a asegurar que exista diligencia y transparencia”, subrayó.

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## **Puerto Rico's capital of San Juan to be powered by APR Energy's turbines (Fox Business)**

October 18, 2017

[Fox Business/Yahoo Finance](#)

It has been one month since Hurricane Maria charged through the Caribbean towards Puerto Rico, wiping out the island's power grid and much of its infrastructure.

As of Tuesday, only 18% of electric utility customers actually have access to power while others are dependent on diesel-fueled generators.

APR Energy says it will have the lights back on in the capital city of San Juan very quickly through its mobile power plants.

“We've already placed them on the site in a place called Palo Seco which is a power plant in San Juan,” APR Energy CEO and Chairman John Campion told FOX Business' Ashley Webster.

The U.S. Army Corps of Engineers has hired the Jacksonville, Florida-based company to deliver two electricity-producing turbines. The APR turbine rentals, built by General Electric (NYSE:GE), will produce up to 60 megawatts of electricity to power 300,000 homes.

Campion said assessing the impact of Hurricane Maria on the transmission lines that power San Juan delayed the shipment of the turbines.

“Part of the problem is San Juan's power, a lot of that comes from the south and that's transmission lines coming over the mountains, and those transmissions were pretty much wiped out,” he said.

APR Energy is working very closely with the Army Corps of Engineers, General Electric, local utility companies and government officials to turn the lights back on in Puerto Rico.

“We won't solve the full problem, but we will solve part of the problem and then we will bring more machines on and solve more of the problems,” Campion said.

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## **Repairing Puerto Rico's Power Grid a Major Challenge (Latin America Herald Tribune)**

Oct. 18

[Latin America Herald Tribune](#)

SAN JUAN – The task of restoring electricity to Puerto Rico in the wake of Hurricane Maria will demand an investment of hundreds of millions of dollars, a senior US Army Corps of Engineers official told EFE on Tuesday.

The island faces “a grave situation,” Jose Sanchez said in an interview, noting that the powerful Category 4 storm damaged 80 percent of Puerto Rico’s infrastructure.

Nearly a month after the hurricane struck on Sept. 20, state-owned utility AEE is generating less than 18 percent of its pre-Maria output.

The Puerto Rico Chamber of Commerce warned weeks ago that many small and medium-sized businesses may go under if the pace of power restoration does not increase, raising the prospect of more pain for an economy that has been in recession for a decade.

And Gov. Ricardo Rossello has said repeatedly that a protracted period of diminished economic activity due to the lack of electricity is likely to spur an increase in the number of Puerto Ricans – who are US citizens – relocating to the mainland United States.

The US commonwealth has lost 10 percent of its population since 2007.

In the days after Maria slammed into Puerto Rico, AEE chief Ricardo Ramos suggested that some areas of the island could wait as long as nine months to get their power back.

“We are working hard,” Sanchez said Tuesday, referring to the efforts of his team and AEE’s roughly 1,000 employees.

He said that it was impossible to give a date certain for full restoration of electricity due to the many variables at play.

Asked about Rossello’s recent statement that nearly 90 percent of AEE customers would have power by mid-December, Sanchez said only that the governor had established “a very aggressive goal.”

Explaining the scale of the challenge, Suarez said that 200 transmission towers and as many as 50,000 electric poles were down, while 10,000 kilometers (6,000 miles) of lines require repair or replacement.

“There are logistics problems in getting equipment and specialists” to the places where they are needed, Suarez said.

The Army Corps of Engineers awarded the Fluor Corporation a \$240 million contract to help rebuild AEE’s transmission and distribution system, while Ramon Rosario, the chief spokesman for the Rossello administration, announced Tuesday that the government signed a \$4.7 million accord with General Electric for repairs to the Palo Seco power plant near San Juan.

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## **Puerto Rico To Get Two Turbines From Florida Firm To Help Restore Power (Miami Herald)**

By Carli Teproff

[Miami Herald](#), October 18, 2017

Power is on the way for hurricane-ravaged Puerto Rico in the form of two giant fuel-powered generators.

APR Energy, a Jacksonville-based firm, has shipped two turbines to the island nation, which means thousands of customers will have their power restored within weeks, said Ed Patricoff, a partner in the law firm Shutts & Bowen, which is representing the company.

“This is an immediate solution,” said Patricoff, adding the turbines at the Palo Seco power plant, just outside of San Juan, arrived late last week. “It’s a stop-gap measure.”



Patricoff said APR was contacted by the governor of Puerto Rico, Ricardo Rosello, days after Hurricane Maria moved through Sept. 20, leaving the island without power. About 85 percent of the island is still without lights.

Shutts & Bowen negotiated the \$35-million contract with the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers.

The turbines are capable of producing about 50 megawatts of power by using natural gas, which will turn the lights on for about 5,600 households and businesses, Patricoff said. What they will also do, he said, is help stabilize a damaged grid, which means about 50,000 people will soon have their power restored

Patricoff said the company also secured a contract with the U.S. Virgin Islands to provide a turbine.

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## **Washington Must Help Puerto Rico Rebuild Its Electric Grid (RealClear Energy)**

By Silvestre Reyes

October 16, 2017

[RealClear Energy](#)

Hurricane Maria hit the island of Puerto Rico almost like a nuclear bomb, and I believe the responses from both the Congress and the Trump administration have been lacking. Can you imagine if New York, Washington or Texas was in the current state that the Commonwealth of Puerto Rico currently finds itself? The victims in Puerto Rico are American citizens, but English is not their first language, and for this reason, I believe that they are being treated like second-class citizens.

After Hurricane Maria swept through Puerto Rico, millions of people were cut off from the rest of the world. Residents were left with no cellphones, water or power and roads had been completely washed away leaving millions isolated from their friends, families and jobs.

The death toll on the island has reached 45 people, and access to clean water is still scarce and nearly 90 percent of the island remains dark for millions of residents. Medical officials continue to warn that the island's healthcare system is desperately struggling to perform its most critical and basic services. The injured and ill are dying due to the lack of power and difficulty transporting patients. Grocery stores are running low on food, and people are waiting in line for hours to get gas to power their generators.

The damage to the island's power grid is so extensive that officials still cannot predict when power will return, and many residents are facing a harsh reality: That it could be many months before they get electric service. Which brings me to the thesis of this piece: Congress and the Administration must use this situation as an opportunity to rebuild the energy grid as quickly as possible, spurring both government investment and public/private partnerships – whatever it takes to get the job done.

The Puerto Rico Electric Power Authority, also known as PREPA, currently manages Puerto Rico's electric grid. PREPA is a government-owned, electric power company responsible for electricity generation, power transmission and power distribution on the island. Now is not the time to point fingers or place blame, but by all accounts, even before Hurricane Maria, PREPA was struggling to get the job done. In fact, PREPA was \$9 billion in debt when it declared bankruptcy in July of 2017. Its equipment was already "degraded, unsafe, and unreliable" according to a draft fiscal report the company filed in April of 2017. Making matters worse, PREPA charged customers around 50% more for power than the average customer on the mainland of the United States pays.

Now is an opportunity to try and rebuild the grid in Puerto Rico and create a better system than currently exists. This means keeping in mind the importance of energy diversification to avoid recreating the same recovery problems that the island is now facing. In 2016, 47% of Puerto Rico's electricity came from petroleum, 34% from natural gas, 17% from coal, and 2% from renewable energy, according to the U.S. Energy Information Administration. Moving forward, it would make sense to expand the renewable portion, allowing the renewable producers to compete for the opportunity to create an infrastructure that will last and best service the Puerto Rican people. The situation in Puerto Rico has already attracted the attention of renewable energy companies and investors.



Congress and the White House must also seek opportunities to incentivize private investment in the grid, so the restoration of the grid can accelerate faster than its current pace, which is painfully slow. As of now, PREPA is only working with a single private contractor to restore the grid and is woefully inadequate.

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## **El Cuerpo De Ingenieros Coloca 505 Barreras De Cemento En Guajataca (El Nuevo Día)**

[El Nuevo Día \(PRI\)](#), October 18, 2017

**The Corps of Engineers already placed 505 concrete barriers and 300 bags of sand with stone in the Guajataca dam, in Quebradillas, as part of the work of mitigation that they carry out to prevent the water from leaving by the Pourer.**

El Cuerpo de Ingenieros del Ejército de los Estados Unidos (USACE) ya colocó 505 barreras de concreto y 300 bolsas de arena con piedra en la represa Guajataca, en Quebradillas, como parte del trabajo de mitigación que realizan para evitar que el agua se salga por el vertedor.

El próximo paso consistirá en colocar 1,300 bolsas adicionales de arena con piedra para luego instalar bombas de agua y, de esta forma, bajar el nivel del agua, explicó el director de operaciones de contingencia y seguridad nacional del USACE, José Sánchez.

“Las bolsas de arena y piedra ahora –como no está vertiendo el agua por el vertedor–, pues me permite usar camiones para colocarlas”, explicó Sánchez, quien ha dicho que después de este trabajo, la represa requiere de una reparación permanente.

Preguntado sobre cuánto tiempo tomará concluir con los trabajos de mitigación, Sánchez dijo “unas cuantas semanas”.

“También estamos tratando de ayudar a que haya agua en los canales (contiguos) que suplen agua potable. Ya el canal está limpio y ahora vamos a poner unas tuberías para hacer un bypass de esa agua y llenar el canal”, afirmó.

“Estamos también instalando unas bombas para ayudar a bajar un poco el nivel de la represa y así bajar la presión”, agregó.

El USACE ya recibió dos bombas para hacer ese trabajo. Sánchez dijo que espera por la llegada de ocho bombas adicionales, “para seguir en el proceso de quererle dar más estabilización a los niveles de la represa”, aseveró el ingeniero sobre el trabajo cuyo costo no se ha precisado, pero es cubierto por la Agencia Federal para el Manejo de Emergencias.

El alcalde de Quebradillas, Heriberto Vélez, dijo que según le explicaron, se instalarán bombas de agua en el río Guajataca para suplir los canales, que quedaron afectados por los escombros y la basura que los cubrió tras el huracán.

“La tubería que lleva agua a los canales se rompió”, dijo.

“Quebradillas no se ha afectado tanto. Más se han afectado Isabela, Aguada, Aguadilla, San Sebastián, y esos pueblos que no reciben agua del río Guajataca sino de la represa”, explicó el alcalde.

Tras el huracán, se dio a conocer que la represa tenía una fisura de 24 pulgadas. Sin embargo, el USACE, luego de una evaluación, dio a conocer que no se trataba de una rotura sino que la gran cantidad de agua que recibió la represa socavó una de sus paredes del aliviadero.

La emergencia hizo necesario el trabajo de mitigación de la USACE y que se desalojaran cientos de personas que residen cercanas a la represa. El alcalde de Quebradillas no precisó la cantidad, pero aseguró que la cifra sobrepasa el centenar. “A las familias se les avisó. Hay unas que viven fuera de sus hogares y otras que van y vienen”, afirmó.

También, unidades de Purificación de Agua de la Reserva del Ejército de Estados Unidos realizan el proceso de purificación en el lago Guajataca para distribuirla a comunidades aledañas.

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## **Municipios Recogerán Escombros En Vías Estatales (El Vocero)**

By Laura M. Quintero

[El Vocero de Puerto Rico](#), October 18, 2017

### **Municipalities will pick up debris in state road.**

La dirección regional de la Agencia Federal para el Manejo de Emergencias (**FEMA**) está buscando que su sede en Washington DC le conceda mayor flexibilidad ante la emergencia que vive Puerto Rico tras el paso del huracán María, de modo que se pueda reembolsar a los municipios por recoger escombros en las carreteras que son jurisdicción del gobierno central.

La directora de la división de infraestructura de **FEMA**, Ana Morales, confirmó ayer a este diario que hicieron la solicitud a las oficinas centrales de la agencia dado a que la regulación establece que solo la entidad con jurisdicción legal sobre la infraestructura puede hacer la reclamación para obtener reembolso de gastos por las labores de limpieza.

El pedido provino de los propios alcaldes con interés y recursos para despejar las vías estatales, a las que el Departamento de Transportación y Obras Públicas (DTOP) o la Guardia Nacional no han podido llegar.

“Estamos trabajando con el coordinador federal (de **FEMA** en la Isla), Mike Byrne, para que se autorice que los municipios que tienen la necesidad y la urgencia de que se saquen los escombros de carreteras estatales, por razones de salud y emergencia, reciban el desembolso por los gastos incurridos”, mencionó Morales.

La funcionaria reconoció que los escombros en las vías públicas representan un riesgo a la seguridad, pues pueden servir de obstáculo a los conductores y ocasionar accidentes de tránsito.

“Tenemos una buena comunicación con la sede y el coordinador federal apoya la decisión. Entiendo que la decisión (de la capital federal) va a ser favorable”, afirmó Morales sobre la respuesta que espera baje esta misma semana.

**FEMA** ya ha asignado \$336.2 millones a entidades públicas para reparaciones de infraestructura, de los cuales \$12.5 millones han sido para el recogido de escombros.

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## **Mississippi To Take In 1,200 Prisoners From Hurricane-scarred Puerto Rico (USA Today)**

[USA Today](#), October 18, 2017

YAZOO CITY, Miss. — About 1,200 federal prisoners from Puerto Rico will be housed at the federal correctional facility in Yazoo City.

U.S. Court Clerk Arthur Johnston for the Southern District of Mississippi confirmed that Mississippi agreed to house the prisoners in the aftermath of the devastation in Puerto Rico from Hurricane Maria.

Johnston said U.S. Supreme Court Chief Justice John Roberts asked federal judges to be available to help if needed on any of the prisoners' cases, but the cases will remain in the jurisdiction of Puerto Rican judges.

“Other jurisdictions helped when we had Hurricane Katrina,” Johnston said. “We are delighted to return the favor.”

Puerto Rico is home to one federal prison with about 1,400 inmates. The territory also has capacity for about 12,000 state prisoners.

Johnston said he was almost certain the federal prisoners were already in Mississippi. However, he said no federal judge in Mississippi has begun to handle any case yet.

Clay Chandler, Gov. Phil Bryant's spokesman, said Wednesday that he couldn't confirm federal prisoners from Puerto Rico were in Mississippi or on their way here.

Bryant released a statement saying, “I would not be in favor of accepting anyone's dangerous prisoners.”

Last month, the Federal Bureau of Prisons said in a statement on its website: “As conditions on the island of Puerto Rico continued to deteriorate, creating difficulties in securing supplies and maintaining power, the Bureau felt it prudent to reduce the inmate population at MDC Guaynabo.”



“We have begun the process of reducing the population at MDC Guaynabo and continue to assess damage and conditions at the facility. Given the large number of inmates that need to be relocated, the movement will take several days to complete.”

The Metropolitan Detention Center Guaynabo in 1993 became the first federal prison facility built outside the continental United States. Its primary mission is to house pretrial and holdover inmates as a service to the U.S. District Courts and the U.S. Marshals Service for the Districts of Puerto Rico and the U.S. Virgin Islands, according to Bureau of Prisons information.

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## **HEALTH / DEATHS / ENVIRONMENTAL**

### **FEMA Dejaría De Vender Diésel A Los Hospitales (Primera Hora)**

[Primera Hora \(PRI\)](#), October 18, 2017

**As of next week the FEMA may stop supplying diesel to the country's private hospitals. The possibility was discussed at a meeting on Saturday at the Emergency Operations Centre (COE), which has caused great consternation in the hospital industry. Four weeks after the passage of Hurricane Maria on the island, when the national emergency still prevails.**

A partir de la semana que viene la Agencia federal para el Manejo de Emergencias (**FEMA**, por sus siglas en inglés) podría dejar de suplirle diésel a los hospitales privados del País. La posibilidad fue discutida en una reunión el sábado en el Centro de Operaciones de Emergencia (COE), lo que ha causado gran consternación en la industria hospitalaria. Esto, a cuatro semanas del paso del Huracán María por la Isla, cuando aún prevalece la emergencia nacional.

Según datos del gobierno, hasta ayer en la tarde solo 17.70% de los clientes de la Autoridad de Energía Eléctrica (AEE) contaban con este servicio, mientras 34.57% de los abonados de la Autoridad de Acueductos y Alcanta-rillados (AAA) continúan sin agua potable.

“Necesitamos que **FEMA** nos siga brindando este servicio, independientemente de que la organización de salud tenga

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### **Hospitales Le Requieren Diésel A FEMA (El Nuevo Dia)**

[El Nuevo Día \(PRI\)](#), October 18, 2017

**The Association of Hospitals warned yesterday that FEMA contemplates the possibility of suspending the supply of diesel to hospital institutions that still operate through electricity generators**

La Asociación de Hospitales alertó ayer que la Agencia Federal para el Manejo de Emergencias (**FEMA**, por sus siglas en inglés) contempla la posibilidad de suspender el suplido de diésel a las instituciones hospitalarias que aún operan mediante generadores de electricidad.

Jaime Plá, presidente ejecutivo de la Asociación, que representa a los 69 hospitales del país, dijo que gran parte de las instituciones que representa han podido mantener operaciones durante las cuatro semanas que van desde el paso del huracán María gracias a los generadores eléctricos, y que aún hoy necesitan del diésel.

Plá indicó que ayer, cuando más del 80% de la isla permanecía sin servicio de energía eléctrica, había 44 hospitales.

Necesaria la electricidad

Plá relató que, debido a la intermitencia del servicio eléctrico, crearon un grupo de trabajo para establecer un sistema más fluido de diésel a hospitales, Centros 330 y Centros de Diagnóstico y Tratamiento (CDT)



mediante un contacto más directo con los proveedores de diésel, especialmente con las compañías más grandes: Puma, Total, Peerless y American Petroleum.

“Pero, mientras continúe la emergencia, necesitamos que **FEMA** siga supléndoles diésel a los hospitales”, insistió.

“Hay una intención de ellos (**FEMA**) de poner otras prioridades, pero nosotros le hicimos la salvedad de que quien ha estado llevando la carga de salud son las instituciones privadas, que incluye una gama amplia de servicios, no solo hospitales, sino médicos, laboratorios, rayos X y Centros 330, entre otros”, señaló.

Plá reclamó, además, que estos servicios han continuado brindándose aun cuando no han podido facturar a los planes médicos por los problemas con las telecomunicaciones y la electricidad.

“El diésel requería dinero, una liquidez rápida, y aun así los hospitales han seguido dando servicio, muchos sin poder facturar (a los planes médicos por los servicios brindados) al no tener sistemas (de conexión de internet), especialmente los hospitales fuera del área metropolitana”, dijo.

Cruz, por su parte, relató que, incluso cuando en el Hospital de Niños San Jorge ha vuelto la energía eléctrica, necesitan de los generadores porque las constantes interrupciones del servicio ponen en riesgo la atención a sus pacientes.

Dijo que el servicio de energía eléctrica ha estado más estable esta semana que la anterior, cuando, dijo, necesitaron del apoyo de su generador para no interrumpir los servicios.

Por su parte, el administrador del Hospital del Maestro, Jorge Torres, relató una experiencia similar, y dijo que, aunque ya tienen servicio de energía que “va y viene”, continúan apoyándose en su generador cuando lo necesitan.

“**FEMA** solo nos sirvió 1,000 galones (de diésel) al principio, por el cual nos van a facturar en algún momento. Pero, básicamente, hemos corrido (con el suplido de diésel) a nivel privado. Hubo mucho assessment (evaluación) de ellos (**FEMA**), pero se quedaba ahí”, dijo.

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## **Langley Medics Deploy To Puerto Rico (Newport News Daily Press)**

By Hugh Lessig

[Newport News \(VA\) Daily Press](#), October 18, 2017

A medical team has deployed from Langley Air Force Base to provide help for hurricane victims in Puerto Rico.

Nearly 90 airmen from the 633rd Medical Group will set up and operate a 25-bed field hospital unit, according to a news release. They left Langley in three flights, starting Oct. 15 and ending Wednesday.

The Langley team will command additional airmen from Eglin AFB in Florida and Nellis AFB in Nevada. All gathered at Langley to fly to Puerto Rico together. The team will establish an acute care clinic in Aguadilla in northwest Puerto Rico.

The team was put on standby about three weeks ago, said Col. Patricia Tate, a senior nurse with the 633rd.

The Expeditionary Medical Support field hospital can handle surgery, primary and dental care, and prepare casualties to be evacuated. It is designed to be set up quickly.

During a training exercise at Langley held one year ago, members of the 633rd set up their operation and treated airmen who needed annual exams or who had minor ailments. It added a dose of realism to the exercise.

They practiced teamwork, communication and noticed little things, such as a wheeled stool set on uneven ground. It may sound trivial, but it could become a distraction over the course of a long day.

In Puerto Rico, the Langley airmen will support the broader effort undertaken by the **Federal Emergency Management Agency**, according to Col. Jeffrey Lewis.

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## BUSINESS

### **She was 92, stranded in Puerto Rico nursing home. Her rescue: an Uber sent from Miami (Miami Herald)**

By Douglas Hanks

October 19, 2017 7:00 AM

#### [Miami Herald](#)

The good news out of San Juan came in a hurry for Natascha Otero-Santiago but it wouldn't last long: Her mother's 92-year-old friend, stranded on the fifth floor of a nursing home with no power, finally had a seat waiting for her on a private jet. It was leaving in 90 minutes.

Otero-Santiago, stuck in her office in Fort Lauderdale, had to find the elderly woman a ride and fast. So she pulled out her cellphone. And hailed an Uber.

"I was really surprised it was working," the public relations executive said, recalling the Oct. 4 rescue. "I got a driver right away."

Nearly a month after Hurricane Maria wiped out most of Puerto Rico's electricity and cellular service, Uber has emerged as an app-based barometer for the most modern of recoveries. The ride-hailing service is operating at only about 20 percent of its capacity before the storm, largely confined to the San Juan area and its enclave of cell towers that at least offer spotty service.

"I've been busy," said Giovanni Gonzalez, an Uber driver in San Juan who went back to work about two weeks ago. With long gas lines, Gonzalez said many residents opted to hire a driver instead of using their own car. And Maria left driving a mess: Missing traffic signals worsen gridlock as police step in to direct traffic, he said, and rains can all but shut down a road.

"It rains for 10 minutes, and it's already flooded because everything is saturated," he said.

Another problem for Gonzalez is spotty cellular service. While phones are working enough for customers to hail him, Gonzalez said he can't count on a connection lasting long enough to record his full fare.

"When you have no cell service, it takes Uber a long time to end the trip," he said during a telephone interview. "There are some rides when I had to tell them: I did this ride, but it didn't record the trip."

Uber spokeswoman Julie Robinson said the company secured about 10,000 gallons of fuel for drivers to combat shortages, but that a lack of cellular service has idled almost the entire fleet. Robinson said only about 15 percent of the company's drivers were connected to the system last weekend.

Electricity is out for about 80 percent of the island. An Oct. 18 report from the Federal Communications Commission said 71 percent of the island's cellular towers are out of service.

San Juan's numbers look much better on the FCC report, with just 45 percent of its towers out of service — the lowest outage number for any area in the U.S. territory. Gonzalez said he's taken riders to Walmart for groceries, restaurants and shops. His most recent fare: a trip to a San Juan mall.

Still, Gonzalez said business hasn't been brisk enough for him to make it. He expects his trip to the mall to be his last as an Uber driver in Puerto Rico. The 29-year-old conducted a phone interview from the city's airport, where he was waiting for a flight to take him to a friend's home in Seattle.

"It's very difficult here," he said.

Nearly a month after Hurricane Maria wiped out most of Puerto Rico's electricity and cellular service, Uber has emerged as an app-based barometer for the most modern of recoveries.

Uber's skeleton fleet in San Juan was key to getting Margarita Berga de Lema to Miami two weeks after Maria hit. The 92-year-old retired airline executive was stranded without power in a nursing home, relying on daily food deliveries from staff.

Her best friend, Chia Otero, 89, was already in the Miami area when Maria hit, part of a long-planned visit with her daughter, Otero-Santiago. After the storm, the two were desperate to get Berga de Lema out of San Juan, especially after Maria left her without running water in the early days of recovery.



Otero-Santiago, director of digital strategy at Latin 2 Latin in Fort Lauderdale, grew up in Puerto Rico and had been part of the South Florida relief effort shuttling supplies to the island and helping residents flee to the mainland. Her volunteer work connected Otero-Santiago with the operator of an air ambulance leaving San Juan on October 4, with a last-minute opening for a seat.

"We called Margarita, because we knew we had to get her out of there as soon as possible," said Otero, who was in her daughter's office when news arrived about the open seat.

Berga de Lema got the call at 4 p.m. for a flight leaving 90 minutes later. She thought she could get to the airport herself. "She said, 'I'm calling my nephew,'" Otero recalled. "My daughter said, 'No, you're not calling anybody. We're sending you an Uber. He's on his way.'"

After tossing some clothes in a bag, Berga de Lema walked down five flight of steps to meet her driver, a man that Otero-Santiago's phone only identifies as Moises.

"He told me, 'Don't worry, lady,'" Berga de Lema said in an interview Wednesday from Miami. Traffic was bad, and Otero-Santiago's Uber app showed the car seeming to stop on its way to San Juan as the mother-and-daughter team followed the progress from Fort Lauderdale.

At one point, the pair in Florida had the pair in Puerto Rico on parallel phone conversations: the mother talking to Berga de Lema and the daughter to Moises. The driver drove his passenger to the private jet terminal, checking various runways until he found the waiting plane with the right tail numbers, completing the \$40 trip.

"Moises," Otero-Santiago said, "got five stars."

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## **Without power, Puerto Rico turns to radio for information - and company in the dark (Miami Herald)**

By Jim Wyss

October 17, 2017 5:13 PM

[Miami Herald](#)

SAN JUAN, Puerto Rico -- For several hours after Hurricane Maria slammed into the island of Puerto Rico, Jorge Blanco had an unexpected monopoly.

His station, Wapa Radio, was the only broadcaster — radio or television — still transmitting after the storm raked the U.S. territory with 110-mph winds.

Three weeks later, most media outlets are up and running again, and trying to feed the insatiable appetite for news post-Maria. But even now that the winds have died down, it's clear that the hurricane has dramatically changed the media landscape.

With 82 percent of the island still without electricity and many without cellphone service, radio has, once again, become a dominant player.

At Wapa Radio — AM 680 — Blanco said advertising is up more than 300 percent since the storm. Companies are using the radio both to advertise and to communicate with employees who no longer have phones or are scattered over the island.

Across Puerto Rico, people sit in their cars and huddle around battery-powered radios to find out where food distribution centers are, or in hopes of hearing from loved ones on call-in radio shows.

When Hurricane Mari hit Puerto Rico, it crippled the island's infrastructure. More than three weeks later, fewer than 20 percent of the population have power and that's changed the way people are getting their news. In this hard hit section of Toa Baja, locals said that radio was their only source of information.

Jim Wyss

Blanco is grateful for the new rush of advertisers but that doesn't mean his business is running without a hitch. Since the hurricane made landfall Sept. 20, he's been on a non-stop loop around the island trying to keep 10 generators full of diesel and functioning. And he fears he's one breakdown away from losing his ability to broadcast, as well as his advertisers.