

contending with cheap Mexican imports, watching his neighbors abandon crops in their fields and sell off their farms when they couldn't match the price of incoming produce.

But emboldened by the Trump administration's hostility toward foreign trade, DiMare and a group of Southeast growers are pushing for tough new protectionist measures against their Mexican rivals — so tough, in fact, that their demands threaten to wreck the negotiations.

"I'm all about free trade, but it has to be fair," DiMare said.

"It's Americans first now, right?" he added.

As the United States, Canada and Mexico prepare to wrap up a fourth round of talks Tuesday about revisions to the North American Free Trade Agreement, there is growing fear that the talks could collapse around one of several "poison pill" provisions.

Those include the Florida tomato growers' demands, which are supported by some berry, melon and pepper producers, for stronger anti-dumping measures — an idea that has been soundly rejected by the Mexicans.

The Florida growers' high-stakes campaign for special anti-dumping measures for seasonal produce has also exposed sharp divisions with the rest of America's farmers, who are generally strongly pro-NAFTA and whose livelihoods are on the line if the negotiations falter.

"There's a lot of political power resting with a small group of individuals who have a lot to gain," said Joseph Glauber, a senior research fellow at the International Food Policy Research Institute and the former chief economist at the Agriculture Department. "Unfortunately, the special provision you carve out for one interest group can really backfire for others."

Agriculture is one of the sectors with the most to lose should NAFTA fall through — in large part because the trade deal has given farmers so much.

Between 1993, the year before NAFTA went into effect, and 2016, U.S. agricultural exports to Canada and Mexico shot up by more than 400 percent, from \$8.9 billion to \$38.1 billion. Mexico and Canada are now the principal foreign markets for such U.S. commodities as corn and soybeans, apples and high-fructose corn syrup.

Those benefits have generated strong support for the trade agreement among farmers

and ranchers over the years — and anxiety at the prospect that it could come to an end.

"The words we didn't want to hear, in farm country, were 'terminate NAFTA,' " said Chad Hart, an economist at Iowa State University who focuses on grain markets. "Maybe 'readjust,' maybe 'renegotiate.' But you're talking about two of our three largest agricultural trading partners — it's never 'terminate.' "

But not all farmers have seen those gains — and some, including Florida tomato growers, argue that they have lost out because of competition from producers who enjoy lower labor costs and a better growing climate.

The problem, in a word, is humidity. Florida has a whole lot of it. As a result, its growers can't use greenhouses, which better protect the vegetables, and they have severe problems with pests and diseases.

When you buy an industrial Florida tomato, it has been grown outdoors in a field, harvested green and ripened near the grocery store with ethylene gas. Mexican tomatoes, on the other hand, are largely vine-ripened and grown in greenhouses.

Florida growers say these aren't the only things separating them from the Mexican competition. Farmworkers' wages in the United States are far higher, as is the cost of meeting government regulations. And the Mexican greenhouse industry has taken off, they argue, only because the state helped subsidize it.

As a result, growers say, dozens of Florida farms have closed, and the number of acres planted in tomatoes in the state has fallen by half since its high in 1989.

"That, to me, draws the clearest picture," DiMare said. "When you look at the disadvantages we face, how do you expect the domestic industry to survive?"

Tomato growers have suggested a series of remedies to stem their losses. In 1997, the countries agreed on a minimum price for Mexican tomatoes.

Now U.S. tomato growers' demand to make it easier for regional producers to bring anti-dumping complaints could become a stumbling block in the NAFTA negotiations.

Under current rules, farmers can file dumping cases only after demonstrating damage to their entire industry across multiple seasons. The U.S. proposals would make it possible for smaller

groups of producers to bring complaints, effectively increasing the number of anti-dumping -cases and the chance that U.S. growers would prevail.

"It's about fundamental fairness," said Mike Stuart, president of the Florida Fruit and Vegetable Association, which has lobbied for the measure. "As it stands, they're sitting ducks for unfair trade practices."

But some in the industry have described the provision as a backdoor mechanism for putting more tariffs on Mexican produce.

Mexican officials have said they will not consider a deal that enhances protections for seasonal growers, criticizing the proposals as "arbitrary" and "against the interests of free trade."

"It's a red line. There is no room to negotiate," said Bosco de la Vega, president of the National Agricultural Council, Mexico's largest farming group.

The provision has also incited tensions across U.S. agriculture, where the general feeling is that Florida growers have put -everyone else's business at risk. The -industry-wide line on NAFTA has long been "do no harm" — make no changes to the deal that could lead to any agricultural trade restrictions.

But if the seasonality provision makes its way into the final agreement, it could be used against American farmers and ranchers who export to Mexico, several industry representatives said. Targets might include pork producers, who sold 1.6 billion pounds of hams, legs and "off-cuts" to Mexico last year.

There is also growing recognition that American farmers could get hurt if disagreements over the provision cause the United States to walk away from the free-trade pact.

In that case, tariffs for most U.S. agricultural exports would spike — making them more expensive than the commodities on offer from other countries.

Midwestern corn, oilseed and wheat farmers would have the most to lose, said Roman Keeney, an agricultural economist at Purdue University.

As anxieties about the NAFTA renegotiation build, some large U.S. agricultural groups have been lobbying behind the scenes against the Florida provision, representatives told The Washington Post.

On Friday, groups representing the U.S. grain, produce and corn-refining industries held a

joint news conference with Mexico's National Agricultural Council, expressing their opposition to the tomato growers' measure.

"We have concerns with the provision," said Lesly Weber McNitt, director of public policy for the National Corn Growers Association. "Both in terms of precedent and in terms of the overall success of the negotiation."

Both sides will have to wait before they get any certainty.

The tomato growers' provision did not come up at this round of NAFTA talks in Washington, according to several people familiar with the negotiations. That will leave the dispute for the fifth round of talks, in late October or November.

DiMare, for his part, isn't terribly anxious: He says he believes that the Trump administration will continue to push for protections for tomato growers.

Besides, he'll see benefits regardless of how the provision fares.

Like the operators of most of Florida's largest tomato companies, DiMare doesn't merely grow tomatoes — he also acts as a wholesaler, sourcing tomatoes from different growers and reselling them to grocery stores and food-service providers.

Some of his product, he admits, comes from Mexico.

"It depends on what customers want," he said. "For whatever reason, some people want the Mexican tomatoes."



FEMA

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MAIN FEMA NEWS

NATIONAL NEWS

NBC: California Wildfires. [NBC Nightly News](#) (10/16, story 5, 2:10, Holt, 16.61M) reported, "We turn now to the massive fire disaster in the west. New video giving us a terrifying glimpse inside the inferno as the death toll climbs to at least 41, which now includes a firefighter. But tonight, crews are hopeful they've finally gotten a handle on the flames. Let's get more from NBC's Joe Fryer." NBC (**Fryer**) added, "A week after the wildfires began their deadly march across California, the sergeant behind this body camera footage is sharing his story." **Unidentified Speaker:** "I was scared beyond

reason. I'm not a fireman. I've never been trained to be a fireman. So it was exceptionally shocking to me." **Fryer:** "Brandon with the Sonoma County Sheriff's Department urgently knocked on doors when the fires erupted." **Unidentified Speaker:** "She's disabled." **Fryer:** "Before helping a couple into their car." **Unidentified Speaker:** "We did as much as we could, but that's what wears heavy on us. What did we miss?" **Fryer:** "The latest death came today. A contract firefighter killed when a water tender truck rolled off a road. Firefighters are making progress, attacking stubborn flames from above, blocking their path down below. On steep terrain like this, firefighters are worried about something called roll-out, logs and vegetation rolling down the hill, starting fires in places that resident burned yet. It's why crews dig perimeters around the fire. Once the flames hit these lines, they often vanish. Tens of thousands

of evacuees are returning home. Lisa found her Napa house still standing." **Unidentified Speaker:** "I'm lucky. We have somebody who is not so lucky that is moving into our guesthouse today." **Fryer:** "Peter's house was destroyed because he focused his energy on saving the 1,000 exotic animals at Safari West. His wildlife sanctuary." **Unidentified Speaker:** "These are living, breathing things and you got to stick with the living souls." **Fryer:** "Forty thousand people are still evacuated tonight, and officials say it will be days if not weeks before some in the hardest-hit neighborhoods are able to return home for good. Firefighters say they are cautiously optimistic right now and hope that some of these fires will be fully contained by week's end."

ABC: California Wildfires. [ABC World News Tonight](#) (10/16, story 3, 2:20, Muir, 14.63M) reported, "And now to California, and a harrowing number tonight. More than a week now after the deadly wild fires began. More than 100 people are still missing tonight. Flames still spreading through the hills of Napa county. The couple married 55 years, trying to survive the fire in the pool. The wife then dying in her husband's arms. ABC's Clayton Sandell is in Santa Rosa." ABC (**Sandell**) added, "The staggering death tolls from the wildfires in California added more today, when a water tank driver was killed in a crash." **Unidentified Speaker:** "Possible water tender rollover." **Sandell:** "The first firefighting death in a week-long firestorm." **Chief David Shew,** Cal Fire: "This is day eight. For these fires to be raging through Napa and Sonoma Counties, and fatigue is definitely a factor." **Sandell:** "The blazes have killed 40 other people. Carmen Barriz and her husband Armando jumped into a swimming pool last week, trying to survive the intense heat and smoke. She died in his arms." **Monica Berriz Ocon,** Daughter: "No one should have to live through that violent fury. It is just remarkable what my father has endured." **Sandell:** "Tonight, as firefighters battle fatigue, there is progress, but flames are still spreading in hard to reach areas. These water dropping helicopters are critical to the firefighting effort because the terrain is so steep. It's hard for firefighters to get in. You can see from all the smoke, there's a long way to go. The devil winds that created hell on Earth are gone for now." **Unidentified Speaker:** "We're going to [bleep] die dude, we got to get out of here!" **Sandell:** "But firefighters are still on high alert." **Dominic Polito,** Escondido City Fire Dept.:

"This fire is still very capable of turning on us, so we just need to keep an eye on it, stay vigilant and keep working as hard as we have been." **Sandell:** "Many residents with homes still standing can now go back. Some reunited with furry survivors." **Unidentified Speaker:** "Oh, thank you!" **Unidentified Speaker:** "You're welcome." **Sandell:** "The pets they were forced to leave behind." **Unidentified Speaker:** "Izzy come here baby!" **Muir:** "Great scene to see. Clayton live with us from Santa Rosa. Clayton, a number you pointed out to us, Seven hundred people still in shelters there?" **Sandell:** "That's right, David. And many of those people will have nothing to come back to. I want to show you the arbitrary nature of the damage here if you look in this direction, it's just destruction, as far as the eye can see. But take a look over here. The other side of this very same street, all the houses, completely untouched."

CBS: California Wildfires. The [CBS Evening News](#) (10/16, story 4, 2:10, Mason, 11.17M) reported, "Firefighters battling the California wildfires are making progress. Winds that fanned the flames are dying down, but today, a driver delivering water to the fire lines was killed when his truck flipped. There are now 41 deaths in the fires. 213,000 acres have burned, and nearly 6,000 buildings were destroyed. Some evacuees are heading home to see if they still have one. Here's Mireya Villarreal." CBS (**Villarreal**) added, "When the fire came racing down into Santa Rosa, an assistant fire marshal was called into service." **Unidentified Speaker:** "I wouldn't imagine we'd have something that big all of a sudden right here." **Villarreal:** "As the fire continues to burn, officials are now turning their attention to making these neighborhoods safer. One Santa Rosa neighbor has been designated by the state as a very high fire hazard zone, requiring homeowners to clear brush and use fire resistant materials on their roofs, but Coffey Park, a dense neighborhood, is considered a safe area with limited requirement. It now looks like this. Neither neighborhood could withstand a fire fueled by 80 mph winds." **Unidentified Speaker:** "There's a lot of systems and codes that have been put in place to make it safer, to make it a safer environment, but mother nature brought wind." **Villarreal:** "This neighborhood is woven within California's wild land, a prime example of the state's suburban sprawl. In 1960, there were 766 homes within the perimeter of the Tubs Fire,

compared to more than 6,000 in 2010.” **Unidentified Speaker:** “I don’t think anyone would have guessed we’d have a wildfire that would move through the volume of hotels, commercial buildings, restaurants, area where there’s little to no landscaping. It burned through all that.” **Villarreal:** “Thousands of evacuation orders have been lifted, but in a wild land areas like this, it could take days if not weeks before the rebuilding can start. There is rain expected later this week, which fire crews are hoping will help them reach their containment goals of 100 percent by this Friday.”

ABC: Trump-Puerto Rico. [ABC World News Tonight](#) (10/16, lead story, 4:10, Muir, 14.63M) reported, “Good evening. And it’s great to start another week with you. And the President started the week with an impromptu press conference, summoning reporters to the Rose Garden today with little notice. After weeks of blistering attacks with Mitch McConnell, he was suddenly standings right there with the President. The President saying we’re closer than ever before. Then, the President took questions on Puerto Rico, the special council on Russia. And what he said about former Presidents not calling families when they lost loved ones at war. Three former Presidents and their teams now reacting tonight. We begin with ABC’s Chief White House Correspondent Jonathan Karl.” **ABC (Karl)** added, “After repeatedly lashing out at him, President Trump held a hastily arranged press conference with Mitch McConnell in the Rose Garden today to declare their relationship outstanding.” **President Trump:** “We have been friends for a long time. We are probably now, despite what we read, we’re probably now, I think, at least as far as I’m concerned, closer than ever before.” **Karl:** “That’s a change in tone for the President, whose former Chief Strategist Steve Bannon has declared war on McConnell.” **Steve Bannon,** Former White House Chief Strategist: “Yeah Mitch, the donors are not happy, they have all left you. We’ve cut your oxygen off, Mitch.” **Karl:** “Mr. President, do you approve on Steve Bannon’s war on Mitch McConnell and the Republican establishment?” **Trump:** “Steve is very committed. He’s a friend of mine, and he’s very committed to getting things passed. I have great relationships with actually many Senators, but in particular with most Republican Senators, but we are not getting the job done. And I’m not going to blame myself, I’ll be honest. They are not getting the job done.” **Karl:** “I

asked the President about Bannon’s vow to take on nearly every Republican Senator up for re-election. But you’re okay with Bannon campaigning against Republicans running for re-election?” **Trump:** “I know how he feels, depends on who you are talking about. There are some Republicans frankly that should be ashamed of themselves. I can understand fully how Steve Bannon feels.” **Karl:** “But in the Rose Garden, McConnell fired back at Bannon’s plan to promote hard-line conservatives.” **Sen. Mitch McConnell,** Senate Majority Leader: “You have to nominate people who can actually win because winners make policy and losers go home.” **Karl:** “And standing with McConnell, the President said he would talk to Bannon.” **Trump:** “Steve is doing what Steve thinks is the right thing. Some of the people he may be looking at, I’m going to see if we can talk him out of that because frankly, they’re great people.” **Karl:** “The President took questions for about 40 minutes on a wide range of subjects, including Puerto Rico.” **Trump:** “We have massive amounts of water. We have massive amounts of food. But they have to distribute the food, and they have to do this, they have to distribute the food to the people of the island. So, what we’ve done, is we now actually have military distributing food. Something that they really shouldn’t have to be doing.” **Karl:** “And on the investigation into Russian meddling and possible collusion, the President signaled he won’t pull the plug on the special prosecutor.” **Unidentified Speaker:** “Are you considering firing Robert Mueller?” **Trump:** “No, not at all.” **Muir:** “Jon Karl live from the White House tonight. And something else the President said today. He said that unlike some of his predecessors, he actually calls the families of fallen troops. Here’s what the President said.” **Trump:** “The traditional way, if you look at President Obama and other Presidents. Most of them didn’t make calls, a lot of them didn’t make calls. I like to call when it’s appropriate, when I think I’m able to do it. They have made the ultimate sacrifice. So, generally, I would say that I like to call.” **Muir:** “So, Jon, tonight, three former President’s teams are responding now?” **Karl:** “All three of the last three Presidents have said that the President went too far in what he said today. An aide to President Clinton said that President Clinton did place calls to the fallen. A spokesperson for George W. Bush said President Bush wrote all the families of the fallen and called or met privately with hundreds, if

not thousands. As for President Obama, a spokesperson for him said that President Obama engaged the families of the fallen and wounded warriors throughout his presidency, through calls, letters, visits to section 60 at Arlington, visits to Walter Reed, visits to Dover and regular meetings with gold star families at the White House and across the country. The spokesperson for President Obama, David, said that the President Trump's words were unequivocally wrong."

Trump Touts Federal Response To California Wildfires

By Anita Kumar

[McClatchy](#), October 16, 2017

President Donald Trump on Monday praised his administration's response to the wildfires that have killed more than 40 people dead and displaced tens of thousands of people.

"We have FEMA there. We have military there. We have first responders there," he said. "It's a tragic situation. We are working very closely from the representatives from California and we're doing a good job. "

Trump, who boasted that former FEMA Director James Lee Witt gave his administration a top grade on its response to the hurricanes despite withering criticism from Puerto Rican residents, denied that he was ignoring California and said Witt could have easily included wildfire response in his critique. "James Lee Witt gave us an A+," he said.

Trump said he was "honored" by the comments from Witt, who worked for former Democratic President Bill Clinton. "I just want to thank Mr. Witt, wherever you may be now, wherever you may be listening," he said. "I just want to say I really much appreciate, because that took it out of politics, out of the world of politics, in that he was with the Clinton administration, and I'm sure remains loyal to the Clinton administration."

During an impromptu Rose Garden news conference, Trump said he had spoken to Democratic California Gov. Jerry Brown and that federal officials were on the ground in the Northern California, where fires have also devastated California wine country.

Earlier, during a Cabinet meeting, Trump said the state had seen "a lot of progress in the past couple of days."

On Sunday, the wildfires showed signs of easing off. More than 25,000 people were allowed

to return home and containment grew at most of the major fires. But hundreds of people are still missing as more than 10,000 firefighters battled blazes on Monday.

"It's very sad to watch how fast, how rapidly they move and how people are caught in their houses. I mean, it's an incredible thing. Caught in their houses," Trump said.

The administration issued a disaster declaration in the state but the president, himself, had said very little about the wildfires.

"We mourn the terrible loss of life. We have FEMA and first responders there. We have our military helping," Trump said. "But we're a little subject to winds and what happens with nature. But it's been a very sad thing to watch."

Houses Spared By Massive Fires Bring Joy And Sense Of Loss

By Sudhin Thanawala And Terry Chea

[Associated Press](#), October 16, 2017

SANTA ROSA, Calif. (AP) — Tom and Catherine Andrews live on the edge of devastation.

On one side of their mid-century style home, the deadly wildfires that ravaged parts of Northern California for more than a week wiped away the houses of neighbors they have known as long as two decades. On the other side, were those like the Andrews, who were spared.

On Monday as calm winds gave an advantage to firefighters trying to tame the flames, the couple balanced their good fortune against the losses suffered by many friends.

"It was disbelief and just feeling like the luckiest guy on earth," Tom Andrews said. "I can't believe, I mean, total destruction 50 feet away and to have our house still standing here."

For his wife, a real estate agent who sold many of the homes to friends on Wikiup Drive, there was bitter along with the sweet.

"It's heartbreaking," she said. "I'm trying not to have survivor's guilt, I think they call it. But we've been here 20 years this week. We raised our kids in this house. So many of the families on this hill raised their kids."

After days of wind gusts that constantly fanned the fires, lighter wind offered a chance for crews to make greater gains, and thousands more people were allowed to go home more than a week after the blazes that have killed more than 40 people began.

Improving weather, the prospect of some rain later in the week and tightening containment of the flames were tempered by the first death from the firefighting effort — a driver who was killed when his truck overturned on a winding mountain road.

Many of those who returned knew in advance whether their homes were standing or reduced to ash.

Satellite images, aerial photos and news reports with detailed maps of entire neighborhoods had given homeowners in populated areas a pretty clear idea of the fire's path. Some had seen the flames coming as they fled. Some families in rural areas had to wait until they laid eyes on their property.

The return home was emotional even for those whose properties were spared.

"When we came up to check on it, we were amazed it was here," said Tom Beckman, who credited his neighbor's two sheep with chomping vegetation surrounding his home and keeping the fires at bay.

"All the trivial things we have to work on — cleaning up, replacing the stuff in the fridge and freezer — that's nothing compared to my friends who lost their homes," Beckman said.

The smell of smoke remained thick in the air and spread to the San Francisco area, but skies were clearer in some places.

The truck driver, who had been delivering water to the fire lines, crashed before dawn Monday in Napa County on a roadway that climbs from vineyards into the mountains. No other details were available about the accident, which was under investigation, said Mike Wilson, a fire spokesman.

In the historic main square of the wine and tourist town of Sonoma, a statue of the community's 19th century founder was draped with signs thanking firefighters who have saved the town from disaster.

"The love in the air is thicker than the smoke," read a sign on the bench that displays the statue of Gen. Mariano Vallejo, which was wearing a face mask.

Although the weather was still hot and dry, the calmer winds and the possibility of rain should help crews tamp down the deadliest, most destructive cluster of blazes in California history.

"Any sort of moisture is welcome at this point," said Scott Rowe, a meteorologist with the National Weather Service. "In terms of fire, the weather outlook is looking to be improving."

A fraction of an inch is predicted to fall late Thursday in Sonoma and Napa counties, though fire officials noted that if showers bring more wind than moisture, it could spell trouble for firefighters.

Crews continued to battle flames that have crossed a mountain from Sonoma County to Napa County. Three helicopters repeatedly dipped water buckets into a reservoir and made drops to stop flames from crawling downhill toward historic wineries in the Napa Valley.

Most of the people reported missing have been located, and authorities said many were false reports from people far away who could not get in touch with friends or relatives.

About 100 people remained unaccounted for. Sonoma County Sheriff Rob Giordano said he expects some of those will be found dead in burned-out homes.

Before they let people return to view the damage to their homes, authorities want to search thoroughly for remains and make sure the area is safe — a process that could take weeks, Giordano said.

About 40,000 evacuees were still waiting for permission to go back to their communities, down from a high of 100,000 on Saturday.

While police kept people from burned-out neighborhoods, some managed to sneak past road blocks to view the damage.

Janis Watkins wasn't so lucky. She was turned back from Santa Rosa's Wikiup neighborhood, where she wanted to see if the home she grew up in — built by her father — had survived.

She was almost certain it was lost, as well as a home where she raised her family in another part of the city.

"It appears that both my family homes are gone," she said, tears in her eyes. "The landmarks of my life are gone. It's a big emotional loss."

Associated Press writers Ellen Knickmeyer in Sonoma, Brian Skoloff in Napa and Brian Melley, Janie Har and Jocelyn Gecker in San Francisco contributed to this report.

Follow the AP's complete wildfire coverage here: <https://apnews.com/tag/Wildfires>.

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Cleanup From California Fires Poses Environmental And Health Risks

By Kirk Johnson

[New York Times](#), October 16, 2017

SANTA ROSA, Calif. — Dr. Karen Relucio has heard reports of people digging into the ashes of their burned homes in recent days without gloves, wearing only shorts and T-shirts, looking for sentimental items that might have survived California's horrific wildfires. And as the chief public health officer in Napa County, one of the hardest-hit places, she has used her office as a bully pulpit to urge them to stop, immediately.

"Just think of all the hazardous materials in your house," she said in an interview. "Your chemicals, your pesticides, propane, gasoline, plastic and paint — it all burns down into the ash. It concentrates in the ash, and it's toxic," said Dr. Relucio, who declared a public emergency over the hazardous waste from the fires, as have at least two other counties.

California's fires are far from out. They have killed at least 41 people and burned about 5,700 structures and over 213,000 acres since they exploded in force on Oct. 8 and 9 — record totals for a state that is used to wildfires. Thousands of firefighters are still at work fighting blazes and tens of thousands of people remain under mandatory evacuation from their homes, though fire officials have expressed cautious optimism about bringing the fires into containment.

But even as the smell of smoke still wafts through this area north of San Francisco, public health officials and environmental cleanup experts are starting to think about the next chapter of the disaster: the huge amount of debris and ash that will be left behind.

In whole neighborhoods here, a thick layer of ash paints the landscape a ghastly white. Wind can whip the ash into the air; rain, when it comes, could wash it into watersheds and streams or onto nearby properties that were not ravaged by fire.

And the process of cleaning it all up, which has not even begun, is very likely to bring its own thorny set of issues, in the costs, timetables and liability questions — all compounded by scale, in the thousands of properties that must be repaired and restored.

"In modern times this has got to be an unprecedented event, and a major hazard for the public and for property owners," said Dr. Alan Lockwood, a retired neurologist who has written widely about public health. He said an apt

comparison might be the environmental cleanup after the terrorist attacks of Sept. 11, 2001, in New York, as debris and dust swirled through Lower Manhattan.

As could well happen too in California, Dr. Lockwood said, the health and environmental effects were felt long after the attack, in the chemicals or pollutants workers and responders at the site, and the public at large, may be exposed to as the cleanup went on.

Household building materials are obviously different from the components of a concrete tower. But they pose risks too. Treated wood in a house's frame, for instance, put there to prevent bacteria growth, can contain copper, chromium and arsenic. Consumer electronics contain metals like lead, mercury and cadmium. Older homes might have asbestos shingles. Even galvanized nails are a concern because when they melt they release zinc. All are potentially harmful.

"It's a completely complex mixed bag of different stuff that's there," said Geoffrey S. Plumlee, associate director for environmental health with the United States Geological Survey.

Dr. Plumlee led a study after several Southern California wildfires in 2007 that found that ash from burned-out residential areas contained elevated levels of arsenic, antimony and metals including lead, copper and chromium. In most cases the levels were above federal Environmental Protection Agency guidelines for soil remediation.

After a fire in Slave Lake, Alberta, in 2011 that destroyed about 400 homes, the city landfill was found to be leaching toxins after fire debris was deposited there.

In California, the road ahead to cleanup and the safe return to properties will probably not be smooth or fast, public health officials and cleanup experts said. The sheer number of communities affected and properties destroyed creates a greater challenge than any the state has faced in recent history.

Local and state agencies, focused on active fires, have not yet sorted out who will take the leadership roles. Even determining how severely lands are affected and the estimated costs of remediation lay ahead in the weeks and months to come.

At a packed public meeting in the basketball gym at Santa Rosa High School on Saturday, some residents said they worried that the cleanup

could go on for years and asked state officials if they could proceed on their own.

The answer they got was a qualified yes. An approved contractor can be hired, if one is available. Otherwise the cleanup should be free in most cases, residents were told, paid for with taxpayer money or private insurance if a homeowner has a debris-removal clause in the insurance policy on the house.

But state and federal officials said on Monday that many of the details of how this cleanup would work remained unsettled. That is partly because the focus has been on response to the fires and the fatalities, and the 40,000 people still evacuated from their homes, but also because of the complex mix of properties affected on both public and private lands.

"There are more questions than answers," said David Passey, a spokesman for the Federal Emergency Management Agency. He said, for example, that FEMA, the federal government's lead disaster response agency, typically concentrated on public property, not private, unless individual counties declare the private properties a public health and safety risk. Counties and cities can also take the lead on cleanup, he said, and that too has not been fully sorted out.

"We don't know yet which of those solutions, or mixture of those solutions, the cities and counties will choose," Mr. Passey said.

Mark Oldfield, a spokesman for the California Department of Resources Recycling and Recovery, which administers state-managed waste handling and recycling programs, said a typical situation for cleanup would include a kind of triage, with the most hazardous materials as a site handled first, typically by the California Department of Toxic Substances Control. That agency would evaluate and remove hazardous debris, which can range from asbestos siding or pipe insulation to paints, batteries, flammable liquids and electronic waste like computers and monitors.

After that, contractors under CalRecycle's auspices could focus on remaining debris removal for recycling (metals and concrete) or disposal (ash and contaminated soil), Mr. Oldfield said. Then the land could be prepared for potential rebuilding. But, he added, "With fires still active in many areas, there is not yet a timetable for cleanup efforts to begin."

Dr. Relucio, Napa County's public health director, said that in the meantime, people who go back to their properties should protect their eyes, lungs and skin, with long sleeves and pants, boots, glasses, and a good quality N95-rated mask available in most hardware stores.

Dr. Lockwood said a secondary caution for anyone entering a burned site is human idiosyncrasy, in the things people store in garages, use in their hobbies or just never got around to throwing away.

"One never knows what people have stashed in their homes," he said.

Firefighters Gain Ground On California Wildfires

By Scott Neuman And Merrit Kennedy
[NPR](#), October 16, 2017

Updated at 3:45 p.m. ET

Fire crews were starting to gain the upper hand on numerous blazes in Northern California that have killed at least 41 people and destroyed thousands of homes, but officials warned that the deadliest wildfires in the state's history were far from extinguished.

The death toll rose Monday after "a private water tender driver assigned to the Nuns Fire tragically died in a vehicle rollover on Oakville Grande in Napa County," according to Cal Fire. The driver has not yet been publicly identified.

Hundreds of people have been listed as unaccounted for, but many of them have been located safely. In Sonoma County, Sheriff Rob Giordano said authorities have accounted for 1,560 of the more than 1,700 once listed as missing, according to AP.

With ferocious winds dying down and the fires contained in some areas, about a quarter of the nearly 100,000 people who had been ordered to flee have been allowed to return to their homes — or at least what is left of them.

Marking firefighters' progress, Cal Fire Deputy Chief Bret Gouvea said at a Sunday press briefing, "Things feel good in our gut as firefighters."

The Chronicle reports:

"Underscoring the progress, authorities in Napa County lifted all evacuation orders in Calistoga in the afternoon. State officials predicted they would fully contain, or surround, every active blaze in Sonoma County by Friday, and the region was even due for a bit of badly needed rain at the end of the week."

Even so, 40,000 people were still being told to stay away. Some 5,700 structures have been destroyed by the flames, according to California's Department of Forestry and Fire Protection, or Cal Fire.

"This is my home. I'm going to come back without question," 56-year-old Howard Lasker, who returned Sunday with his daughter to view their torched house in Santa Rosa, told The Associated Press. "I have to rebuild. I want to rebuild."

In Santa Rosa, the Sonoma County seat, Mayor Chris Coursey told member station KQED he is grateful that firefighters may finally be gaining the upper hand on the fires. "We here in the city of Santa Rosa feel like we can take a breath. And we can start, instead of just worrying about the five minutes in front of our faces — that we're able to take a step back, look five days out, maybe even five weeks out," Coursey said.

"We've lost almost 5 percent of the housing stock in Santa Rosa," Coursey said Friday afternoon. "We're looking at \$1.2 billion in damage in Santa Rosa alone. It's a huge hill we've got to climb."

One of those who are now homeless is Tracey Cooper, who gasped when she saw what was left of her house. "Everything's gone. I mean, everything," she told NPR's David Schaper.

A concrete foundation, some rock pillars from the garage, twisted and scorched metal and roof tiles are all that remain amid powdery gray and white ash.

"And just to see the devastation, it's something most people just don't see in their lifetime, thank God; it's — I mean, it's just unbelievable," Cooper said.

Ten miles northeast of Santa Rosa is the city of Calistoga, near where Sonoma wildland firefighter Steven Moore is stationed.

"We're pretty exhausted. It's pretty steep terrain," Moore told NPR's Eric Westervelt.

Nearly 11,000 firefighters are arrayed against 14 large fires — down from 21 last week — that have charred more than 200,000 acres, mostly in the counties of Sonoma, Napa and Mendocino.

The Tubbs Fire alone has burned through more than 36,000 acres and killed at least 18 people from Calistoga to Santa Rosa. It was 70 percent contained as of Monday afternoon, according to Cal Fire. The Atlas Fire engulfed an additional 51,000 acres, destroying homes and wineries northeast of the city of Napa, the San

Francisco Chronicle reports. That fire was 68 percent contained.

How To Help Victims Of The California Wildfires

By Bethany Hines

[CNN](#), October 16, 2017

Fast-moving wildfires continue to spread devastation and desperation in Northern California. So far, the flames have driven more than 20,000 people from their homes. At least 15 people are dead. Authorities in Sonoma County received more than 100 missing person calls.

Here is how you can help those dealing with the fires, and ways you can get help if you're in need.

If you live in Northern California, you can volunteer and donate aid through this Facebook page.

The American Red Cross is seeking volunteers to assist evacuees.

Facebook has also activated a safety check-in page.

Meanwhile, Airbnb hosts are offering free rooms to displaced neighbors and relief workers from October 8 to October 30.

Wine County Animal Lovers is offering pet supplies to help evacuees keep their animals with them.

And Direct Relief is providing medical resources to local health centers and clinics.

Family Loses All To California Fire: 'We're Going To Start Again'

By Sarah Litz

[USA Today](#), October 17, 2017

GLEN ELLEN, Calif. — Only remnants of the life the Ashton family spent 50 years building remained.

The home, a pile of warped glass and charred nails. Stephen Ashton's studio, built with his bare hands, ashes. The vineyard Ashton and his wife planned to give to their children, a skeleton of what used to be glorious grape vines of old vine pinot noir and syrah.

The Ashton Vineyard built on the property they owned since 1968, a memory.

Their home was one of over 5,700 buildings that were destroyed by the merciless Northern California wildfires. The fires that sparked Oct. 8 continued to whip through neighborhoods, destroying everything in their path — including lives.

On Sunday, Stephen and his two daughters visited home for the first time since the Nuns Fire raged through the area. Friends braced the family for what they had lost, but reality set in as Ashton and daughters Sarah and Tara walked up the winding driveway to what once was their home on Henno Road.

Nothing remained besides a chimney and warped remnants of the house that had hosted family gatherings and served as headquarters for Ashton's yearly film festival — the same home where Ashton's three daughters were born.

"I feel so much lighter!" Ashton bellowed, trying to make the crowd chuckle as he stood in the rubble of his studio. "Hallelujah!"

Broken bits of a past life were strewn across the landscape. Some pieces were recognizable — like an antique brass knob from a door in the studio or shards of melted glass that were once wine bottles carefully stored in a temperature-controlled room.

But, most pieces were just traces of what they used to be.

The family left Sunday after the fire jumped Highway 12 and the gusting winds showed no sign of breaking. They didn't grab much — "Just the clothes on our backs and a few hard drives," Ashton said, adding that the last thing he grabbed was his camera.

The hard drives he took only held a portion of his life's work of filmmaking and photography — the rest burned to ashes. The 31 years of archives from Ashton's Wine Country Film Festival — a yearly showcase of international and independent films — were gone. The films Ashton filmed and produced through his company Phoenix Productions were disintegrated.

"When I named Phoenix in 1970, I never thought I'd have to live up to the truth of that name," he said.

As the flames started to rage towards the vineyard Monday morning, Ashton's friend and heroic neighbor Robert Rex made the decision to stay behind and try to hose the home down in the hopes of saving it Monday morning, but, "It was too late," he said.

Ashton's next door neighbors were almost untouched by the fire's harsh grasp.

"This is where my parents built their lives," Tara said. "Their soul was here in a very, very creative way. ...It's not about the structures; it's about what was created here."

Ashton and his wife, Justine, bought the land in their early 20s even after "everybody said it was impractical," he said.

"We decided to do it, and we did it damn well. We were just following a dream."

The sustainable vineyard was hand-planted in 1970. Each vine was carefully tended to, their grapes harvested and fermented into rich, full-bodied wines. The family has a "few thousand cases" left of the syrah and pinot noir labels, which is "enough to get (them) through."

"Pop, do you think the roots are still strong?" Tara asked hugging her dad as they stood on the driveway overlooking the charred black vineyard.

"We'll have to see," he said. "We'll have to see."

Ashton is already looking hopefully toward the future. Instead of focusing on the decades of mementos lost, he's talking about rebuilding — about using the flames as a chance to rise above, just like a phoenix.

"We're going to keep our wine business going," he said sifting through the rubble. "We're going to start again. We'll rebuild the house. We'll rebuild the studio — that's for sure."

"Whatever we build will now be for the next generations. It'll be nice — I promise you that."

The fire didn't show any forgiveness to the family's belongings, passions and livelihood, but Ashton stayed positive. Even though everything was lost, their family — including Clementine the orange ranch cat found hiding in burned brush — were alive.

"Family is everything," he said wrapping both daughters in his arms. "Especially when you have nothing else."

To donate to the Ashton family [click here](#).

Follow Sarah Litz on Twitter: [@SarahMLitz](#)

California Fire: Family Dog Found Alive Amid Rubble After Wildfire Destroyed Home

By Josh Hafner

[USA Today](#), October 16, 2017

Amid the raging wildfires that killed dozens and ravaged communities across Northern California, video of a bounding dog is providing a bit of hope.

A day and a half after flames forced the Weaver family to evacuate their Santa Rosa home, brothers-in-law Jack Weaver and Patrick Widen returned to their address to search for the

remains of their family's dog, the Mother Nature Network reported.

They instead found the pet alive and wagging, a surprise reunion captured on video.

Jack's mother, Katherine weaver, feared Izzy, their 9-year-old Bernese Mountain Dog, had perished in the flames that destroyed their wine country home, per the Associated Press. The dog, like other pets in the region, was lost amid the panic of escaping a burning home.

But when Weaver and Widen reached the home's ruins, out ran Izzy from behind the brush.

"Izzy's here!" Weaver says in the video. "Izzy! Come here, baby."

A veterinarian later pronounced Izzy fine, her thick coat likely shielding her from the flames' intense heat, according to AP.

Trump: Military 'Shouldn't Have To Be' Distributing Food In Puerto Rico

By Cristiano Lima

[Politico](#), October 16, 2017

President Donald Trump said military personnel assisting in Hurricane Maria recovery efforts "shouldn't have to be" distributing food in Puerto Rico, again casting the U.S. territory's challenges as partially self-inflicted during a Monday press conference.

The president said that while federal agencies have provided "massive" amounts of food and water to Puerto Rico — where access to resources and power remains severely hampered by last month's storm — they should not also be expected to distribute them. Trump has previously said Puerto Ricans relied too much on federal government resources instead of a "community effort" to rebuild.

"We have massive amounts of water. We have massive amounts of food," Trump said at the White House, where he spoke alongside Senate Majority Leader Mitch McConnell. "But they have to distribute the food."

Trump added: "We now actually have military distributing food — something that, really, they shouldn't have to be doing."

The president has singled out issues with infrastructure and other challenges in Puerto Rico that he said pre-dated the storm as hurdles in the path to recovery. He has also warned that he won't leave federal employees in Puerto Rico indefinitely.

"We cannot keep FEMA, the Military & the First Responders, who have been amazing (under

the most difficult circumstances) in P.R. forever!" he tweeted.

The House of Representatives on Thursday overwhelmingly approved a \$36.5 billion relief package for Puerto Rico and other impacted regions. It is headed to the Senate, where it is expected to be approved.

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.

Puerto Rico Desperate For Supplies, FEMA Aid

[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. Source: CNN

Trump: Former FEMA Head Gave Me An A+

[CNN](#), October 16, 2017

President Donald Trump says former FEMA Director James Lee Witt, who served under President Bill Clinton, gave him an A+ grade for recent hurricane relief efforts. Source: CNN

Post-Maria, Trump's Approval Rating On Hurricanes Down 20 Points

By Jennifer Agiesta

[CNN](#), October 16, 2017

President Donald Trump's approval rating for handling the federal government's response to recent hurricanes has dropped 20 points in the aftermath of Hurricane Maria, according to a new CNN poll conducted by SSRS.

In mid-September, 64% of Americans said they approved of Trump's handling of the US hurricane response. That finding followed his administration's handling of hurricanes Harvey and Irma, which hit the US mainland in late-August and September. Now, as many Puerto Ricans remain without access to clean water or electricity nearly a month after Maria hit, just 44% say they approve.

In the weeks since Maria devastated the island, Trump's response has vacillated between criticism and praise. He has used his Twitter account to contend that local officials aren't doing enough to help and has threatened to withdraw assistance from the island entirely. At other times, he has praised the work of the military and first responders there.

In a Rose Garden news conference Monday, Trump mixed praise for the federal government's response to the situation with criticism of local

efforts, saying that ample supplies had reached the island but were held up by distribution issues.

"We have massive amounts of water," Trump said. "We have massive amounts of food, but they have to distribute the food, and they have to do this. They have to distribute the food to the people of the island."

The poll found Trump's numbers on this score have dipped across party lines. His ratings are down 9 points among Republicans, 22 points among independents and 25 points among Democrats.

The decline also includes a steep drop in his approval rating on handling hurricanes among non-whites, from 52% in September to 25% now. Among Hispanics, approval for Trump's handling of hurricane response has dropped from 49% in September to 22% now.

In the September poll, majorities of men and women and majorities across age groups approved of the way Trump was handling the Hurricane response. Now, among women, just 36% approve, while only 32% of those under age 45 approve.

The 64% approval rating Trump held on this issue in September was the highest the President had received for any issue in CNN's polling since he took office in January, exceeding his previous high of 55% approval for handling the economy in March by 9 points.

The CNN Poll was conducted by SSRS by telephone October 12 to 15 among a random national sample of 1,010 adults. The margin of sampling error for results among the full sample is plus or minus 3.5 percentage points; it is larger for subgroups.

President Trump's Approval Rating On Hurricanes Drops 20% After Maria Hit Puerto Rico

By Katie Reilly

[TIME](#), October 16, 2017

President Donald Trump's approval rating regarding his handling of the federal government's response to hurricanes fell 20 points after Hurricane Maria ravaged Puerto Rico, according to a new poll.

The CNN poll, conducted by SSRS, found that 64% of respondents said they approved of the way Trump handled the response to hurricanes in mid-September, after Hurricane Harvey and Hurricane Irma hit the continental

United States. But just 44% said the same a month later, after Hurricane Maria.

Trump has faced heavy criticism for his response to the destruction in Puerto Rico, where residents are still struggling with major power outages and a lack of drinking water. In the wake of Hurricane Maria, Trump called San Juan Mayor Carmen Yulin Cruz "nasty" after she begged for help and slammed the U.S. government's response. Last week, Trump said FEMA and first responders won't help the island "forever."

The CNN poll found that a greater percentage of men (53%) than women (36%) approved of Trump's response after Hurricane Maria. The approval rating was also higher among white people (54%) than non-white people (25%). And young people under the age of 45 were more likely to disapprove than were respondents over the age of 45.

The poll, which surveyed 1,010 respondents by phone between Oct. 12 and Oct. 15, had a margin of error of plus or minus 3.5 percentage points.

'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.

San Juan's Mayor Sounds Off On Disaster Relief Effort: 'Damn It, We're Dying'

[Huffington Post](#), October 16, 2017

"Damn it, we're dying." Four weeks after Hurricane Maria devastated the U.S. territory of Puerto Rico, federal aid still isn't reach those in need. We spoke to San Juan Mayor Carmen Yulín Cruz, who has been slammed by Donald Trump for calling out the inadequate relief effort.

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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Desperate Puerto Ricans Line Up For Water — At A Hazardous Waste Site

By Arelis R. Hernández And Brady Dennis
[Washington Post](#), October 16, 2017

DORADO, Puerto Rico — Every 10 minutes or so, a truck or a van pulled up to the exposed spigot of an overgrown well, known as Maguayo

#4, that sits not far from a bustling expressway and around the corner from a Krispy Kreme doughnut shop.

Fencing around the area had been torn open, and a red and white "Peligro" sign, warning of danger, lay hidden beneath debris and dense vegetation. One after another, people attached a hose to draw water for bathing, washing dishes and, in some cases, drinking. They filled buckets, jugs, soda bottles.

What many didn't realize is that the well is one of nearly a dozen that are part of the Dorado Groundwater Contamination Superfund site — designated last year by the Environmental Protection Agency as among the nation's most toxic sites.

Past testing here has shown the presence of tetrachloroethylene and trichloroethylene, solvents commonly used in industrial processes, which can cause health problems including liver damage and increased risk of cancer. The EPA has yet to identify the cause of groundwater contamination in the wells, and local water systems no longer draw from them.

But the aftermath of Hurricane Maria has brought desperation in many forms. In this corner of the island, many residents still have no reliable source of water and search for access wherever they can.

It's difficult to know just how many people have sought water from the Superfund site in the weeks since the Category 4 hurricane walloped Puerto Rico and crippled its infrastructure. The central water authority continues to depend on generators and some limited electricity-grid power to keep pumps working at plants across the island. As of Sunday, the government announced it had restored service to nearly 70 percent of customers.

But for the families who live in Dorado, nothing is yet flowing in their homes. In a single hour on Saturday, more than four families arrived at the unsecured Maguayo well to draw water. None was aware of the potential dangers. Several assumed the well was part of the "Supertubo" that carries water to greater San Juan, roughly 20 miles to the east.

In the late morning, EPA officials arrived on the scene just as a man and two children were topping off a 50-gallon container on the back of his pickup. Andres, who declined to give his last name, said he had been using the water for bathing and had no idea it might be contaminated.

The dozen officials, armed with kits, gloves and other materials to conduct tests, hastily reassembled the broken chain-link fence near the spigot and restored the "Danger" sign.

Recent local testing showed that contamination levels were below legal thresholds, but EPA spokesman Elias Rodriguez said the agency remains concerned about any residents drinking from wells that are part of the site. Officials said Sunday that data gathered in 2015 showed some wells were contaminated — exceeding standards for volatile organic chemicals — while others met drinking-water standards. The entire area was included in the Superfund site boundaries as a "precautionary measure" because groundwater contamination can move over time, the EPA said.

An agency statement said that the results of the bacteria portion of its testing should be available by midweek and that its chemical analysis should be completed by the end of next week.

Residents unwittingly drawing water from a Superfund site is merely one example of Puerto Rico's dire lack of clean, reliable water. Government officials have said it could be months before power is fully restored across the island, which means that it could take nearly as long to get water flowing to all residents in need. National Guard troops and aid workers only recently began reaching the most far-flung communities with bottled water and water trucks.

The massive disruptions have forced residents to forgo the basics of modern plumbing and resort to any means available to fill containers. Along Highway 10, which cuts a jagged north-south route through the center of Puerto Rico, vehicles frequently line the road shoulders as drivers search for spring water flowing from craggy mountainsides.

In the mountainous municipality of Comerio, flooding from the hurricane left residents cut off from the central government and outside aid. So locals used plastic pipes to install a crude system to reroute spring water to a clearing where, one by one, people could shower. Elsewhere, residents have slogged regularly to creeks to fetch water and to bathe.

With the lack of reliable water has come increasing fear of disease.

Already, the island government has identified four suspected deaths as a result of leptospirosis, a bacterial infection spread by animal urine in the

soil or groundwater. The deaths won't be certified as "hurricane-related" unless the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention confirms lab samples indicating the victims became infected by drinking or having contact with contaminated water.

The health risks posed by water from the Maguayo well probably depend on the person, Rodriguez said. Any hazards might be more risky for vulnerable populations, such as elderly people or pregnant women.

Another EPA spokesman, Rusty Harris-Bishop, said government officials only recently learned that people were trying to get water at Superfund sites. In one case, a local resident contacted the agency to request access to a well.

Harris-Bishop said the EPA began sending assessment teams late last week to evaluate hazardous waste sites in Dorado, Hormigas and San German. After surveying those locations and two others, the agency says it believes residents were able to access wells only at the Dorado site, although officials acknowledge they have no way of knowing how many people carted away water before the site was again secured Saturday.

The EPA is working with the Federal Emergency Management Administration and the Army Corps of Engineers to ensure water trucks are reaching nearby neighborhoods. "We are sensitive to the suffering and needs of these communities," Harris-Bishop said.

Dennis reported from Washington.

Flirting With Another Disaster: Puerto Ricans Tap Into Potentially Unsafe Water

By Ed Lavandera And John Sutter

[CNN](#), October 16, 2017

Dorado, Puerto Rico (CNN) A tall chain link fence, shrouded in vines, surrounds an aging water well tucked away in this small town just west of San Juan. A metal sign carries a warning in Spanish to anyone who approaches: "Danger. Do Not Enter."

That doesn't stop Juan Carlos Oquendo, 39, from peeling away a corner of the fence and jumping inside. He's brought a van load of containers to fill.

But what he doesn't fully understand is that water from the faucet is potentially contaminated with industrial chemicals that can cause serious health issues.

"I'm going to drink it. I've drank it before. It tastes fine," Oquendo told CNN as he filled his jugs. "If I don't drink water I'm going to die. So I might as well drink this water."

Oquendo stresses that he's willing to take this chance because access to clean water in his neighborhood has been extremely difficult for much of the last month since Hurricane Maria wiped out the water system on the island.

Just before CNN spotted Oquendo at the water well site, a team of scientists from the US Environmental Protection Agency was collecting water samples from the well.

The EPA is focused on this site because the well sits on what's called the Dorado Groundwater Contamination Site, which was listed in 2016 as a Superfund site in Puerto Rico. The area is polluted with industrial chemicals, including tetrachloroethylene and trichloroethylene, "can have serious health impacts including damage to the liver and increasing the risk of cancer," the EPA said when it designated the site as contaminated.

Gary Lipson, the EPA Incident Commander working in Puerto Rico in the aftermath of Hurricane Maria, says nearby residents have been drinking potentially contaminated water from this well.

"It's a concern both in public health and perception. We understand that people are hurting right now. We understand there are a lot of thirsty people out there, and they are accessing whatever water they can," Lipson told CNN. "We are trying to ascertain if it poses any hazards or not."

The EPA has "provided information to the Dorado community emphasizing that they must avoid using wells on the western portion of the site," the agency said in a statement Sunday.

That is the same area where CNN saw Oquendo tapping into a well.

EPA teams gathered water samples this weekend from at least six wells inside the Dorado Superfund site. A series of tests will determine the contamination levels.

EPA officials say the results could be made public by the end of the week.

One well on the Dorado Groundwater Contamination Site has been approved by the Puerto Rican water authority and federal officials for public use. Thousands of residents wait in a shopping center parking lot to fill up containers of water.

Puerto Rico Gov. Ricardo Rossello also says the territory's Department of Health has tested this water and deemed it safe.

"What people need to know is they did pass the Clean Water Act and standard," Gov. Rossello told CNN. "If it's non-drinking water, we're not going to be serving it. But if it complies with the Clean Water Act, it is going to happen."

CNN reviewed documents published in 2016 as part of the EPA's move to designate the Dorado Groundwater Contamination Site as a Superfund location.

It's unclear exactly which parts of the area may be contaminated.

"The EPA is in the process of examining the precise extent and location of this contaminated groundwater plume," said the agency's news release on Sunday. "Data gathered by EPA in 2015 showed that some wells in the western part of the area are contaminated, while some wells in the eastern portion of the area meet drinking water standards. The entire area, including many wells regardless of contamination levels, was included in the designated Superfund site boundaries as a precautionary measure because groundwater contamination can move over time and EPA wants to study the entire area."

David Carpenter, Director for the Institute of Health and the Environment at the University of Albany, said "it is reasonable to distribute this water under the present circumstances" but there are no safe levels for carcinogens in water.

"It is certainly likely that these wells will have contamination," Carpenter said after reviewing EPA documents.

The documents show that three different wells contain concentrations of toxic chemicals known as PCE and TCE that exceed the agency's maximum contaminant levels for drinking water, said Erik Olson, the Health Program Director with the Natural Resources Defense Council in Washington, DC.

Olson also says the documents show the Superfund site contains karst limestone, "which is notorious for allowing contamination to spread easily and quickly."

"It is irresponsible to not make every effort humanly possible to find and provide safe drinking water as soon as possible," Olson wrote to CNN in an email.

Juan Carlos Oquendo returned to his home in Dorado and unloaded the bottles he filled at the

well. The home he shares with his siblings and mother was severely damaged in the hurricane.

The roof was ripped off the second floor, and the family is still living without electricity and running water.

Oquendo's mother, Carmen Rojas, recounted the moment when the house started coming apart in the storm. Since then, she says, emergency officials have delivered only two small packages of water to residents in her neighborhood.

Rojas, 68, says she started drinking the Dorado Superfund well water about two weeks ago and immediately started feeling stomach pains.

"I don't know what's causing it," she says, "but it might be because of the water."

On Monday afternoon, CNN returned to four sites around Dorado and found that security guards have now been stationed at each. One of the wells was guarded by two agents with Puerto Rico's Special Investigations Bureau. Private security guards were stationed at the remaining wells, cutting off any further access to these sites by the general public.

Also, near these wells CNN witnessed a small convoy of military vehicles and personnel including FBI agents, handing cases of bottled water to cars driving by.

On Monday, the EPA announced that results of tests on samples from wells on the Dorado Groundwater Contamination Site should be available on Tuesday and the results of the more serious chemical analysis are expected early next week.

CNN's Jason Morris contributed to this article.

Trump Blames Difficulty Accessing Water In Puerto Rico On Local Distribution

By Eli Watkins

[CNN](#), October 16, 2017

WASHINGTON (CNN) – President Donald Trump defended the federal government's response to the disaster in Puerto Rico, and contended difficulty accessing food and water was due to shortcomings on local distribution.

"We have delivered tremendous amounts of water, and then what you have to do is you have to have distribution of the water by the people on the island," Trump said at a news conference on Monday from the White House.

Trump noted the military is on the ground helping with distribution efforts – which he argued shouldn't be their job.

"What we've done is we now actually have military distributing food, something that really they shouldn't have to be doing," Trump said.

He said there are plenty of supplies in Puerto Rico, but the local distribution chains need to work to get them where they are needed.

"We have massive amounts of water," Trump said. "We have massive amounts of food, but they have to distribute the food, and they have to do this. They have to distribute the food to the people of the island."

Trump said the situation was "very tough" because Puerto Rico is an island and had a poor electrical grid prior to being hit by back-to-back hurricanes.

"It was in really bad shape before," Trump said.

The entire island of Puerto Rico was walloped by hurricanes last month, and the population of more than 3 million US citizens continues to struggle with the fallout. The House passed a package of relief funding last week, but much of the island remains without power – and access to clean water continues to be lacking.

Stranded By Maria, Puerto Ricans Get Creative To Survive

By Caitlin Dickerson

[New York Times](#), October 16, 2017

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 farthest 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 is what is 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."

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 fundraisers. 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. Albers'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. Albers 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. Albers 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. Albers, 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. Albers 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. Albers, 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. Albers, at last, felt a wave of relief.

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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Solar Industry Wants To Build Puerto Rico's Grid Of The Future

The island is focused on restoring power as quickly as possible, but it can't ignore the chance to rethink its entire energy grid.

[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

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 linesmen 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."

Misery In Puerto Rico: No Power, No Job, 'Enormous' Lines

By Patrick Gillespie

[CNN Money](#), October 16, 2017

Leslie Cofresi started to cry when he saw his staff the day after Hurricane Maria hit Puerto Rico.

With no electricity or running water in their own homes, all 25 employees came to help clean up the bar, La Factoria, which was recently named one of the world's 50 best bars.

Located in Old San Juan, La Factoria is also where the music video for the mega hit song "Despacito" was filmed.

But nearly a month after Hurricane Maria, Puerto Rico's most famous bar is hanging on by a thread. It was closed for two weeks and crowds have been extremely thin since it recently reopened.

If Cofresi, the co-owner, can't get electricity back on soon, he knows he can't keep all his employees or even convince them to stay on the island.

"I don't know how far we can keep going like this...Our operations are not sustainable under these conditions here," says Cofresi, 35.

"Educated people, young people: These are people that, their first reaction has to be, 'Well, I won't have a job.' They're leaving the island right now in droves." Roberto Berdecia and Leslie Cofresi, co-owners of La Factoria in Old San Juan, are operating without electricity.

Cofresi highlights two factors that are crippling Puerto Rico's recovery: Many people are facing dim job prospects, and some are simply leaving the island.

This for an island that, before Hurricane Maria hit, had a 10% unemployment rate – more than double the national rate – and was suffering from an ongoing exodus of young workers.

Rising unemployment adds to Puerto Ricans' misery. Over 80% of the island still doesn't have electricity. About 40% of residents don't get a cell phone signal. About a third of Puerto Ricans lack running water.

And for some, losing their job felt like salt in the wound.

Christopher Canales says he worked 13 years as a waiter at the Melia Hotel, one of Puerto Rico's most luxurious.

But three weeks after Hurricane Maria hit, the Melia fired Canales and "most" of its 300 employees, a hotel spokesperson confirmed after CNNMoney obtained a letter sent to employees.

Canales suddenly had no job along with no electricity or running water. He and two of his four kids – ages 4 and 14 – went to Atlanta to stay with his brother-in-law. His other two children, teenagers, stayed with their mother in Puerto Rico.

He registered his youngest kids in Atlanta schools, but he suspects they may be moving to Florida at some point during the school year to reunite the entire family. A return home isn't in the cards.

"Right now, I can't say that I'm going back," says Canales, 37. "If you don't have a job in Puerto Rico, the situation is really hard."

Melia International, the luxury hotel's parent company, which had 375 hotels and \$3.3 billion in revenue last year, said it had no choice but to let go its employees in Puerto Rico.

A spokesperson said the property was destroyed by Hurricane Maria. The company hopes to rehire its former workers if they can reopen in the next six months. But that depends greatly on when the hotel gets electricity back.

"We are aware and very concerned about how this situation has personally affected our

staff," a Melia spokesperson wrote in an email, adding that it says it's not the only hotel laying off workers.

Aixa Montes, a waitress at the Melia hotel restaurant for 10 years, still has no electricity in her home in Luquillo, a 40-minute drive from the capital, San Juan.

And now she has no job. Montes is one of many workers waiting on lone lines to receive jobless benefits.

"The lines are enormous in the unemployment insurance office. It's horrible," says Montes, 37.

It's hard to get reliable statistics on the problem because the continuing dysfunction on the island is affecting data collection.

Cofresi, the owner of La Factoria, says he hasn't fired any workers at his bar. He considers them like family. But everyone's hours have been cut back.

La Factoria is operating on a generator, and Cofresi is frustrated that FEMA and the Puerto Rican government haven't given him any idea when he can expect power to come back.

He worries that electricity will come back slowly, building by building. He's concerned that would create unfair competition.

"It's going to be this thing where your life's work is going to be up to luck," says Cofresi. "If you get electricity first, you'll survive. If you have to hold on three, four months without electricity while some other businesses next door has electricity ... you're not going to survive."

Some customers are coming back for La Factoria's signature drink: a lavender mule, a twist on the traditional Moscow mule.

Other bar regulars come to reconnect with friends and clear their minds, Cofresi says. Some just need to charge their cell phones so they can communicate with family.

"We have to start giving people a sense of normality," Cofresi says.

Floating Hospital Sits Empty Near Puerto Rico

[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. Source: CNN

There's A Hospital Ship Waiting For Sick Puerto Ricans – But No One Knows How To Get On It

By Leyla Santiago And Mallory Simon
[CNN](#), October 16, 2017

San Juan, Puerto Rico (CNN) Sammy Rolon is living in a makeshift clinic set up at a school. He has cerebral palsy and epilepsy and is bedridden. He's waiting for surgery that was scheduled before Hurricane Maria smashed into Puerto Rico. Now, he can't even get the oxygen he needs.

There is help available for the 18-year-old – right offshore. A floating state-of-the-art hospital, the USNS Comfort, could provide critical care, his doctor says.

But nobody knows how to get him there. And Sammy is not alone.

Clinics that are overwhelmed with patients and staff say they don't even know how to begin sending cases to the ship. Doctors say there's a rumor that patients have to be admitted to a central hospital before they can be transferred to the Comfort. Only 33 of the 250 beds on the Comfort – 13% – are being used, nearly two weeks after the ship arrived.

The hospital ship was deployed as part of the federal response to the storm and its aftermath that has left 3.4 million Americans facing power and communications outages, water and food shortages and at risk for worsening health conditions.

The USS Comfort is waiting. But Puerto Rico's Department of Health has to decide which patients can get care aboard the ship. And referrals have been minimal.

CNN's Leyla Santiago asked Ricardo Rosselló, governor of Puerto Rico, why so many are in need of help and yet a ship with operating rooms and intensive care units sits nearly empty.

"The disconnect or the apparent disconnect was in the communications flow," Rosselló said.

He acknowledged that the system must get better.

"I asked for a complete revision of that so that we can now start sending more patients over there," Rosselló said.

For doctors and medics in hospitals and makeshift clinics, time is of the essence. It is difficult for them to watch patients suffer, and not be able to provide answers or direction about whether the USNS Comfort is an option.

Dr. Jorge Rosado, who oversees Sammy's care at the clinic and works at the San Jorge

Children's Hospital, says the young man is a prime example.

"He can become acutely ill if he continues to be (at the school)," he said. "It's very frustrating. I know they have the capacity; they have the medical staff; they have the supplies. ... To hear there's only 33 patients in such a big mobile hospital – it's tough."

Capt. Kevin Robinson, the Comfort's mission commander, says help is waiting.

"I know that we have capacity. 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," he said. "Every time that we've been tasked by (Puerto Rico's) medical operation center to respond or bring a patient on, we have responded."

For Sammy's father, Jose Cruz, the waiting for a plan is heartbreaking.

"I feel horrible," he says. "Because I can't help him."

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.

FEMA Aid Approved For Louisiana Parishes Impacted By Harvey

[Associated Press](#), October 16, 2017

BATON ROUGE, La. (AP) — Louisiana has been approved to receive federal assistance to help with recovery from Hurricane Harvey.

Gov. John Bel Edwards and members of the state's congressional delegation announced Monday that President Donald Trump signed off on the FEMA aid request.

Five days after striking Texas as a Category 4 hurricane in August, Harvey hit southwest Louisiana as a tropical storm.

The Edwards administration says FEMA assistance for government agencies and certain nonprofits will be available in 20 of the state's parishes. The program can reimburse them for debris removal, repair of damaged buildings and emergency response to the storm.

The state also is eligible for dollars aimed at fortifying communities, to make them less vulnerable to future storms.

Louisiana's request for FEMA aid to help individual households is under review.

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911 Calls From Nursing Home Where Residents Died: 'Oh My God, This Is Crazy'

By Sheri Fink

[New York Times](#), October 16, 2017

It was 3 a.m. when a nurse at a Hollywood, Fla., nursing home called 911 one day last month.

"There's a patient who's in cardiac arrest," she told the operator. "Code Blue. Respiratory failure."

It was Sept. 13, four days after Hurricane Irma ravaged the state, knocking out electrical lines. The nursing home's air conditioning systems had no power, and the heat inside had risen dramatically.

"I saw her slouch over," the nurse said of Betty Hibbard, 84, who had been seated in the hallway on the second floor. "I realize that she's not breathing, so I check her."

The nurse told the 911 operator that the areas around Ms. Hibbard's mouth and fingers were turning blue. "We're doing CPR on her now," she said.

It was only the first of six emergency calls that day made by nursing home staff members over three and a half hours. By the final call, multiple paramedics were on the scene, as well as staff members who had walked over from Memorial Regional Hospital, a short distance away, and were alarmed by the conditions of the patients who had begun to arrive into their emergency room with heat stroke and fevers upward of 109 degrees.

The audio of the emergency calls, released by the Hollywood Police Department on Monday, gives a sense of the growing crisis that unfolded at the nursing home, Rehabilitation Center at Hollywood Hills. Eight residents, including Ms. Hibbard, died that day and six more died in the days and weeks that followed. More than 100 people were evacuated to hospitals and other nursing homes.

The callers, sometimes nurses or nursing assistants, attempted to remain calm, but often sounded pressured, exhausted and overwhelmed as they answered questions about the conditions of the patients. All were reported to be having severe difficulty breathing.

"Oh my God, this is crazy," a woman making the fourth call said at around 6:15 a.m. as she struggled to find a patient's age in the nursing home's computer system, which had a separate power source. "We are initiating CPR at this moment," she said. Then, sounding flustered, she gave the phone to another woman.

"They have a crash cart there, they're working on her now as we speak," the second woman said, referring to the wheeled supply cart used for resuscitations.

Gov. Rick Scott has criticized the nursing home for failing to call 911 on behalf of its residents, and the deaths remain under police investigation. The newly released audio demonstrates that the nursing home staff did indeed call 911 for patients that Wednesday morning, as well as for two patients the previous two days.

But by the time the calls were made, the residents were suffering respiratory distress, and in some cases dying.

According to information provided by the police, a call was made on Monday, Sept. 11, a day after Hurricane Irma made landfall in Florida.

That call was made for an 81-year-old woman on the second floor who was experiencing breathing problems. A second 911 call was made around midday on Tuesday, on behalf of Miguel Franco, 93. "He had a fever," a woman told the 911 operator. "We started, you know, ordering the tests for him and stuff, but he's getting short of breath now." Mr. Franco died the next day, and his wife, Cecilia Franco, 90, who shared a room with him, died last week.

The 911 audio was released by the police after two local newspapers, The Sun-Sentinel and The Miami Herald, went to court to demand them under the state's public records statutes.

"Investigators have now completed witness interviews related to the 911 calls and have determined that the audio can be released without jeopardizing the ongoing investigation," the police said in a news release.

Several families of residents who died have sued the home. The governor, through the state's health agency, moved to shut down the nursing home. The home has filed a legal challenge.

Hollywood Hills, one of many nursing homes in South Florida that lost power after the hurricane, has noted that state officials and the power company were repeatedly called for help in restoring electricity to the air conditioning. In one

of the 911 calls made on Sept. 13, a worker at the Broward County emergency operations center noted that the day before, a psychiatric facility that shared the same building as the nursing home, and also had no air conditioning, had called the county for assistance.

On Monday, Geoffrey D. Smith, a lawyer for the nursing home, said the home could not comment on the 911 calls because it had not yet heard them. "We have been asking for these records since the incidents occurred," he said in an email. "To date, we have not had access to the 911 calls and are still waiting for responses to our multiple public record requests."

After the deaths, the governor released an emergency rule that will require all nursing homes and assisted living facilities, by Nov. 15, to have generators and enough fuel to keep their facilities at safe temperatures. In the past, nursing homes have resisted similar measures, citing cost, and several industry groups have filed legal challenges to the new rule. Last week, the state's health care agency said that homes could request extensions "under extreme circumstances."

Inside the overheated nursing home that Wednesday, the calls, over the space of just a few hours, became more frequent and urgent as the situation turned dire.

"I have another patient that's in respiratory distress," one caller said.

"Make sure to check on the patient, please! I'm on this call," she said to someone else in the home. "I'm on the phone for the next patient."

"She's not breathing!" she said to the operator, who told her to locate a defibrillator. "Yes, a defibrillator, get a defibrillator for her," the woman told someone else, then returned to the phone.

She told the operator: "There's another one at this moment, sir."

Trump Voters In Storm-ravaged County Confront Climate Change

By Claire Galofaro

[Associated Press](#), October 16, 2017

PORT ARTHUR, Texas (AP) — The church was empty, except for the piano too heavy for one man to move. It had been 21 days since the greatest storm Wayne Christopher had ever seen dumped a year's worth of rain on his town, drowning this church where he was baptized, met his high school sweetheart and later married her.

He had piled the ruined pews out on the curb, next to water-logged hymnals and molding Sunday school lesson plans and chunks of drywall that used to be a mural of Noah's Ark. Now he tilted his head up to take in the mountain of rubble, and Christopher, an evangelical Christian and a conservative Republican, considered what caused this destruction: that the violent act of nature had been made worse by acts of man.

"I think the Lord put us over the care of his creation, and when we pollute like we do, destroy the land, there's consequences to that," he said. "It might not catch up with us just right now, but it's gonna catch up. Like a wound that needs to be healed."

Jefferson County, Texas, is among the low-lying coastal areas of America that could lose the most as the ice caps melt and the seas warm and rise. At the same time, it is more economically dependent on the petroleum industry and its emissions-spewing refineries than any other place in the U.S. Residents seemed to choose between the two last November, abandoning a four-decade-old pattern of voting Democratic in presidential elections to support Donald Trump.

Wayne Christopher stands for a portrait as a stained glass window is reflected in his glasses in the damaged sanctuary of Memorial Baptist Church.

When the people of Jefferson County, Texas, narrowly voted majority Trump last November, climate change rarely came up as an issue. Then they were devastated by Hurricane Harvey. AP Video by Martha Irvine. (Oct. 16)

Then came Hurricane Harvey. Now some conservatives here are newly confronting some of the most polarizing questions in American political discourse: What role do humans play in global warming and the worsening of storms like Harvey? And what should they expect their leaders — including the climate-skeptic president they helped elect — to do about the problem now?

Answers are hard to come by in a place where refineries stand like cityscapes. Nearly 5,000 people work in the petroleum industry. Some have described the chemical stink in the air as "the smell of money" — it means paychecks, paid mortgages and meals.

Christopher, like most people in Jefferson County, believed that global warming was real before the storm hit. Post-Harvey, surrounded by debris stretching for block after block, he thinks

the president's outright rejection of the scientific consensus is no longer good enough.

But how do you help the climate without hurting those who depend on climate-polluting industries?

"It's a Catch-22 kind of thing," he said. "Do you want to build your economy, or do you want to save the world?"

"Steroids for storms" is how Andrew Dessler explains the role global warming plays in extreme weather. Climate change didn't create Hurricane Harvey or Irma or Maria. But Dessler, a professor of atmospheric sciences at Texas A&M University, and most scientists agree that warming and rising seas likely amplify storms that form naturally, feeding more water and more intensity as they plow toward land.

"It will be 60 inches of rain this time, maybe 80 inches next time," Dessler said of Harvey's record-setting rainfall for any single storm in U.S. history.

As a private citizen and candidate, Trump often referred to climate change as a hoax, and since taking office he and his administration have worked aggressively to undo policies designed to mitigate the damage. He announced his intention to pull out of the Paris climate agreement, a global accord of 195 nations to reduce carbon emissions, and his administration has dismantled environmental regulations and erased climate change data from government websites. This month, his Environmental Protection Agency administrator promised to kill an effort to limit carbon emissions from coal-fired plants.

Anthony Leiserowitz, a Yale University researcher, traces the politicization of the climate to 1997, when then-Democratic Vice President Al Gore brokered a commitment on the world stage to reduce greenhouse gases. The political parties have cleaved further apart ever since, and climate change denial reached a fever pitch as the Tea Party remade the GOP during President Barack Obama's first term.

Americans tend to view the issue through their already established red-versus-blue lens, Leiserowitz said, but while there are fractions on each extreme, the majority still fall somewhere along a scale in the middle.

A new Associated Press-NORC Center for Public Affairs Research poll finds that 63 percent of Americans think climate change is happening and that the government should address it, and

that two-thirds of Americans disapprove of the way Trump is handling the issue. Most Americans also think weather disasters are getting more severe, and believe global warming is a factor.

As the downpour from Hurricane Harvey stretched into its second day, with no end in sight, Joe Evans watched from the window of his home in the Jefferson County seat of Beaumont, and an unexpected sense of guilt overcame him: "What have we been doing to the planet for all of these years?"

Evans, a Republican, once ran unsuccessfully for local office. He ignored climate change, as he thought Republicans were supposed to do, but Harvey's deluge left him wondering why. When he was young, discussions of the ozone layer were uncontroversial; now they're likely to end in pitched political debate.

Joe Evans at the window of his home in Beaumont, Texas.

"I think it's one of those games that politicians play with us," he said, "to once again make us choose a side."

Evans voted for Trump, but he's frustrated with what he describes as the "conservative echo chamber" that dismisses climate change instead of trying to find a way to apply conservative principles to simultaneously saving the Earth and the economy. Even today, some Republicans in the county complain about Gore and the hypocrisy they see in elite liberals who jet around the world, carbon emissions trailing behind them, to push climate policies on blue-collar workers trying to keep refinery jobs so they can feed their families.

Evans isn't sure if the disastrous run of weather will cause climate change to become a bigger priority for residents here, or if as memories fade talk of this issue will, too.

"I haven't put so much thought into it that I want to go mobilize a bunch of people and march on Washington," he said. "But it made me think enough about it that I won't actively take part in denying it. We can't do that anymore."

Most in Texas didn't believe climate change existed when Katharine Hayhoe, a climate scientist at Texas Tech University, began evangelizing about the issue years ago. Now studies estimate that 69 percent of Texans believe that the climate is changing, and 52 percent believe that has been caused by human activity. Most resistance she hears now is not with the

science itself but over proposed solutions that mean government intrusion and regulation.

Jefferson County's refineries produce 10 percent of the gasoline in the United States, 20 percent of diesel and half of the fuel used to fly commercial planes, said County Judge Jeff Branick, a Democrat who voted for Trump and then switched his party affiliation to Republican, in part because of his disagreement with the Democratic Party's climate policies.

Branick doesn't deny that climate change exists, but he calls himself a cheerleader for the petroleum industry and believes environmental policies are "job killers."

John Sterman, a professor at MIT Sloan School of Management, said addressing climate change will invariably lead to gradual job losses in the fossil fuels industry. But communities have lost a dominant industry before, and those able to diversify can prosper. Jefferson County could look to the renewable energy industry, with jobs that require many of the skills refinery workers have, he said. Texas already produces more wind power than any other state.

An oil refinery stands in the background as children play on a basketball court in Port Arthur, Texas.

Angela Lopez's husband works in a refinery, so she understands the worry of the economic cost of addressing global warming. But her county is nicknamed "cancer alley" for its high levels of disease that residents have long attributed to living in the shadow of one of the largest concentrations of refineries in the world.

"It's our livelihood, but it's killing us," Lopez said, standing in what used to be her dining room. Now her house in Beaumont is down to the studs. As Harvey's floodwaters rose, she tried to save what she could. She piled the dresser drawers on the bed and perched the leather couch up on the coffee table. It did no good. The water didn't stop until it reached the eaves, and the Lopezes lost everything they own.

Just about all of her relatives are conservatives, and indeed the political divides in the county run deep: Even as most of the communities along the Gulf Coast turned red years ago, Jefferson County clung to its Democratic roots. The county is ethnically diverse—41 percent white, 34 percent black and 20 percent Hispanic—with a historically strong union workforce. Trump won Jefferson by just 419 votes.

"To come up with real solutions, you have to be honest with yourself about what causes something to happen," Lopez said. "It's not just because some storm came, it was bad and unprecedented. It was unprecedented for a reason, so we have to acknowledge that and start working toward being better. And part of that conversation should be climate change."

Graphic shows demographic and other details about Jefferson County, Texas compared to Texas and the U.S.; 3c x 6 inches; 146 mm x 152 mm;

On a porch outside another ruined house nearby, two neighbors who both lost everything to Harvey started having that conversation.

Gene Jones, a truck driver who didn't vote, asked Wilton Johnson, a Trump supporter, if he thought climate change intensified the storm.

"I don't think so, no," Johnson said.

"You don't? You don't think about the chemical plants and the hot weather? You don't think that has anything to do with it?"

"I can understand people believing that," Johnson replied. But he blames natural weather cycles for upending their lives so completely.

Jones now lives in a camper in his driveway; Johnson's father has been sleeping in a recliner in his yard to ward off looters.

Johnson feels like he's gone through the stages of grief. At first, as he fled his home, he denied how devastating the storm might be. Then he got angry, when he realized nothing could be saved—not the family photos or the 100-year-old Bible that fell apart in his hands. He grew depressed and now, finally, he thinks he's come to accept this new reality as something that just happened because nature is not always kind, and never has been.

And he remains unshaken in his support for Trump's environmental agenda.

Wilton Johnson stands in his gutted home in Beaumont, Texas.

"We need to be responsible human beings to the Earth, but at the same time we shouldn't sacrifice the financial freedoms," he said. "What good is a great environment if we're poor and living like cavemen? And vice versa, I understand the other side of that: What's great about living in luxury when you can't go outside?"

"I just don't think we should look at two storms and say, 'We're ruining the Earth! Shut the plants down!'"

When Wayne Christopher was a boy in Jefferson County, it got so hot he remembers frying eggs on the sidewalk. It has always been hot here, and there have always been hurricanes.

But it seems to him that something is different now. There is a palpable intensity in the air, in the haze that hangs over the interstate. The region has warmed about two degrees in his lifetime, according to the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration, and annual rainfall has increased by about 7 inches on average. Christopher counts the number of times a beach road he's driven on all his life has had to be rebuilt because the ocean overtook it.

"The sea keeps moving in — water rising, land disappearing or eroding or whatever you want to call it — it's happening," said Christopher, who is 66 now and retired after toiling more than 40 years for the railroad. "I think Mother Nature can come back, but there's a point to where, if we just keep on and keep on, I don't know if she can come back."

He thinks the president he helped put in office should do something: take the threat seriously, research before he talks or tweets, not dismiss established science as a hoax because acknowledging it's real would mean acknowledging that something must be done.

But like many others here, Christopher is not pushing to stick with the Paris climate agreement or other global coalitions because he's not sure it's fair that the United States should invest in clean energy when other countries that pollute might not. He worries that could cause more job losses to overseas factories, put a squeeze on the middle class and forfeit a slice of American sovereignty.

His wife, who also supported Trump, cocked her head as she thought about that sentiment.

"I can see the pros, I can see the cons," Polly Christopher said. "But if you were to simplify it to your children, and they say, 'Well, everybody else is doing it, if I do it what difference is it going to make?' you would just get on them and say, 'You've got to do the right thing. Right is right, and wrong's wrong.'"

For weeks, the couple have been gutting Memorial Baptist Church, a place they consider their home. The congregation dwindled over time to about 45, mostly older people, and it was so hard to make ends meet the church canceled a \$19,000-a-year flood insurance policy just two months before Harvey hit. Now it could cost some

\$1 million to rebuild, meaning the church may never be rebuilt at all.

So when Christopher's granddaughter came by to help, found the piano in the otherwise empty sanctuary, sat down and started to play, he was overcome with a sense of grief.

"In my head I was thinking the whole time, this could be the last time that piano is played inside the auditorium," he said. Then she started to sing: "Amazing grace, how sweet the sound ..."

"It did something to me," he said.

Wayne Christopher plays the keys on a piano put out on the curb next to pews from Memorial Baptist Church.

Both he and his wife believe President Trump has a responsibility to look at the destruction Harvey left them with and act accordingly.

"He's got a business mind. Whatever it takes to make money, that's what he's going to do to make America great again," Christopher said, and that's why he voted for Trump. "But it does make me wonder if he looks at global warming as a real harm. Because you can make all the money in the world here. But if you don't have a world, what good is it going to do you?"

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If North Korea Attacks The U.S. With A Nuclear Bomb, Everyone And Everything Will Be Destroyed In The Target Area

By Beatrice Dupuy

[Newsweek](#), October 16, 2017

The back-and-forth jabs between President Donald Trump and North Korea's Kim Jong Un has Americans wondering if they could survive a nuclear blast on U.S. soil.

Google saw a spike in searches on "how to survive a nuclear attack" after Trump threatened "fire and fury like the world has never seen before" against North Korea in August. North Korea later responded in September threatening a hydrogen bomb launch in the Pacific Ocean.

But the Trump administration has denied reports that the president is looking to increase its nuclear arsenal.

Given the mounting tension between the two countries, experts have some tips on how to survive a nuclear attack —but ultimately say there isn't much you can do.

First things first: Experts recommend being on the lookout for emergency alerts that could come in the form of text messages, television announcements or emergency vehicle loudspeakers. It can take up to as little as ten minutes for a nuclear bomb to strike the U.S. giving no time to buy emergency supplies.

Likely targets of a nuclear attack include strategic missile sites and bases, D.C. government centers, ports and petroleum refineries, according to Ready, a government campaign created in 2003 to help Americans plan for disaster scenarios.

Experts say having a stock of water, batteries and radio will come in handy once it's time to hunker down.

Staying inside in the event of a nuclear blast is key, according to experts. After 20 minutes of the blast, radioactive flurries and toxic matter will begin to fall. Fallout is especially dangerous during the first two weeks.

If radioactive material gets on your clothing, government officials say taking off the outer layer can eliminate 90 percent of the radioactive material.

"Get down, cover your head, don't stand there in the middle of Central Park and gawk," Tom Nichols, a professor at the Naval War College, told the Examiner. "Get under something."

FEMA suggests camping out in underground spaces underneath large buildings before the blast. Experts also encourage hiding in a central location with no windows.

A 2014 study published in The Royal Society found that most homes and buildings will not be able to withstand a nuclear blast.

With a nuclear bomb eminent, experts warn looking at the blast. Unlike the eclipse, special glasses won't save you in the event of nuclear destruction, which causes a light so strong it's brighter than the sun and will blind you. Experts urge keeping your mouth open to keep your eardrums from bursting. If you live close enough to the blast, chances of survival are slim.

"People in most of the areas that would be affected could be allowed to come out of shelter within a few days and, if necessary, evacuate to unaffected areas," according to Ready. "The heaviest fallout would be limited to the area at or downwind from the explosion."

FEMA HOUSING

FEMA Assistance Deadline A Month Away

By Deborah Bayliss

[Brunswick \(GA\) News](#), October 16, 2017

The deadline to apply for federal disaster assistance from the Federal Emergency Management Agency and the Small Business Administration is a month away.

The deadline to submit an SBA loan application or to apply for FEMA assistance is Nov. 14.

"If you were referred by FEMA to the SBA, you should complete an SBA disaster loan application as soon as possible," said Dana Laurie, spokeswoman for the SBA. "The assistance process stops completely if those applications are not completed."

People who apply for an SBA loan do not have to accept the loan, however, it is a necessary part of the process, Laurie added.

"They have time after the loan is approved to make a decision on whether to accept the loan," Laurie said. "However, they must apply before the deadline or SBA can't help them. If they are not approved for an SBA loan, they will be referred back to FEMA for any other grant assistance that may be available. If they do not complete the SBA loan application they will not be eligible for other assistance."

Scott Sanders, a FEMA spokesperson, said the SBA loan process is important for FEMA Assistance.

"A lot of times when people receive a determination letter saying that they are ineligible to receive federal assistance, the reality is they likely failed to complete the SBA application. The SBA is a huge part of disaster assistance for individuals. SBA steps up for individuals and businesses in times of disasters."

Residents and business owners who would like to apply online for an SBA loan can go online to www.sba.gov/disaster.

For one-on-one assistance, go to the Business Recovery Center located at 715 Bay Street in Brunswick.

People who want to apply for FEMA assistance can go to the disaster recovery center at the Ballard Park Complex, 323 Old Jesup Road in Brunswick.

As of Friday, FEMA has approved nearly \$10

million in federal disaster money in Georgia for Irma Recovery.

Those numbers include \$9.9 million in individual and household program grants to help survivors with critical needs, temporary rental assistance and damage to homes and personal property.

That figure also includes nearly \$4.4 million in temporary rental assistance to provide survivors with a temporary place to live while they repair their homes or find other permanent housing; nearly \$2.6 million in housing repair assistance and nearly \$2.9 million in other needs assistance.

Additionally, more than \$5 million in National Flood Insurance Program claims have been paid, with more than 1,800 claims submitted.

As of Friday, the U.S. Small Business Administration approved \$873,400 in low-interest disaster loans for homeowners, renters and businesses.

Everybody has a right to appeal a decision from FEMA.

The first step is to read the determination letter carefully to understand FEMA's decision and exactly what is needed to appeal, Sanders said.

People who do not understand the letter, should take it to the disaster recovery center.

The hours of operation for the center in Glynn County are 8 a.m. to 6 p.m., Monday through Saturday.

The Glynn County center is closed on Sundays.

NFIP AND FLOOD MAPS

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."

Floodwater surrounded houses and apartment complexes in West Houston after Hurricane Harvey hit. (Jabin Botsford/The Washington Post)

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."

After Irma: Why Are 90% Of Flood Claims Being Denied?

By Charles Elmore

[Palm Beach \(FL\) Post](#), October 16, 2017

Nine out of 10 flood claims resolved by the National Flood Insurance Program in the early going after Hurricane Irma have been closed without payment, federal records provided to Florida officials show.

Why? The Palm Beach Post asked the Federal Emergency Management Agency.

Nearly \$100 million in payments have been approved on payable flood claims, said Greta Richardson, claims branch chief with FEMA in Washington, D.C.

But it's still early in the process, she said, and payable claims tend to take longer to resolve than cases where officials have determined there was no qualifying damage.

"Irma was a hurricane that brought in a lot of wind damage," Richardson said, though some areas of Florida did experience flooding as well. In contrast, Hurricane Harvey in Texas did much of its damage from flooding.

NFIP policies generally cover flooding from the ground up, such as storm surge or heavy rain causing local waterways to overflow. Standard homeowner policies tend to cover damage from, say, wind blowing off a piece of the roof and rain coming in from above.

If homeowners are not entirely sure of the cause of damage, they might file claims under both their standard home and flood policies just to be sure.

According to data federal officials gave Florida Insurance Commissioner David Altmaier last week, 195 NFIP claims administered by private partners in a Write Your Own program have been closed with payment after Irma, compared to 1,936 resolved without payment.

But there are still plenty of claims to be worked out. Fewer than 8 percent of the 24,316 flood claims mentioned had been resolved at that stage. Records provided to Altmaier showed more than \$72 million in payments had been made at the time.

The average claim closed with payment was for more than \$25,000.

FEMA officials urged Florida residents to buy flood coverage, because flooding is not covered in standard home insurance policies. Lenders require flood policies in certain high-risk zones, but it's up to homeowners to make the choice in other cases. Florida has the largest share of the nation's roughly 5 million NFIP policies, including more than 100,000 in Palm Beach County.

Most flood policies come from the federal program, though a limited number of private insurers offer such policies.

Out of 1,419 private flood claims filed so far after Irma, 269 have been closed with payment and 92 have been closed without payment, with more than 1,000 still open, state records show.

Among NFIP claims, Monroe County leads with 6,714 claims, or 29 percent of the total, according to information provided by FEMA on Monday.

That is followed by 2,870 claims in Miami-Dade County and 2,082 in Collier County.

Duval, Lee, St. John's and Broward counties all registered more than 1,200 NFIP claims.

Palm Beach County is among the top dozen counties affected with 313 claims, though nearby Martin Co. had just 29.

As of March 31, there were more than 100,000 policies in Palm Beach County, including more than 66,000 in unincorporated areas, nearly 15,000 in Boca Raton, more than 9,000 in Boynton Beach, and more than 7,000 each in Jupiter, Palm Beach and Delray Beach. Changes to flood maps effective this month have caused some uncertainty and anxiety among county homeowners about how their homes and

properties are classified. Homeowners can talk to their agents and mortgage companies to get more information as their policies renew.

Hundreds of thousands of Florida homeowners with a choice — meaning they were not required by lenders to buy it — dropped flood insurance after Congress increased costs in recent years in an effort to tackle the flood program's \$23 billion debt load following storms including Katrina and Sandy.

Florida officials have often maintained their state often gets a bad deal as a donor market, receiving about 30 cents in claims paid for every premium dollar spent.

FEMA Plans Floodplain Expansion For Madison County

By Adam Jacobs

[Rexburg \(ID\) Standard Journal](#), October 16, 2017

The two cities of Rexburg and Sugar City have joined forces with Madison County to resist efforts from the Federal Emergency Management Agency to expand the current floodplain in Madison County.

A floodplain is an area of land near a body of water that is prone to flooding due to factors like rain runoff and stream flow. Local leaders have criticized FEMA for expanding the floodplain in Madison County to cover areas that some say have traditionally never been prone to flooding.

Residents and business owners who live in a floodplain are often required by their mortgage lenders to have flood insurance. According to www.fema.gov, "Congress has mandated federally regulated or insured lenders to require flood insurance on mortgaged properties that are located in areas at high risk of flooding."

Todd Smith, a Madison County Commissioner, said he's unaware of why FEMA would allow for a floodplain expansion of this size.

"I don't know what initiated it," he said, "but FEMA had a new study done of the floodplain that resulted in a much larger floodplain in the area than it used to be."

Smith said that the fault might lie with the surveying company that FEMA contracted to assess Madison County in its floodplain study.

"The company FEMA hired to do the study didn't look at everything like all the bridges and roads that can have an impact on flooding," he said. "Even before the Teton Dam Flood, this area has never had a serious problem with flooding,

and what issues that were there have never even come close to the magnitude that FEMA wants to impose on the county."

In an Oct. 10 Madison County Commissioner meeting, Smith said resolving the issue means reaching out to both the Department of Homeland Security, which oversees FEMA, and Idaho's senators in Congress. This week members of Madison County's planning and zoning office will be traveling to Boise to talk with the Department of Homeland Security.

"We're wanting to see if they'd be willing to accept a study done by the cities and county before we start one," Smith said. "We've got to try to work with them and try their process. We do need to contact our senators and congressmen, but we have to have the data first in order to back up what we're asking them to consider."

"Within the next couple of weeks, we hope to hear back if they'll look at our study. When we get to the point where we need to apply political pressure, the more letters our congressmen get on the issue the better."

David Rapte, an engineer with FEMA, told the Standard Journal that the most recent floodplain map of Madison County is outdated.

"The most recent study was made just after the Teton Dam flood for the North Fork and the South Fork," Rapte said. "Back in the early part of this decade, this area was identified of having a need for a floodplain analysis."

The newest study, completed by the Strategic Alliance for Risk Reduction and funded by FEMA, takes into account 130 river miles in the Teton Watershed, and includes data gathered between 2009 and 2011 with advanced data gathering methods such as Light Detection and Ranging, or LiDAR.

"Using LiDAR significantly improves the accuracy of floodplain boundaries," said Ryan Ike, a FEMA representative.

Rapte said the floodplain maps submitted to the county and cities so far are all drafts.

"We shared draft maps that were nearly 80 percent complete in July of 2016 with the county and the cities, and we've followed up with them in June of this year," he said. "We are in the process of revising the draft maps, and we'll provide them to the county and the city and their consultants for review, and then we'll coordinate further."

David Ogden, mayor of Sugar City, said he's pleased to be working with the City of Rexburg

and Madison County to correct the floodplain map.

"The cities of Rexburg and Sugar City, along with Madison County, are working very hard with the Federal Emergency Management Agency to correct some of the deficiencies we see in the currently proposed flood map for our area," he said. "Many of these issues have not as yet been resolved, but we are willing to use whatever resources are necessary to make sure the final map is accurate. We understand our responsibility to keep our citizens safe and aware of the risks of potential flooding, but we do not want to have a floodplain in an area where it should not be."

Rapte said the new analysis of the floodplain map would provide valuable data to help locals prepare for future natural disasters.

"As a part of this project, all of this will lead to opportunities to mitigate flood risk," Rapte said. "We're also able to move beyond flood risk and go into seismic risk as well in that area."

"We're hoping that sharing all of that data will increase the community's resilience and identify mitigation strategies and mitigation projects the communities can pursue and reduce public and property exposure to these risks, and to put them in a better position to face the next major flood or seismic event."

Not everyone is convinced that FEMA is acting for the good of the county. Madison County Commissioner Jon Weber said he's concerned about the economic impact of expanding the floodplain. He and others believe the floodplain redrawing is being done for a financial motive.

"We just can't help but think that FEMA is reaching out to expand their coverage to cover their other natural disaster costs," Weber said. "That's the only reason I can see that they would come in to our community to redraw our floodplain map."

Weber said the county is doing all it can to reconcile FEMA's map with what the floodplain should be.

"We are working with engineers and other specialists in the community to come up with a game plan on how to change the FEMA floodplain map. We will band together locally, and go together as one to visit our state representatives, Homeland Security and FEMA on this issue. When we work together there's strength in numbers. None of us wants to fight this alone. It concerns us all."

MITIGATION

Gov. Edwards' Request For Harvey Aid Approved By President

By Rachael Thomas

[WAFB-TV Baton Rouge \(LA\)](#), October 16, 2017

Governor John Bel Edwards' request for federal assistance for areas affected by Tropical Storm Harvey was approved Monday by President Donald Trump.

The storm made landfall in Louisiana in August as a tropical storm, just five days hitting Texas as a Category 4.

"We appreciate this support from our federal partners. Our communities in southwest Louisiana were impacted by Harvey while we worked to keep our residents and residents in Texas safe. We urge FEMA to consider our entire request in order to help our citizens recover and become more resilient," said GOHSEP director, Jim Waskom.

Parishes approved for Public Assistance (PA) include:

Allen
Beauregard
Calcasieu
Cameron
Natchitoches
Red River
Sabine
St. Charles
Vernon

PA for emergency protective measures was approved for the following parishes:

Acadia
Assumption
DeSoto
Iberia
Jefferson Davis
Lafourche
Lafayette
Plaquemine
Rapides
St. Mary
Vermillion

In addition to PA approval, hazard mitigation assistance was approved in all areas of the state impacted by Harvey. Hazard mitigation is any action taken to reduce or eliminate long-term risk to people and property from natural disasters. The state's request for Individual Assistance is still under review.

U.S. FIRE ADMINISTRATION

No stories for this edition

DHS/FEMA GRANTS

No stories for this edition

FIRE GRANTS

No stories for this edition

NEWS AROUND THE COUNTRY

HURRICANE RECOVERY

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 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.

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.

Villages Anticipates FEMA Will Pay 90 Percent Reimbursement For Irma Damage

By Meta Minton

[Villages \(FL\) News](#), October 16, 2017

The Villages will likely see a 90 percent reimbursement from the Federal Emergency Management Agency for damage associated with Hurricane Irma.

Villages District Manager Janet Tutt updated Project Wide Advisory Committee members on Monday morning about the status of the cleanup and FEMA reimbursement.

She said that District staff has carefully calculated all of the costs, which are expected to reach into the millions.

Additionally, she said 5 percent of the costs will likely be reimbursed by the state. That would leave residents on the hook for only 5 percent.

In the short term, clean up contractors will be paid by the individual Community Development Districts. While the FEMA reimbursement will likely take a long time, the CDDs all have ample reserves. The CDDs are funded through annual maintenance assessment fees paid by residents.

FLOODS

No stories for this edition

TORNADOES

No stories for this edition

WILDFIRES

Monday, October 16, 2017

[National Native News](#), October 16, 2017

Wildfires in Northern California force tribal members from their homes

St. Regis Mohawk Tribe pushes back against congressional challenges to its patent deal with Allergan

Tribes partner with state and Indian Health Service to combat suicide in Montana

WINTER STORMS

No stories for this edition

OTHER NATURAL DISASTERS

No stories for this edition

OTHER FEMA NEWS

EMERGENCY PREPAREDNESS

Akron Looks For Answers After A Third Fire In 10 Months Kills Young Children

By Kabir Bhatia

[WKSU-FM Kent \(OH\)](#), October 16, 2017

Officials in Akron continue to investigate a fire that claimed two young girls over the weekend, and to evaluate its fire-safety awareness programs for school children.

Seventh-grader Jada Snowden and kindergartner Kymeria Cody were alive but unresponsive when they were rescued Thursday night from a house fire on Seward Avenue. They died over the weekend.

Akron Fire spokeswoman Lt. Sierjie Lash says in the past year, the department has been exploring how to reach schoolchildren in the city throughout their lives, starting with a program for kindergarteners through second-graders.

"We go out and we try to reach each classroom in that grade range. We have another program where we try to reach all the cooking classes – both middle school and high school – and then we've added programs for the seniors, as well as our smoke trailer for the third and fourth-graders."

The house had no working smoke detectors, nor did homes where seven schoolchildren died in fires in the past year.

Lash says the city had already been trying to equip more homes with smoke alarms. And she says Akron just received a \$108,000 grant from FEMA to equip 500 homes with smoke detectors.

"We go into an average of one to two homes per day, and we are still finding homes that don't have smoke alarms. And we want to make sure that we can provide that. And they're free of charge. And we make an appointment and come out and install those so that our residents don't have to."

The American Red Cross has information about the smoke detectors and installation on its web site and at (330) 535-2030.

Nine Akron Public Schools students have been killed in house fires in the past 10 months. In a statement released over the weekend, schools Superintendent David James said the district is going to start discussing how students can better protect themselves outside of school hours.

Here is James' statement:

We are saddened by the news of the deaths of Kymeria Cody and Jada Snowden. We are here to help and support their family in any way we can during this difficult time.

Our counselors and psychologists will have their teams at Schumacher and Buchtel community learning centers first thing Monday morning to assist classmates of Kymeria and Jada

and our staff members who feel these losses profoundly.

This is the third time in 10 months we have lost children in house fires in our community. Nine children have perished. This has led us to begin discussing working on a better way to help children protect themselves outside of school hours. Clearly, more must be done.

Here are the number of fatal fires in Akron by year, according to the Beacon Journal.

The cause of the fire is unknown at this time.

NATIONAL PREPAREDNESS MONTH

No stories for this edition

AMERICA'S PREPAREATHON!

No stories for this edition

FEMA CORPS

No stories for this edition

PRIVATE SECTOR

No stories for this edition

CITIZEN CORPS

No stories for this edition

POLITICAL COMMENTARY, COLUMNS AND EDITORIALS

No stories for this edition

SOCIAL MEDIA

No stories for this edition

SPANISH MEDIA

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.

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 período 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 redcillas 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”.

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.

Afectados Por Incendio En Anaheim Califican Para Ayuda Federal

[La Opinión \(CA\)](#), October 16, 2017

Mientras los bomberos continúan luchando contra el incendio que arrasa el este de la ciudad de Anaheim, el gobernador de California, Jerry Brown, anunció este domingo que los residentes del Condado de Orange son elegibles para recibir ayuda federal; al igual que los afectados por los fuegos en los condados de Napa, Sonoma, Butte, Lake, Mendocino y Yuba.

Los supervivientes pueden solicitar online asistencia federal para casos de desastre en www.DisasterAssistance.gov o a través del teléfono 800-621-3362 entre las 7 a.m. y las 10 p.m. siete días a la semana. El proceso de solicitud demora unos 20 minutos y estará abierto hasta el próximo 30 de noviembre.

Además de asistencia individual para las familias, California también ha asegurado asistencia pública para ayudar a los condados de Butte, Lake, Mendocino, Napa, Nevada, Orange,

Solano, Sonoma y Yuba a eliminar los desechos y tomar medidas adicionales de protección en caso de emergencia.

El fuego de Anaheim, apodado Canyon Fire 2, ya ha quemado 9,217 hectáreas y destruido o dañado más de 50 edificios, la mayoría de ellas casas. Los bomberos han conseguido contenerlo en un 80% y su extinción está prevista para este martes 17 de octubre.

Se han levantado todas las órdenes de evacuación, pero los funcionarios piden a los residentes que se mantengan alerta y estén atentos de los cambios de temperatura y humedad.

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MAIN FEMA NEWS

NATIONAL NEWS

CBS: California Wildfires. The [CBS Evening News](#) (10/18, story 8, 1:55, Mason, 11.17M) reported, "The California wildfires are

now blamed for 42 deaths. Another body was found today in one of the 6,000 destroyed homes. And a fire crew shared video of what they encountered battling the flames in Santa Rosa. Here's Adriana Diaz." CBS (**Diaz**) added, "Berkeley firefighters thought they were responding to a grass fire, but instead they drove in to an inferno. This was a K-Mart, and this fireball, a gas station." **Unidentified Speaker:** "I

can actually feel that heat." **Diaz:** "This rare account of the first moments on scene were reported by a firefighter." **Unidentified Speaker:** "I think the first thing we were feeling was disbelief." **Diaz:** "What was it that you were looking at that took your breath away?" **Unidentified Speaker:** "We were expecting to see a row of house, a structure, a school, something we could save. That was the most discouraging part, because that's what we do. We go out and we help people. At that point there was no one to help." **Diaz:** "There was nothing left." **Unidentified Speaker:** "Nothing that homes that were vanished, homes that were vaporized." **Diaz:** "Neighborhoods eviscerated on the ground, now looked like grids of gray ash from the air. Oh, my gosh. You can't even tell there were houses here. We saw the scope from the sky in a National Guard helicopter." **Unidentified Speaker:** "This literally looks like a bomb hit this neighborhood." **Diaz:** "But there was one bright spot. His team stopped the flames from advancing." **Unidentified Speaker:** "That was the greatest moment, when we finally found that row of houses where we said, this is it, this is where we can make a difference. We can stop this fire from spreading further." **Diaz:** "The firefighter says he was struck by the random path of the fire. It obliterated homes like this one while leaving the ones just next door completely untouched."

NBC: Flooded Cars Warning. [NBC Nightly News](#) (10/18, story 7, 2:35, Holt, 16.61M) reported, "In Houston today, hundreds of residents lined up to receive disaster relief, more than seven weeks after Hurricane Harvey hit. Harvey and other recent storms caused tens of billions in damage, including an unprecedented number of flooded vehicles. Now experts warn some of those cars may be for sale in your state, and the damage may never be disclosed to you. NBC News National Investigative Correspondent Jeff Rossen tells you how to keep from getting scammed in tonight's Rossen Reports." NBC (**Rossen**) added, "Tonight the numbers are still rising from Hurricane Harvey to Hurricane Irma. More than 637,000 cars flooded out and damaged. And some of those cars ended up here in this flooded car graveyard. Just how many? Let's show you. We have our NBC drone up. We'll bring you up and give you some perspective. Believe it or not, this is just a fraction of the flooded out cars from Hurricane Harvey and Hurricane Irma. These are only the people that

turn their cars in to their insurance companies. Around here, over 60 percent of the people don't have any car insurance, and experts say, they could try to resell these flooded cars on the open market across the country without ever telling you there's a problem." **Roger Morris**, National Insurance Crime Bureau: "It's obvious from the dirt and debris, this car has been in a major flood. Somebody could come along and for a couple of thousand dollars, clean it up, sell it to an unsuspecting buyer. Everything's great until they're driving it down the road in a few weeks and the electronics go out, and boom, you have a bomb on your hands." **Rossen:** "Roger Morris is with the National Insurance Crime Bureau." **Morris:** "That's how high the flood water came up. It got the engine, and it also got the anti-lock brakes." **Rossen:** "How can you tell? Because chances are, a seller would clean that up. How can you tell? What should I look for when buying a used car?" **Morris:** "Be on the lookout for condensation." **Rossen:** "The lights?" **Morris:** "It has water in there. Yeah." **Rossen:** "He says there are other clues, too, that a car was under water like rust or corrosion on the engine. Brand-new upholstery in a used car or sand and dirt in unusual places like deep under the seats. And here's another big tip." **Morris:** "So if you are looking to buy a used car, take the VIN number from the car, run it through our data base, VIN check, at www.nicb.org. It's free. If that car was flooded and insured, it will show up in there." **Rossen:** "If it wasn't insured?" **Morris:** "Buyer beware." **Rossen:** "For every car in this graveyard, experts say there are thousands more dangerous and on the market. Jeff Rossen, NBC News, Texas."

Trailers Could House Those Displaced By Fires In California Wine Country

By Dan Whitcomb And Alex Dobuzinskis
[Reuters](#), October 18, 2017

Full-text stories from Reuters currently cannot be included in this document. You may, however, click the link above to access the story.

Trump Has No Immediate Plans To Visit Calif. Wildfire Damage

By Ken Thomas And Sudhin Thanawala
[Associated Press](#), October 18, 2017

WASHINGTON (AP) – President Donald Trump, who has made four visits to hurricane

zones in recent weeks, isn't rushing to survey the damage from California's wildfires.

The president has no immediate plans to visit the state to inspect the aftermath of the wind-whipped wildfires, which have swept through parts of Northern California, including the region's famed wine country. The wildfires have killed at least 42 people and destroyed thousands of homes, becoming the deadliest and most destructive series of blazes in California's history.

For Trump, the wildfires are ravaging a state that has long been a Democratic stronghold and gave his presidential rival, Democrat Hillary Clinton, a commanding victory in California during last year's election. Trump received about 31 percent of the vote in the state, prompting questions of whether politics have influenced his plans after the president visited Republican-leaning states like Texas and Louisiana and campaign battleground Florida after they dealt with massive hurricanes. He also visited Puerto Rico to view hurricane damage and traveled to Las Vegas after the city's deadly mass shooting.

"I'd like to see him here," said Rick Rogers, 52, who lost his home in Santa Rosa, California, to the fire. "I think it's going to go down as one of the worst disasters in the state's history. It would be nice to have the president here to show some support."

Suzanne Finzell, 62, a self-described "dyed in the wool" Democrat who lost her rented home in the blaze, accused Trump of having "no empathy." But she added: "Even if he came here, what could he possibly do?"

In a sign of the frustration, The San Francisco Chronicle published an editorial on Sunday with the headline: "California burns: Where's the president?" The editorial said Trump's voice had been "conspicuously mute through day after day of crisis."

White House press secretary Sarah Huckabee Sanders said Wednesday a trip by Trump to California was not "planned at this time but it certainly hasn't been ruled out either." She said the Trump administration "has been very engaged throughout this process. We're going to continue to be there."

Trump retweeted a tweet on Wednesday from Federal Emergency Management Agency Administrator Brock Long, who has been touring the region this week. Trump wrote, "Our hearts are with all affected by the wildfires in California.

God bless our brave First Responders and @fema team. We support you!"

And during a Cabinet meeting on Monday, the president noted that his administration had issued a disaster declaration in California to respond to "devastating wildfires like we've never seen. And we mourn the terrible loss of life." He pointed to FEMA, first responders and members of the military assisting people in the path of the fires and cited "a lot of progress in the last couple of days. But we're a little subject to winds and what happens with nature, but it's been a, it's a very sad thing to watch."

Administration officials also noted that Vice President Mike Pence met with first responders at the state's Office of Emergency Services headquarters in the Sacramento area last week during a trip to California.

Previous presidents have toured the aftermath of wildfires in the past but the catastrophes have not always led to presidential visits.

Former President Barack Obama visited Colorado Springs, Colo., in June 2012, as he sought re-election, to observe recovery efforts from the state's wildfires. And former President George W. Bush made separate visits to California to tour fire-ravaged parts of Southern California in 2003 and 2007.

Other wildfires, meanwhile, have been addressed by past White House administrations through phone calls and extensive coordination with state and federal officials but haven't always involved a presidential trip.

Gov. Jerry Brown, a Democrat, has praised the Trump administration for quickly approving his request for federal assistance less than two days after they were sparked. In total, eight California counties are receiving federal relief. "I appreciate the fast response from the President," Brown said in a statement last week.

And some residents say the visit isn't necessary. "He's got more important business," said Rob Ferguson, 75, of Santa Rosa, who lost his home in the fires. His 68-year-old wife, Judy Ferguson added: "We just want him to take care of everything else."

Thanawala contributed from Santa Rosa, Calif. Associated Press writer Kathleen Ronayne in Sacramento, Calif., contributed to this report.

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President Trump Sends First Tweet About Wine Country Fires, 10 Days After Fires First Broke Out

[San Francisco Chronicle](#), October 18, 2017

On Wednesday morning, President Donald Trump sent his first tweet about the Wine Country fires.

President Trump tweeted, "Our hearts are with all affected by the wildfires in California. God bless our brave First Responders and @FEMA team. We support you!"

The tweet was quoted under a re-tweet of FEMA administrator Brock Long, who had a posted photo Tuesday on Twitter of officials from FEMA, California Office of Emergency Services and Cal Fire surveying fire damage in Santa Rosa.

It took Trump 10 days to tweet about the fires. A San Francisco Chronicle editorial Sunday took President Donald J. Trump to task for his "perfunctory" response to the California wildfire crisis.

"This is a president who views tweets as his primary means of connecting with the people, without the media filter he loathes," the editorial noted.

So, what did Trump tweet after the devastating fires broke out on the night of Oct. 8-9?

Here is a breakdown of every tweet sent before Wednesday's tweet about the fires (note, a few tweets cover more than one topic):

Fake News: 10 tweets

Obamacare is imploding, but is being dismantled: 10 tweets

Tax 'reform': 8 tweets

How great the stock market/economy is doing since Election Day: 6 tweets

Obstructionist Democrats: 5 tweets

NFL players who don't stand for anthem: 5 tweets

Crooked Hillary/Comey protected her: 4 tweets

Promoting interview with Sean Hannity: 4 tweets

Can't keep FEMA, military & first responders in Puerto Rico forever: 3 tweets

Hated Iran deal: 3 tweets

Failing New York Times did not mention my accomplishments: 2 tweets

Immigration/border wall: 2 tweets

Welcoming Greek prime minister: 2 tweets

Support for Republican Ed Gillespie: 1 tweet

Lou Dobbs complimented me: 1 tweet

Pakistan is more cooperative: 1 tweet

Americans worship God, not government: 1 tweet

HAPPY BIRTHDAY, U.S. Navy!: 1 tweet

Support for Puerto Rico: 1 tweet

Happy National Farmers Day!: 1 tweet

\$1 million for Las Vegas: 1 tweet

Honored to host NHL champion Pittsburgh Penguins: 1 tweet

Failing NY Times set 'Liddle' Bob Corker' up: 1 tweet

'Really good book' about me: 1 tweet

ESPN ratings tanking: 1 tweet

Happy Columbus Day!: 1 tweet

North Korea policy hasn't worked for 25 years: 1 tweet

Rep. Tom Marino, a 'great congressman,' withdraws name from consideration for drug czar: 1 tweet

Thanks for the 'beautiful welcome,' South Carolina!: 1 tweet

Freedom comes from God, not govt.: 1 tweet

Democratic congresswoman lied about what I said to soldier's widow: 1 tweet

California wildfires: 0 tweets *

* The president did tweet a 1:46 min. video from Harrisburg on Wednesday during which he mentions the California wildfires along with the hurricane disasters. His comments about the wildfires, praising first responders and especially FEMA, lasted less than 30 seconds.

Last Tuesday, Trump said he had spoken with Gov. Jerry Brown and that the federal government would stand with the "people of California and be there with you in this time of terrible tragedy and need."

Brown toured Santa Rosa on Saturday.

"This is truly one of the greatest, if not the greatest, tragedy that California has ever faced," the governor said. "The devastation is just unbelievable. It's a horror that no one could have imagined."

While the president has traveled to Houston and Puerto Rico in the aftermath of hurricane disasters, he has yet to visit the wildfire-ravaged counties of Sonoma, Mendocino and Napa.

Trump Tweets: 'Our Hearts Are With All Affected By Wildfires In California'

By Jenna Lyons

[San Francisco Chronicle](#), October 18, 2017

President Trump tweeted out support to California wildfire victims and first responders on Wednesday.

It was the president's first online mention of the disaster, in which a series of wildfires has claimed at least 42 lives, destroyed thousands of homes and burned more than 200,000 acres in California since Oct. 8. Trump had undergone some criticism for not immediately tweeting about the fires, although he has already spoken about it publicly.

Trump tweeted, "Our hearts are with all affected by the wildfires in California. God bless our brave First Responders and @FEMA team. We support you!"

The tweet was quoted under a re-tweet from FEMA administrator Brock Long, who on Tuesday posted, "Viewing fire devastation in Santa Rosa, CA neighborhood w/ @Cal_OES @CAL_FIRE and @femaregion9 "

Long's post included a photo of officials from FEMA, California Office of Emergency Services and Cal Fire surveying fire damage in Santa Rosa.

Trump mentioned the fires on Oct. 10 before welcoming the Stanley Cup champion Pittsburgh Penguins to the White House. At the time, he said he had spoken with Gov. Jerry Brown and that the federal government would stand with the "people of California and be there with you in this time of terrible tragedy and need."

The president also approved federal disaster relief funds that day for areas in Butte, Lake, Mendocino, Napa, Nevada, Sonoma, and Yuba counties affected by wildfires.

Trump has traveled to a series of U.S. disaster zones in the past few months. He visited hurricane victims in Florida, Texas, and Puerto Rico. Trump also visited victims of the recent shooting massacre of 58 people at a country music festival in Las Vegas.

There was no immediate announcement that the president would visit California fire zones.

Jenna Lyons is a San Francisco Chronicle staff writer. Email: jlyons@sfchronicle.com Twitter: @JennaJourno

A Third Of California's Fire Evacuees Still Waiting To Go Home

By Scott Neuman

[NPR](#), October 18, 2017

Even as many of the thousands of people forced to evacuate from deadly California wildfires were being allowed to return to their homes, yet another fire has started in the Santa Cruz mountains.

Authorities said 60 people were still missing on Tuesday from the fires that have killed at least 41 people, destroyed more than 6,000 homes and burned through some 200,000 acres of the state.

The latest Cal Fire summary says that the Tubbs Fire affecting Sonoma and Napa counties between the towns of Calistoga and Santa Rosa has been 82 percent contained.

The Nuns Fire between Santa Rosa and the city of Sonoma has been 68 percent contained. The Atlas Fire, the single largest blaze — which has engulfed more than 51,000 acres and caused six fatalities in an area south of Lake Berryessa and northeast of Napa — is 77 percent contained.

Yet another fire in Redwood Valley, Mendocino County, that has killed eight people is 60 percent contained, Cal Fire says.

Firefighters gained more control on the massive wildfires that raced through wine country last week, forcing the evacuation of an estimated 100,000 people. About 34,000 remain under evacuation orders and many have yet to find out if their homes are still standing.

"Just over the last 24 hours, we have repopulated 13,956 homes and 36,225 people," Sonoma County Sheriff Rob Giordano told reporters on Tuesday. "That's at a pretty brisk pace, you might say, and about as fast as we can do it."

California's licensed psychologists were being asked to volunteer to help those who lost loved ones in the fire or saw their homes destroyed, The Associated Press said.

NPR's David Schaper, reporting from Santa Rosa, says many people evacuated from the fires stayed in hotels or in Red Cross shelters, while others slept in their cars or on couches with relatives and friends.

David spoke with Linda Schiltgen. She and her husband and two girls stayed on a friend's floor. After several days there, Schiltgen expects that in the next day or two, the evacuation order for her neighborhood will be lifted.

"We have a home to go back to. My mom does not," she tells NPR.

Meanwhile, another major fire is raging in Northern California, this time in the Santa Cruz Mountains, just outside of San Jose. Member

station KQED reporter Tonya Mosley says the Bear Fire has scorched more than 200 acres, tearing through mostly dense forest area. Some 150 homes have been evacuated as a precaution.

Five firefighters sustained minor injuries battling the latest blaze.

California Wildfires Further Burden The State's Housing Crisis

[NPR](#), October 18, 2017

Thousands are displaced by the northern California fires — sleeping in hotels, shelters or on couches of friends and relatives. They're facing a long period of uncertainty about where to call home.

STEVE INSKEEP, HOST:

Now let's report on a side effect of California's fires. The state was already experiencing a housing shortage, really high housing prices. And now several thousand people who lost their homes in northern California face uncertainty about where they're going to live. From Santa Rosa, NPR's David Schaper reports.

DAVID SCHAPER, BYLINE: As several fast-moving wildfires raced across California's wine country last week, tens of thousands of people fled their homes. Many stayed in hotels or in Red Cross shelters, while others slept in their cars or crashed on couches with relatives or friends. For Linda Schiltgen, her husband and two girls, it's...

LINDA SCHILTGEN: ...At a friend's house on a floor.

SCHAPER: And after several days of staying with that good friend, Schiltgen expects that in the next day or two the evacuation order for her neighborhood will be lifted.

SCHILTGEN: And we have a home to go back to. My mom does not.

SCHAPER: Her mother has been staying with other relatives. But where she'll end up living long term is unclear.

SCHILTGEN: You know, a week ago, losing your house was tragic. And now it's lucky because she's alive.

SCHAPER: Douglas Braly feels fortunate to have escaped the fires, too. But his Santa Rosa home...

DOUGLAS BRALY: ...Nothing left. The house is flat. There's nothing there.

SCHAPER: For now the 53-year-old and his wife and 22-year-old son are living in a motor home on the land around his in-laws' house.

BRALY: Two of her brothers lost their home as well. So there's a whole bunch of us there at the five acres. We're calling it the family compound and making the best out of it.

SCHAPER: Braly says the motorhome was already feeling a little cramped. And he's beginning to realize he might be camped out there for a while.

BRALY: Well, with the rental market the way it is right now because we don't have a lot of rentals to begin with and everybody and the brother out there, we're trying to find a rental. But if we don't find one, we might be there for two, three years till we finish rebuilding.

SCHAPER: Homeowners insurance often covers rental housing. And for those who are on or underinsured, FEMA provides temporary housing assistance. But that tight rental market was a big problem even before the fires, as Sonoma County has a huge housing shortage.

JAMES GORE: Well, we have less than 1 percent vacancy.

SCHAPER: James Gore is a Sonoma County supervisor. And he estimates at least 6,000 families in the county lost their homes to the fires.

GORE: We're not talking about houses that are for vacation rentals. We're talking primarily core workforce housing — teachers, plumbers, electricians, you know, people who work every day and have to make ends meet.

SCHAPER: Gore says already the community is getting creative. There's a share program in which residents are offering up spare rooms. And the county may give incentives to open up vacation rentals to displaced residents. But he says there is no question about the need to build new affordable housing fast. David Schaper, NPR News, Santa Rosa, Calif.

(SOUNDBITE OF TRACE BUNDY'S "ACOUSTIC NINJA")

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More Rain In Puerto Rico Brings Misery To Those With Damaged Roofs

[NPR](#), October 18, 2017

Puerto Rico has had steady rain this week, meaning misery for those whose roofs were damaged or destroyed by Hurricane Maria. Across the island, frustration is building over delays in the distribution and installation of the tarps usually provided by FEMA and the Army Corps of Engineers.

MARY LOUISE KELLY, HOST:

Some other news now from Puerto Rico, which has seen steady rain this week. Rain means more misery for people whose roofs were damaged by Hurricane Maria, and there was already an extreme shortage of tarps that people need to protect their homes. Across the island, people are frustrated by the long wait for tarps, which are usually provided by FEMA and the Army Corps of Engineers. NPR's Adrian Florido has the story.

ADRIAN FLORIDO, BYLINE: The view from Nancy Jimenez's rural home is breathtaking. It's perched on the side of a hill in the heart of Puerto Rico, a tiny mountain community called Mata de Cana. Her elderly mother lives on the first floor. Jimenez, her husband and daughter have a separate entrance to the second floor where they live. The storm ripped off the roof – all of it. She invites us upstairs. Above us, it's wide open sky.

NANCY JIMENEZ: (Speaking Spanish).

FLORIDO: She says, welcome to my home. It's completely destroyed, she said, but I still consider it my home.

JIMENEZ: (Speaking Spanish).

FLORIDO: We're standing in the house, but the roof is wide open. The roof is completely – it's just nonexistent anymore.

JIMENEZ: (Speaking Spanish).

FLORIDO: (Speaking Spanish).

JIMENEZ: (Speaking Spanish).

FLORIDO: This is her daughter's bedroom.

More than anything, Jimenez wants one thing – a tarp, the kind of tarp that FEMA provided the last time a hurricane hit the island hard. She just wants to stay dry. Take Nancy Jimenez's situation and add to it many tens of thousands of families in Puerto Rico, and you begin to understand the extent of the demand. Everywhere we'd gone, people have been asking for tarps.

ALEJANDRO DE LA CAMPA: We need to manage expectations. We don't have the tarps in Puerto Rico.

FLORIDO: Alejandro de la Campa is the FEMA official in charge of Puerto Rico and the Caribbean.

DE LA CAMPA: There were not even tarps in the United States. We have to understand we are in the peak of the hurricane season, so regularly we're always keeping Puerto Rico between 30,000 to 40,000 tarps. At the same time, Maria is the most catastrophic event in Puerto Rico's history.

FLORIDO: There are actually two kinds of tarps. The first is a simple 20-by-25 foot tarp that people can drape over their own homes. De la Campa said manufacturers are working to fill an order for half a million. But FEMA isn't expecting delivery till the end of the month. The second kind is an extra strong tarp placed on top of a reinforced wooden frame, but those are customized for each home, so they have to be installed by crews working for the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers.

UNIDENTIFIED MAN: Twenty-eight foot here. Just stay right there.

FLORIDO: We watched one government-hired crew measuring a house in a working-class neighborhood of San Juan. The plan was to come back in a week or two to build the frame and put the tarp up – close to a day's worth of work. As of early this week, the Army Corps had installed fewer than 500 tarps island-wide. They estimate demand for some 100,000. The Army Corp's John Broachmann, who is overseeing work crews here, said even though FEMA is ramping up personnel...

JOHN BROACHMANN: Our anticipation is that the program really will go on for months. We're all here on the ground doing what we can. All we can do is hope that our government does the right thing and keeps supporting this mission. It's very important.

FLORIDO: As the crew worked upstairs, Gloria Agosto Martinez showed us around the downstairs part of her house.

GLORIA AGOSTO MARTINEZ: (Speaking Spanish).

FLORIDO: She's glad to be getting the tarp soon, but there was no relief in Gloria Agosto's voice. She's been traumatized by storms. Three years ago, her son, a utility worker, was electrocuted and lost both arms while working to replace power lines after a different storm. Her doctor tells her to stop thinking about those things, but she said she can't help it. She's reminded

every time it rains. Adrian Florido, NPR News, San Juan, Puerto Rico.

(SOUNDBITE OF MTBRD'S "PHONE CALL")

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Puerto Rico Governor And Trump To Meet At White House

[Associated Press](#), October 18, 2017

The White House says President Donald Trump and Puerto Rico Gov. Ricardo Rosello will meet Thursday to discuss the recovery and rebuilding effort on the island after it was ravaged by back-to-back hurricanes.

White House press secretary Sarah Huckabee Sanders says Rosello will visit the White House.

The meeting comes after Trump received some criticism for his response to Puerto Rico after Hurricanes Irma and Maria. Rosello has been supportive of Trump, while the mayor of San Juan has been outspoken in her criticism. Much of the island remains without electricity several weeks after Maria struck.

Sanders says the administration will continue to work hand-in-hand with local leaders in all areas of the country that have been affected by recent natural disasters.

Trump visited Puerto Rico earlier this month.

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Trump, Puerto Rico Governor To Discuss Hurricane Aid At White House

By Roberta Rampton And Nick Brown

[Reuters](#), October 18, 2017

Full-text stories from Reuters currently cannot be included in this document. You may, however, click the link above to access the story.

Puerto Rico Governor To Huddle With Trump On Recovery Efforts

By Jonathan Easley

[The Hill](#), October 18, 2017

Puerto Rico Gov. Ricardo Rosselló will visit the White House on Thursday as the island struggles to rebuild in the wake of devastating hurricanes.

"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 told reporters at the daily news briefing.

"We will continue working hand in hand with local leaders in all areas of our country that have been impacted by several natural disasters in recent months," she added.

"As President Trump has repeatedly said, we stand with our fellow citizens," she said. "We're here to help and get them back on their feet."

Weeks after Hurricanes Irma and Maria first made landfall, most of Puerto Rico remains without power and people there are struggling to find food and water.

Trump has been criticized by Democrats who say the federal response was slow and that the president has not shown the same amount of attention to those in Puerto Rico as he has to those who were impacted by hurricanes that struck Texas and Florida earlier this year.

Some have also said that Trump has lacked empathy by criticizing Puerto Rico's existing infrastructure and debt problems and saying Puerto Ricans need to do more to assist his administration's recovery efforts.

"We cannot keep FEMA, the Military & the First Responders, who have been amazing (under the most difficult circumstances) in P.R. forever!" Trump said on Twitter last week.

Rosselló tweeted back:

The U.S. citizens in Puerto Rico are requesting the support that any of our fellow citizens would receive across our Nation.— Ricardo Rossello (@ricardorossello) October 12, 2017

The president struck a different tone at a Christian summit on Friday.

"These are people that are incredible people, they suffered gravely and we'll be there, we're going to be there," Trump said.

"We have really, it is not even a question of a choice. We don't even want a choice, we're going to be there as Americans and we love those

people and what they've gone through and they're all healing, and their states and territories are healing and healing rapidly."

Trump To Meet With Puerto Rico Governor About Hurricane Aid On Thursday

By Mandy Mayfield

[Washington Examiner](#), October 18, 2017

President Trump will meet with Puerto Rico Gov. Ricardo Rossello on Thursday to discuss a rebuilding plan after the U.S. territory was ravaged by Hurricane Maria, according to the White House.

"We need to think about rebuilding Puerto Rico in a holistic way. All the crops are all dead, agriculture is dead, housing is destroyed," Carlos Mercader, a spokesperson for the governor, told Reuters, pointing out that more than 660,000 people have now filed claims with the federal government.

Senate Democrats on Monday called on the Federal Emergency Management Agency to provide Puerto Rico with the funding they need to make repairs to the island's devastated infrastructure.

"The scale of damages across the island is clear, and Puerto Rico should not have to wait any longer for this assistance to be granted so they can begin the process of rebuilding their infrastructure and communities," the Democratic senators said in a letter addressed to FEMA Administrator Brock Long. The letter was signed by Senate Minority Leader Chuck Schumer, D-N.Y., and six other Senate Democrats.

Hurricane Maria struck Puerto Rico on Sept. 20, devastating the island's homes, roads and power. Less than 20 percent of Puerto Rican residences have had power returned to them.

FEMA Chief Blamed For Katrina Response Says The Same Problems Are Happening In Puerto Rico

By Justin Worland

[TIME](#), October 18, 2017

Michael Brown, the former FEMA head who was widely blamed for the Bush administration's slow response to Hurricane Katrina, sees some familiar patterns in the aftermath of Hurricane Maria in Puerto Rico. The same breakdown in coordination between different levels of government that exacerbated the disaster of

Katrina also contributed to struggles to respond adequately to Maria, Brown told TIME this week.

Brown, who resigned as FEMA director under President George W. Bush amid criticism of his handling of Katrina, praised the Trump administration's overall response to Maria. But he said that the unified command center in Puerto Rico was ineffective at coordinating and managing resources, as some local officials would not or could not make it there because they were isolated by the storm's damage to the island's infrastructure. In the immediate aftermath of Katrina, New Orleans lacked a federal command center on the scene altogether, according to a government report commissioned to assess the event.

"I think presidents and certainly FEMA have learned that you got to have a unified command structure to respond to any disaster," Brown said. "In Puerto Rico, we see that there are many people who haven't learned that."

David Paulison, who succeeded Brown as FEMA leader under Bush, offered a similar assessment. "What we had in Katrina was a disconnect between the federal, state and local level," he said. "In Puerto Rico I see that same breakdown."

Those assessments were challenged by a senior FEMA official in Puerto Rico. "I know both Mike and Dave and I have a lot of high regard for them, but that's just not the case on the ground here," Mike Byrne, the federal coordinating officer for Puerto Rico, said in a phone interview from San Juan. Byrne said he meets daily with Puerto Rico's governor at the command center established early on in San Juan and several times a day with his staff, and has an inter-governmental coordinator in each of the island's 78 municipalities. "I not only have ground troops at the most minute level, I also have constant access to the highest levels," he said.

Byrne, who took over for another FEMA official a week ago, acknowledged that Puerto Rico's physical isolation and the comprehensive damage of the storm — which knocked out power and cell phones, and many roads — slowed the initial response. But with 77 helicopters and 19,000 troops on the island three weeks after the storm, the relief effort was "robust," Byrne said, delivering one million liters of water on Oct. 17, and 600,000 meals. "So there's always slow ramp up time, but once you get the pump primed, things get moving. And it took longer to get this pump

primed, because it's 1,000 miles from the mainland."

Despite these efforts, Puerto Rico remains in dire straits, with much of the island without electricity or access to clean drinking water nearly a month since the storm struck the U.S. territory, leaving at least 48 people dead. Still, many natural disaster experts agree with Byrne that delays in response have been due to the island's location and lack of infrastructure, rather than issues with the federal government's response. Brown said the Trump administration's response in Puerto Rico was "pretty much textbook." James Lee Witt, who served as FEMA director for the entirety of the Clinton presidency, told the Washington Post he would give the Trump administration an "A-plus" for its handling of the storm — something Trump picked up on in remarks this week.

"I was very honored," Trump said Monday. "He's the FEMA director of the Clinton administration. Gave us an A-plus for how we responded to the hurricane aftermath."

Perceptions of the response have also been affected by President Trump's social media habits. While Trump put resources at FEMA's disposal, he distracted from recovery efforts at times with tone-deaf comments and online feuds with some local officials, including San Juan Mayor Carmen Yulín Cruz. Last week, Trump threatened to pull FEMA and the Department of Defense from the island. Trump's advisers would prefer not to focus on the President's Twitter feed. "Judge us by the actions," Mick Mulvaeny, Trump's director of the Office of Management and Budget, told CNN earlier this month. "Judge us by what's happening on the island."

-With reporting by Karl Vick

'We Have Not Forgotten You,': Elizabeth Warren, Activists Hold Rally For Puerto Rico

By Rachel Chason

[Washington Post](#), October 18, 2017

Touting a sign that read "Paper towels are not enough," Jean Clark, a software developer from Silver Spring, Md., joined a few hundred others Wednesday on a march from the Capitol to the Federal Emergency Management Agency to protest what they say is an inadequate response by President Trump to storm-ravaged Puerto Rico.

Clark said she was particularly incensed by Trump's visit to the U.S. territory after Hurricane

Maria, during which he tossed paper towels to a crowd. She and other protesters want debt relief and more aid for the island.

"We have not forgotten you," said Sen. Elizabeth Warren -(D-Mass.), speaking about Puerto Rico and the U.S. Virgin Islands as she addressed the crowd outside the Capitol. "You are our brothers and sisters. You are our fellow U.S. citizens. And you are part of our hearts."

Trump last week announced that he may withdraw federal relief workers from Puerto Rico, where more than 80 percent of the island's 3.4 million people are still without power, and 75 percent do not have working cellphones. Residents are struggling to access food, clean water, gasoline and money.

"We are on the verge of a public health catastrophe," said Melissa Mark-Viverito (D), speaker of the New York City Council, who came to the District for the march.

Mark-Viverito (D), a native of Puerto Rico, told The Washington Post that Trump at least tried, with varying degrees of success, to express empathy for victims of Hurricanes Harvey and Irma in Texas and Florida.

"With Puerto Rico, he didn't even try," Mark-Viverito said. "He's shown a real disrespect for the people of Puerto Rico. It's like he is kicking us while we are down."

Following a backlash at his suggestion that federal aid workers might be recalled from Puerto Rico, Trump appeared to try to reassure the island last week.

"The wonderful people of Puerto Rico, with their unmatched spirit, know how bad things were before the H's," he tweeted. "I will always be with them!"

On Monday, Trump agreed with former FEMA director James Lee Witt's assessment that he would give the Trump administration an A-plus for its response to the string of hurricanes — including in Puerto Rico.

"They've maxed out probably how many people they could put there," said Witt, a Democrat who ran the agency under President Bill Clinton. "I know they're all working frantically, but sometimes that's not enough."

'Shrinking, Shrinking, Shrinking': Puerto Rico Faces A Demographic Disaster

By Peter Whoriskey

[Washington Post](#), October 17, 2017

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 economist at the Agriculture Department. 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 expected to lean Democratic — especially in Florida. The swing state already boasts half a million Puerto Rican-born residents, 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," Rosselló said. "You're going to get millions, creating a

devastating demographic shift for us here in Puerto Rico."

Puerto Rico Treasury Secretary Raúl 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 Center for International Governance Innovation. "Now it's no longer theoretical. In a week's time, they've lost another huge chunk of the population."

Compounding problems

For years before the economic slide, companies such as Merck, Johnson & Johnson and PepsiCo had collectively saved \$2 billion 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 also 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 efforts to raise taxes

and significant cuts to the government. Even with 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 plan for the island.

In the short term, at least, the island is likely to see an economic boost; 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 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 a 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 businesspeople 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 Bayamon. His company, Top Hat, once had three stores but now has just one. With the reductions over the years, he's had to lay off 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, a lawyer 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 said, 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 Joaquín Fernández Quintero, the president of Telemedik, a telehealth company that employs about 400 people.

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," Fernández 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.

About 1 Million Americans Without Running Water. 3 Million Without Power. This Is Life One Month After Hurricane Maria.

By John D. Sutter

[CNN](#), October 18, 2017

Puerto Rico (CNN) After Hurricane Maria toppled the bridge that connects him to the rest of civilization and ripped the roof and walls off his house here in the central mountains of Puerto Rico, Ramón Sostre raised a weathered American flag above the wreckage.

His message to the world: I'm alive, and I'm American.

It worked, if temporarily. Helicopters came. So did a tarp, food and bottled water.

Yet little else has changed. His roof is still missing, as are some walls. He and his cat, Tipo, sleep in the kitchen. When the wind blows at night, rain soaks them. The power is out, as it is for roughly 3 million Puerto Ricans, or more than 80% of the island's residents. More than a third of households in the US territory, including much of Sostre's community, are without reliable drinking water at home. That's roughly 1 million American citizens.

One month after Hurricane Maria, these realities are starting to feel less like an emergency and more like the new way of life – a nightmarish loop that resets each day the sun rises.

"You wake up and it's this mess as far as the eye can see," Sostre told me.

The US government says it is committed to helping Puerto Rico but is confronted with challenging circumstances, including some roads that are narrow, muddied and impassable for large aid-delivery vehicles. There also are pre-existing problems with power and water systems. Puerto Rico is "an island sitting in the middle of an ocean ... a very big ocean," as President Donald Trump said on September 26, making Hurricane Maria more distant than two other recent storms that hit the US mainland, Hurricanes Harvey and Irma.

After traveling the island for three days, however, and conducting interviews with residents and federal officials and experts, it's clear the level of suffering is far outpacing relief.

Much of the island feels as if it were hit by a storm yesterday, not one month ago. Mountains are covered in branchless trees, stuck in the dirt like the walking sticks of giants. Power lines are tangled about like spaghetti dropped from the sky. Sheet metal from roofs and fencing has been turned into floppy strips of chewing gum, scattered on the hills. Not only are people such as Sostre exposed to the elements, but supplies of clean drinking water are woefully inadequate and

environmental health experts fear a public health emergency could be brewing.

On Tuesday, the Federal Emergency Management Agency, or FEMA, said it had 1,700 personnel deployed in Puerto Rico and the US Virgin Islands, which also were hit by Hurricane Maria. Yet nearly 2,600 FEMA staff – about 900 more – remain deployed to Hurricane Harvey, nearly two months after that storm hit the Gulf Coast of the mainland United States.

In their defense, FEMA officials point out also that 20,000 other federal staff and military have been deployed to respond to Hurricane Maria.

"(P)lease understand that every disaster is different geographically and demographically and there is no point of comparison from one to the other. Numbers are a snapshot in time for any given day; it is like comparing apples to oranges," FEMA said in an emailed statement. "Please note that numbers do not save or improve lives, missions and progress do; for example, (Texas) may need more people to support housing, while (Puerto Rico) may need more generators and poles to support the grid."

Others see it differently.

"I thought we'd learned our lesson after (Hurricane) Katrina where the response was awful, both carelessly slow and incompetent," said John Mutter, a professor at Columbia University and an expert in international disaster relief. "In Puerto Rico, it doesn't look like we've learned anything at all – or we just don't care."

'If I don't drink water, I'm going to die'

The situation is particularly bad when it comes to water.

There are 3.4 million people in Puerto Rico, and about 35% of households were without access to safe drinking water as of Tuesday, according to government estimates. The World Health Organization says each person needs at least 2.5 liters per day for drinking alone, with a recommended daily allotment of up to 15 liters per day including basic cooking and hygiene.

Yet FEMA has provided 23.6 million liters – 6.2 million gallons – of bottled water and bulk water since the storm hit on September 20, said Justo Hernandez, FEMA's deputy federal coordinating officer. That includes water delivered to hospitals and dialysis centers, he said.

That's only roughly 9% of the drinking water needs for the entire territory.

It's an even smaller fraction if you include basic cooking and hygiene needs.

“The potential for cholera and diarrheal diseases is quite high” without bottled water, said Mutter, the disaster recovery expert at Columbia in New York, who recommended the WHO standard. “What you will get is contaminated wells and surface water. It’s a situation where you really should be drinking bottled water. If you can’t get bottled water ... that’s trouble.”

Volunteer groups and nonprofits also are helping with supplies. FEMA says it has distributed drinking-water purification tablets and deployed six mobile-filtration systems. And there are efforts to distribute water-purification tablets and to tell locals who can’t find bottled water either to boil the water or add bleach or water-purification tablets.

But many residents remain desperate, week after week, for drinking water.

Lines for water – potable or not – are long in many parts of the island. Rumors of contamination are rampant. Even as some taps turn back on, residents worry about drinking from faucets, which sputter and, in some locations, produce hazy liquid. Autoridad de Acueductos y Alcantarillados, the water utility in Puerto Rico, says on its website that residents should boil the water and add bleach even after service is restored.

In Dorado, near the capital, San Juan, people are so desperate for water they’ve turned to a federal hazardous-waste site in search of something to drink. CNN has reported that people are breaking through a fence marked “danger” to pull water from a Superfund site in an area known to be contaminated with industrial chemicals linked to cancer. It’s unclear if the wells are unsafe for public health; the Environmental Protection Agency is conducting water tests on wells on the Superfund site.

“If I don’t drink water, I’m going to die. So I might as well drink this water,” one resident said.

‘There is a public health crisis here’

Water delivered by FEMA have been inadequate, according to some residents.

One afternoon, I met Wilfredo Santiago while he was collecting water from a spout along Highway 10. The area smelled something like a pet store, and Santiago told me there likely are dead squirrels, rats and horses in the hills.

Santiago knows it may be unsafe, but his 9-year-old daughter bathed in the water stream while he filled up a number of plastic bottles with the liquid. A line of cars waited to do the same. He took the water home to an apartment complex in

Utua, an interior city. On the floor in the kitchen, there were 37 jugs of the stuff, bottled in containers meant for Sprite, Pepsi and cranberry juice. The family collects water from a gutter to flush the toilet. There’s no running water here, and bottled water is expensive and hard to come by, he told me. The grocery store in town had none. Deliveries to the area by government officials come infrequently, he said.

Across the street is the municipal emergency management office, which helps distribute FEMA aid. Héctor Cruz Cruz, its director, told me everyone in that complex is fine – they all get bottled water delivered through the complex’s manager. He disputed the claims of Santiago and about a half-dozen of his neighbors who said they are short on water and often struggle to find it.

“It’s dangerous,” Santiago told me, referring to drinking and bathing with water from the mountains, “but we have no choice.”

All of this is concerning to public health experts.

“Our biggest worry is that as people get desperate and sort of give up on safe water sources that they are going to rely on things like streams and pipes that just come out of a spring or a mountain,” said Erik Olson, head of the health program at the Natural Resources Defense Council, an environmental group. “It’s just really a desperate situation.”

“There is a public health crisis here,” Catherine Kennedy, a vice president at National Nurses United, said from Puerto Rico. “They need water. And we haven’t seen much of FEMA.”

‘I step out of my bed and there’s water’

Hernandez, the FEMA official, said this relief effort is “a marathon,” not a sprint.

But President Donald Trump already is emphasizing the finite nature of federal attention.

“We cannot keep FEMA, the Military & the First Responders, who have been amazing (under the most difficult circumstances) in P.R. forever!” Trump tweeted on October 12.

Carmen Rivera Rodriguez, a 55-year-old resident of “P.R.,” didn’t see that tweet. She has heard next to nothing about Trump or the federal response to this storm. When we met outside a supermarket in Comerío, about 20 miles southeast of Sostre and his American flag, she told me she hasn’t even been able to reach her son in the mainland United States because there’s virtually no cellular service here – 75% of antennas are down – and she doesn’t have a car.

Rivera was wearing a cast on her left arm.

She fell while trying to sweep rain out of her living room.

That was October 11 – 21 days after the storm.

Rivera invited me to her home, which is on a cleared and accessible road on the side of a mountain. When you step inside the house, your foot splashed in inch-deep water, sending ripples throughout the home across linoleum floors. This is what she was scraping with a squeegee when she slipped and fell. Her roof is gone, except for over the kitchen and a small garage, where she sleeps. And it rains most afternoons here, lately. "Just imagine. I step out of my bed and there's water. I go to the bathroom and I have to bring an umbrella," she said.

The same week Trump visited Puerto Rico, throwing paper towels to hurricane victims on October 3, Rivera told me she heard a truck driving by her home with loudspeakers blaring what seemed like good news: US government workers would be in town tomorrow.

The next morning, she said, she awoke at 4 and hitched a ride into the valley so she could apply for a tarp to stop it from raining indoors. Mold is growing on a baby picture of her now-grown son, which hangs on the plywood wall of her living room.

Her right eye is pink and puffy, which she figures is a symptom of being damp for one month.

She waited in line for hours and filled out a government form, she said.

As of October 15, 25 days after the storm, the tarp hadn't come.

FEMA has distributed 38,000 tarps on the island, said Hernandez, the FEMA official.

The need for roofing help is estimated at 60,000 homes, he said.

'Soy americano'

Puerto Rico is part of America and yet it isn't.

It's a territory of the richest nation on Earth – a country founded in opposition to colonialism. It's a place where the federal government oversees a financial crisis and controls certain aspects of commerce and shipping, but where Americans can't cast ballots in presidential general elections, and where the island's one representative in Congress can't vote, either.

Sostre, the man who was trapped on the other side of a broken bridge, was right to fly the

Stars and Stripes above his home and to say, "Soy americano," or "I'm an American."

Rivera, for her part, doesn't think much about the politics.

She only wants to stay safe and dry.

Nights have been the hardest, she said as darkness fell over her neighborhood and the island's coquí frogs began their electronic chorus. Rain splashed on the floor as she talked. The situation is so bad Rivera prays to God asking that if another storm comes, she won't survive it.

"I'm not ready to live through something like that again," she said, crying.

The truth is she's still living it.

CNN's Claudia Morales, Madeleine Stix, Cristian Arroyo and Lorraine Martinez contributed to this report.

FBI Investigates Puerto Rican Officials Distributing FEMA Aid Based On 'Loyalty' [VIDEO]

By Tim Pearce

[Daily Caller](#), October 18, 2017

The FBI is investigating allegations that Puerto Rican officials are passing out Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA) supplies based on "political loyalty," according to Congressional letters sent to the head of each department.

Three GOP representatives and Rep. Jennifer González-Colón of Puerto Rico sent letters Tuesday to FBI Director Christopher Wray and FEMA Administrator William Long requesting a briefing on Puerto Rican aid and recovery efforts by Oct. 23.

"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 letters said. "The public's confidence in the integrity of FEMA's distribution of emergency supplies is also imperative."

"Allegations that local elected officials are distributing life-sustaining FEMA emergency supplies based on political loyalty is deeply disturbing," the representatives added. "Any persons misappropriating FEMA emergency supplies should be prosecuted to the fullest extent of the law."

The FBI San Juan Field Office announced Oct. 13 it had received "numerous" complaints that FEMA aid packages were mishandled and fraudulently distributed. The agency is

investigating charges in six of the island's 78 municipalities.

One complaint alleged a party official filled his personal vehicle with supplies at a government building, then drove away, according to the letter.

Video posted online Monday shows Puerto Rican Secretary of State Luis Rivera Martin digging through mounds of FEMA packages thrown away after he received reports that supplies were being wasted.

Martin later spoke to CBS News about his discovery.

"We got tipped about a mishandling of some of the supplies. Based on the tip, we moved to Patilla and at a distribution center we were able to corroborate what we didn't want to see," Martin said during the interview. "That was, in a garbage dump truck we found pallets full of meals ready to be distributed at one time but now all spoiled."

Follow Tim Pearce on Twitter

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After Maria, José Andrés And His Team Have Served More Meals In Puerto Rico Than The Red Cross

By Tim Carman

[Washington Post](#), October 18, 2017

A week ago, President Trump issued a warning on Twitter: He could not keep the Federal Emergency Management Agency, the military and other first responders in Puerto Rico forever, he wrote. His tweet was quickly viewed by some as a threat that the government might abandon its own territory before the island could recover from the devastating blow delivered by Hurricane Maria in mid-September.

On Tuesday, chef and restaurateur José Andrés said his nonprofit, World Central Kitchen, and the hundreds who have volunteered to help it, would keep feeding Puerto Ricans until the locals could again take care of themselves, which could take awhile. According to FEMA, only 14 percent of the island has electricity, and many areas still have no drinking water or access to fresh food.

"When we establish contact with a community, we maintain that contact," Andrés said during a phone interview from San Juan. "When we go to a place, we take care of that place until we feel it has the right conditions to

sustain itself. That's what a relief organization should be."

Andrés landed in Puerto Rico on Sept. 25 and immediately started working with chef José Enrique, whose eponymous San Juan restaurant was already preparing batches of sancocho — a Puerto Rican beef stew — for hungry residents. In their first couple of days together, the chefs produced enough food to feed 1,000 or 2,000 people. Within a week of Andrés's appearance on the island, their numbers skyrocketed to 25,000 meals per day, now including sandwiches and paella.

Nearly a month after Maria, Andrés, World Central Kitchen and volunteers have reached a milestone in their #chefsforpuertorico campaign: As of Tuesday, they've prepared and delivered a million meals to residents. As a point of comparison, the American Red Cross has served more than 540,000 meals and snacks (and distributed more than 534,000 relief supplies) in the weeks since hurricanes Irma and Maria struck Puerto Rico, according to a spokeswoman for the organization.

FEMA has provided more than 14 million meals and 11 million liters of water in all 78 municipalities in Puerto Rico, said spokesman Dan Stoneking. That number includes meals provided by state, local and volunteer organizations, such as World Central Kitchen, which FEMA has helped fund. Many of FEMA's meals are military and civilian MREs, or meals ready to eat, which do not include hot food.

How Andrés and crew have pulled off this feat is a story that's difficult to piece together on a cellphone call to Puerto Rico, where service remains spotty and the chef remains too swamped to walk a reporter through all the complex logistics of feeding an island with little gas, electricity or transportation. The chef said it started with Enrique's restaurant and has now expanded to 15 kitchens, including the Coliseo de Puerto Rico in San Juan, where the majority of the meals are prepared. Between 450 and 500 volunteers are involved daily.

In fact, after Andrés navigated Houston's flooded streets to help feed the city following Hurricane Harvey, he learned an important lesson about relief operations: You need a facility with a large-capacity kitchen to prepare meals on a massive scale; otherwise you'll never quiet a city's hunger pains following a disaster. In Houston, Andrés worked at the downtown convention

center. But in Puerto Rico, he initially couldn't get access to the coliseum.

"First, I wanted to come to the coliseo, where I am right now, because I was looking for the biggest kitchen, and they told me, 'No way, José,'" Andrés recalled, now laughing at the story. A week later, however, Puerto Rico Gov. Ricardo Rosselló and first lady Beatriz Areizaga helped the chef secure access to the coliseum, where cooks now prepare more than 60,000 meals a day.

Assistance has come from a variety of sources, Andrés said. Donors, large and small, have contributed millions of dollars to World Central Kitchen. Goya Foods loaned WCK its helicopter to fly food into remote regions in the mountains. (The helicopter also helped crews locate a working kitchen, which is now one of the 15 spots for meal preparation.) Even Homeland Security has assisted with food distribution, Andrés said, after the agency helped the chef locate a missing person.

"I became friends with them," he said of Homeland Security personnel. "We saw that they were going to the very hard-hit areas and that they were going with their cars halfway empty. They said we could bring food, so we began giving them food. They began taking thousands of sandwiches."

FEMA initially provided money to World Central Kitchen to prepare 20,000 meals. But when the agency tried to negotiate a second contract to prepare another 20,000 meals, Andrés balked. The chef wanted money for 120,000 meals, which exceeded FEMA's authority to grant without putting the contract out to bid, an agency spokesman said. Regardless, FEMA said it was still looking at another contract with WCK to fund the organization's meals program.

Andrés then expressed his frustration about government bureaucracy to a Time magazine reporter.

"FEMA used me as a puppet to show that they were doing something," Andrés told the magazine about the original contract.

Several days later, Andrés dialed down his rhetoric, if not his desire to see more from his government. The native Spaniard became a naturalized U.S. citizen in 2013.

"You know me, nobody holds me back. But at the same time, you have to be strategic," Andrés said. He understands that FEMA employees have to abide by the rules and the thresholds established by people higher up in the agency.

But he would still like to see more flexibility from the agency, particular during times of crisis.

"Bureaucracy needs to give them the tools to move quick and fast to take care of people," he said. "If bureaucracy doesn't allow them to move quick and fast, it's a problem."

Andrés is not just talking the talk, either. Since he arrived in Puerto Rico, he has put much of his life on hold in Washington, where he oversees ThinkFoodGroup, a company with more than a dozen restaurants, a catering division and a food truck. Andrés was in Puerto Rico, in fact, when he heard the news that Minibar, the chef's gastronomic funhouse in Penn Quarter, maintained its two Michelin stars.

In the three-plus weeks since Maria pummeled the island, Andrés has been home only three or four days, he said. He returned once after becoming dehydrated.

"The reality here is very hard to escape. My question is, if we don't do it, who's going to do it?" Andrés said about feeding Puerto Ricans. "Fresh food is hard to come by . . . Sometimes the only fresh food people are eating is fruit we are bringing. The only hot meal they are eating is the lukewarm meal we are bringing."

Andrés hopes that World Central Kitchen is demonstrating what kind of results a nonprofit with a "private sector mentality" can achieve. He suspects that, in years to come, others will be examining "our successes and failures and how we did it."

"How we were able to go from 100 meals to a million meals," he added. The secret, Andrés noted, was the chef community, the many volunteers who picked up a knife and got to it. A chef's disposition, Andrés said, is to know how to adapt to crisis.

"We are survivors," he said. "We never wanted to be here for so long . . . But circumstances invited us to be part of it."

Then Andrés remembered a favorite quote from literature, taken from a John Steinbeck novel: "Where there's a fight so hungry people can eat, I will be there," he said.

Andrés remembered the quote almost verbatim. It's a line from Tom Joad, the central character in Steinbeck's Depression-era novel, "The Grapes of Wrath." Joad is the one who experiences a major transformation over the course of the story. He, as CliffsNotes reminds us, undergoes a "moral journey from self to community, from 'I' to 'we.'"

First Lady Encourages Donations For Hurricane Relief

By Darlene Superville

[Associated Press](#), October 18, 2017

WASHINGTON — Melania Trump is urging the public to continue to donate to help the victims of recent hurricanes.

The first lady says in a new public service announcement that “your help is still needed.” She directs viewers to an online list of organizations active in the disaster response and asks that they donate. Mrs. Trump accompanied President Donald Trump when he visited Texas, Louisiana, Florida and Puerto Rico after the hurricanes.

The couple also gave a total of \$1 million to the American Red Cross, the Salvation Army, Habitat for Humanity and other organizations after Hurricane Harvey struck the Houston area in late August.

The White House says the public service announcement was done in conjunction with the Federal Emergency Management Agency, the lead response agency for the storms.

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Senator Worries FEMA Exec Is ‘Fox Guarding The Henhouse’

By Ryan Smith

[Insurance Business](#), October 18, 2017

A Florida senator is worried that a top Federal Emergency Management Agency official – who’s also a former insurance exec – could be equated to “the fox guarding the henhouse.”

Sen. Bill Nelson (R-Fla.) made the claim on Tuesday in a letter to FEMA Administrator Brock Long. He demanded that FEMA ensure that its hurricane claims be handled in an “open, transparent and independent process” after reports surfaced that 90% of flood claims in Florida were being denied.

Celebrate excellence in insurance. Join us at the Insurance Business Awards in Chicago.

Nelson also questioned the intent of David Maurstad, FEMA’s assistant administrator for federal insurance. When Maurstad worked for private insurance company OST, some accused him of pushing for minimal payouts for claims related to Hurricane Sandy, according to a Washington Examiner report. Nelson also cited a Palm Beach Post report that found that in the early aftermath of Hurricane Irma, nine out of 10

flood claims resolved by the National Flood Insurance Program “have been closed without payment.”

“Unfortunately, this could be seen by some as a case of the fox guarding the henhouse,” Nelson said. “NFIP policyholders must have confidence in the claims process.”

According to the Examiner, Maurstad was accused by several whistleblowers of pushing to underpay Sandy victims. One whistleblower said in an affidavit that Maurstad’s work in Sandy’s aftermath “was an elaborate process designed to justify minimal payments to policyholders irrespective of the actual merits of their claims.”

Maurstad was also said to be something of a poster boy for critiques of the “revolving door” nature of politics and lobbyists: He worked for FEMA from 2001 to 2011, then took a job with OST, which went on to win contracts from FEMA. In 2016, Maurstad went back to FEMA.

The agency itself, however, decried that description.

“To describe that as a revolving door is a very generalized statement that does not take into account, for example, the limited pool of qualified individuals with relevant experience, the specific skills and qualities that individuals bring to their jobs, the government’s need to hire the best-qualified individuals for employment regardless of their background, the competitive process normally required to hire a government employee, and the commitment to public service associated with federal employment,” a FEMA spokesperson said last month.

‘Atmospheric River’ Will Deluge Oregon, Washington State With Rain

[ABC News Radio](#), October 18, 2017

ABC News(NEW YORK) – A 5,000-long conveyor belt of moisture called an Atmospheric River has developed in the air over the Pacific Ocean, spanning from Asia to North America.

Over the next several days, storms will move along this conveyor belt, bringing more than a foot of rain to parts of western Washington and northern Oregon and several feet of snow to the Cascade mountains. Gusty winds with these storms could be as high as 50 to 60 mph.

The National Weather Service has issued flood watches and high wind warnings for Washington state and Oregon.

A so-called Atmospheric River is a narrow but a long plume of moisture in the atmosphere, about

450 miles wide but several thousand miles long. Atmospheric rivers transport up to half of the West Coast's precipitation each year during the rainy season, which spans from October to April.

A single Atmospheric River can carry a greater flux of water than the earth's largest river, the Amazon River.

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2017 Could Tie Record For Billion-dollar Disasters In A Year. Here's Why.

By Doyle Rice, Jim Sergent, George Petras, Janet Loehrke

[USA Today](#), October 18, 2017

A hurricane dumped record rainfall on Texas, another left nearly all of Puerto Rico without electricity and intense wildfires killed more than 40 people in California — all in just the past two months.

So far this year, 15 separate weather and climate disasters have each caused at least \$1 billion in damages in the U.S., according to the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration. Initial estimates from AccuWeather put the damage from the northern California wildfires at well over \$1 billion. If so, 2017 would tie 2011 for the most billion-dollar disasters, according to NOAA.

And the year's not over yet.

This year's devastating hurricane season is largely to blame. Hurricane Harvey will likely end up topping all of this year's disasters with an estimated price tag of \$190 billion. The official death toll, now at 48, in Puerto Rico from Hurricane Maria could rise into the hundreds, according to a report Wednesday from Vox.

Hurricane Irma ravaged the Caribbean island of Dominica as Category 5 monster, destroying most of the island's structures and leaving the infrastructure in ruins. It then took aim on the U.S. Virgin Islands and eventually the U.S. mainland. It was also was a Category 5 storm for longer than all other Atlantic hurricanes on record except Ivan in 2004.

Maria's savage swipe across Puerto Rico caused a catastrophe that will take months, if not years, for the island to recover from. In all, three Category-4 hurricanes (Harvey, Irma and Maria) made landfall in the U.S. and its territories, a record for a single year.

Earlier in the year, tornadoes and severe storms caused most of the death and destruction, with seven separate outbreaks that each caused at least \$1 billion in damage. In all, tornadoes killed 34 Americans from January to May.

Here are some of the notable disasters of 2017. Unless noted, all damage estimates and fatalities are from NOAA. Tornadoes

As of Oct. 8, based on preliminary data from the Storm Prediction Center, 1,391 tornadoes have torn through the U.S. — 332 more than in all of 2016.

Southern tornadoes: Jan. 20-22

Deaths: 24

Estimated cost: \$1.1 billion

Authorities said 79 tornadoes swept across Gulf states and South Carolina. It was the third-most number of tornadoes to occur in a single wintertime outbreak.

Central/Southeast tornadoes: Feb. 28-March

1

Deaths: 6

Estimated cost: \$1.8 billion

More than 70 tornadoes swept across the central and southern states, causing widespread damage.

Midwest tornadoes: March 6-8

Deaths: 2

Estimated cost: \$2.1 billion

Eleven states sustained damage by a series of tornadoes that marched across the Midwest. Floods

California floods: Feb. 8-22

Deaths: 5

Estimated cost: \$1.5 billion

Heavy rain across northern and central California caused massive damage from floods, landslides and erosion. About 188,000 residents were evacuated when the Oroville Dam spillway was damaged.

Missouri/Arkansas floods: April 25-May 7

Deaths: 20

Estimated cost: \$1.7 billion

More than 15 inches of rainfall breached levees and caused disastrous flooding along rivers in Missouri, Arkansas, Illinois and other states. Hurricanes

Hurricane Harvey: Aug. 25-31

Deaths: 84

AccuWeather damage estimate: \$190 billion

Harvey, a Category 4 hurricane, struck near Rockport, Texas, and caused extensive damage. Houston and surrounding areas were drenched

with torrential rain and experienced record flood levels. Some 6.9 million people were inundated under 30 inches of rain, while another 1.25 million received 45 inches. As much as 50 inches was calculated for yet another 11,000 residents.

Hurricane Irma: Sept. 6-12

Deaths: 95

Moody's Analytics estimated damage: \$64 billion-\$92 billion

Irma, a Category 5 hurricane at its height, swept through the Virgin Islands and hit Cudjoe Key, Fla., as a Category 4. It destroyed one-quarter of the buildings on the Florida Keys. The Florida and South Carolina coasts reported significant damage. Irma maintained a maximum sustained wind of 187 mph for 37 hours, the longest in the satellite era that began in the 1960s.

Hurricane Maria: Sept. 19-27

Deaths: 38

AIR Worldwide estimate of insured losses: \$40-\$80 billion

Maria, a Category 4 hurricane, hit southeastern Puerto Rico and caused unprecedented devastation to the island and its infrastructure. Rainfall of up to 37 inches caused flooding and mudslides. Maria matched 2005's Hurricane Wilma for most rapid buildup, going from a tropical storm to a Category 5 hurricane in just 54 hours.

Wildfires
For the 2017 wildfire season, although the U.S. is below average in terms of number of fires, it's far above average for acres burned.

California wildfires: Oct. 8 to present

Deaths: 42 deaths

CoreLogic estimated cost: \$65 billion

More than 8,000 firefighters continue to battle multiple wildfires that have burned more than 210,000 acres in Northern California, destroying thousands of homes and forcing evacuations in the state's wine region. At least 13 large wildfires remained active on Wednesday, according to CalFire.

Source: NOAA

How Data Is Helping Disaster Victims Get Back On Their Feet Faster

By Will Caldwell

[Huffington Post](#), October 18, 2017

Although analytics pros might often look at data sets with a sense of bemused curiosity, the numbers related to the recent series of natural disasters in North America are sobering, to say the least.

The extent of the damage from Hurricanes Harvey, Irma and Maria, not to mention a series of earthquakes in Mexico, is absolutely staggering. FEMA expects approximately 450,000 victims of Harvey to file for disaster relief as tens of thousands of assistance agents have been deployed to Texas, Florida, Puerto Rico and the Virgin Islands.

The combined cost related to recovery from Harvey and Irma alone is approximately \$150 billion. Meanwhile, over 3 million people in Puerto Rico are still without power.

It's easy to forget that behind each of these data points and statistics are real people whose lives may never be the same.

But on a similar note, the strategy behind these numbers is posing a crucial question that needs to be addressed: How can data actually expedite deploying help to these disaster victims?

The Link Between Data and Disasters

Given the figures above, there's plenty of data to break down when looking at the scope of any disaster relief effort.

As a result, many companies, indie developers and fellow humanitarians have put their heads together to introduce data-driven initiatives, apps and programs which make the recovery process much more efficient.

Most importantly, though, is that these data-driven developments are helping victims get back on their feet sooner rather than later.

Using Data to Determine Who's in Need

The most pressing questions regard the immediate aftermath of any given disaster are two-fold: who needs assistance the most and what exactly do they need?

Collaborative projects such as this live map, created by non-profit group Sketch City of Houston, are answering questions like these through crowdsourced collaboration and data. This interactive map, which is kept up-to-date by a running Google Doc, notes which shelters and assistance sites need supplies or specific aid for evacuees of Hurricane Harvey.

In short, the map represents a more efficient means of mobilizing volunteers and focusing recovery efforts on shelters that require immediate assistance.

Analyzing the Road to Recovery

Some of the often-overlooked aspects of disaster relief to the public at large are what happens to families during the aftermath and recovery process itself. Figuring out how to move

forward following a disaster is tough enough, but the entire ordeal is exponentially worse when you're dealing with a severely damaged or totally destroyed home.

That's why TruHome, a mortgage banking credit union service organization, is looking to give those affected by Harvey and Irma a helping hand. With the help of business intelligence platform Sisense, TruHome is spearheading an initiative to get in immediate touch with mortgage holders and determine exactly what they should do next based on their specific situations.

Bear in mind that not everyone's road to recovery is the same: some lose homes while others might have their employment disrupted, leading to panic and an overwhelming fear of the unknown in terms of dealing with their mortgages.

Beyond providing advice to victims, TruHome is suspending late fees, payments and any negative credit reporting for 90 days or longer on behalf of its clients. With thousands of loans impacted and hundreds of homeowners already affected based on TruHome's clientele alone, the speed of providing answers and assistance to victims is paramount when looked at on a larger scale.

Assistance via Apps and Mobile

Harvey and Irma were the first massively devastating storms to occur on North American soil in the modern era of smartphones and social media. Naturally, news media, citizens and government officials alike took to the like of Twitter and Facebook to keep those affected updated in real-time. In cases where power outages were inevitable and any sort of communication to the outside world was otherwise lost, those in need of rescue essentially had a constant lifeline.

Similarly, a number of apps and resources were leveraged by volunteers and victims alike to ensure speedy assistance. For example, walkie-talkie app Zello was used en-masse during relief efforts during Harvey's initial aftermath in areas where cellphone service was poor or non-existent.

Other relief services such as Crowdsourc Rescue served as a sort of ticketing system for emergency rescue. Additional tools such as Muck Map and Crisis Cleanup were used by thousands looking to restore their homes back to normal following Harvey.

Another shining example of apps and data making a difference was the widespread use of GasBuddy for evacuees of both Harvey and Irma. The app essentially allows for users to note

whether or not fuel stations are accessible or have gas in real-time, letting fellow evacuees know whether there was a reasonable spot to fill up or if they simply keep driving.

What's perhaps most impressive about these apps and services is how quickly they were able to catch on among the general public. CrowdSource Rescue in particular was created mere days after Harvey made landfall. Inevitably, the presence of social media helped these assistance platforms spread so they could be used by victims at large.

Data's Pivotal Role in Disaster Relief

As displayed by these initiatives and applications, data already has the potential to do so much to aid disaster victims. Developers and leaders in the space will certainly look back on the numbers from this series of storms and disasters to better determine how they can streamline the recovery process in the future.

Although it may be uncomfortable to think of forthcoming disasters in the wake of these recent tragedies, the public can certainly take solace in the fact that so many people are working toward solutions for victims to help them restore their lives back to normal.

Will Caldwell, Contributor
CEO at Dizzle

FEMA HOUSING

U.S. Rep. Blake Farenthold To Hold "Conference Call With Your Congressman"

By Eleanor Dearman

[Corpus Christi \(TX\) Caller-Times](#), October 18, 2017

Congressman Blake Farenthold is hosting a conference call Sunday evening that is open to the public.

Callers can ask questions about applying for assistance in the wake of Hurricane Harvey and arranging temporary housing and can get tips on what to do if denied by FEMA.

Representatives from FEMA, the U.S. Small Business Administration, the Texas General Land Office and the Texas Windstorm Insurance Association also will participate in the call, according to a news release from Farenthold's office.

The call is set for 6 p.m. Sunday, and people interested in listening can call 877-229-8493. The code to join the call is 115712. There also will be a

livestream of the call on Farenthold's Facebook page.

NFIP AND FLOOD MAPS

No stories for this edition

MITIGATION

Bamberg County Eligible For Federal Disaster Assistance For Irma Damage

[Orangeburg \(SC\) Times And Democrat](#), October 17, 2017

Bamberg County has been named a disaster area eligible for federal assistance following Hurricane Irma.

The Federal Emergency Management Agency announced federal money will be available to assist local recovery efforts.

The federal funding is provided on a cost-sharing basis for emergency work and the repair or replacement of facilities damaged by the hurricane. All funds are administered by the state.

Hurricane Irma hit Florida in early September as a category 4 storm. As it moved north, it lost power and caused less damage in The T&D Region than initially feared. The wind did knock down some trees, causing damage.

President Donald Trump declared disasters in 16 South Carolina counties on Monday. Calhoun and Orangeburg counties were not among them, although they could be added at a later date if damage assessments show it is warranted.

Calhoun County Emergency Services Manager David Chojnacki said the county has submitted its required paperwork

Tri-County Electric Cooperative and perhaps the S.C. Department of Transportation may receive some federal money for the Calhoun County damage, but Chojnacki does not anticipate the county will.

"The county was below the \$3,100 threshold," Chojnacki said. "The county did not meet the threshold in the sense that we could recoup 75 percent of the money from FEMA."

Chojnacki said the county's only Irma-related expense was overtime for the sheriff's office and a handful of other emergency employees.

FEMA's assistance to the disaster-designated counties will include:

- Payment of not less than 75 percent of the eligible costs for debris removal and emergency

protective measures taken to save lives and protect property and public health.

- Payment of not less than 75 percent of the eligible costs for repairing or replacing damaged public facilities, such as roads, bridges, utilities, buildings, schools, recreational areas and similar publicly owned property, as well as certain private non-profit organizations engaged in community service activities.

- Payment of not more than 75 percent of the approved costs for hazard mitigation projects undertaken to prevent or reduce long-term risk to life and property from natural or technological disasters.

Bamberg County Emergency Services Director Brittany Barnwell could not be reached for comment by the close of business Tuesday.

U.S. FIRE ADMINISTRATION

No stories for this edition

DHS/FEMA GRANTS

No stories for this edition

FIRE GRANTS

No stories for this edition

NEWS AROUND THE COUNTRY

HURRICANE RECOVERY

Ambler Man Charged With Stealing FEMA Sandy Funds

By Robert Moran

[Philadelphia Inquirer](#), October 18, 2017

A Montgomery County man was charged Wednesday in federal court in Camden with using phony documents to collect more than \$250,000 in FEMA-backed disaster benefits and insurance payments intended for Hurricane Sandy disaster relief, prosecutors said.

Nicholas Ochs, 54, of Ambler, was charged by indictment with one count of disaster benefit fraud, five counts of mail fraud, and one count of theft of government funds.

Ochs' mother lived in a house in Ocean City that was severely damaged in the October 2012

storm. In January 2013, Ochs, on behalf of his mother, filed for FEMA assistance, but was denied because the property was covered by flood insurance.

Ochs then submitted fraudulent documents saying that the insurance provider had denied his mother's claim, prosecutors said. Ultimately, he collected \$21,574 in FEMA benefits and used the money for his own personal expenses.

His mother's insurance provider paid \$231,160, ultimately paid by FEMA, which backed insurance payments for disaster-related expenses.

The mortgage holder, Wells Fargo, held \$169,518 in escrow. Ochs submitted fraudulent invoices and forms to Wells Fargo that over-inflated work performed on the house, prosecutors said. He eventually received the escrow funds and used them for his personal expenses.

Prosecutors said Ochs defrauded FEMA of a total of \$252,734.

The disaster benefits fraud count carries a maximum penalty of 30 years in prison, as does each count of wire fraud. The theft of government funds count carries a maximum penalty of 10 years in prison.

Trump To Meet With Puerto Rican Governor In The Oval Office

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."

Hurricane Maria And Puerto Rico's Neo-Colonial Legacy

By Jon Lee Anderson

[The New Yorker](#), October 18, 2017

The view southward from the Asomante hills outside the Puerto Rican town of Aibonito is spectacular, reaching all the way to the Caribbean coast. A pretty little town situated in the island's southeastern Cayey mountain range, Aibonito has the highest altitude in Puerto Rico—twenty-four hundred feet. It's known for its cool climate, its bucolic scenery, its flowers, and its chicken farms.

In the small valleys around the town, many of the long, low, tin-roofed chicken breederries—polleros—were smashed to smithereens, and their occupants killed, during Hurricane Maria. In the middle of last week, when I visited, the dead chickens had been buried, but there was still wreckage strewn around the blasted polleros. The eye of the storm came right through these hills on September 20th and was especially fierce along the exposed ridgelines. The winds, whipping in at a hundred and fifty-five miles an hour, ripped apart wooden houses; they also turned most of the leaves on the trees in the surrounding forests from green to brown. Along the road leading up to Aibonito from the capital city of San Juan, which is a two-hour drive, there is—as everywhere else on the island—a dismal panorama of ruined houses and businesses, toppled and twisted trees, and downed utility poles.

I went to Aibonito in the company of a friend, Ana Teresa Toro. A talented journalist in her early thirties, Ana Teresa comes from Aibonito; she had always spoken proudly to me of her home town, and promised to show it to me one day. (She is also a newlywed; her wedding took place in the brief lull between Hurricanes Irma and Maria.)

Now we had our chance. In Aibonito, Ana Teresa took me to meet her aunt and uncle, who live in the same house where her grandmother, a traditional healer, had lived and worked until her death, a few years ago. We walked to Aibonito's central plaza to admire its unique red, white, and blue "mural de la bandera," representing a detail of the Puerto Rican flag, which Ana Teresa's cousin Humberto had painted, using an entire house as his canvas. The flag's single illuminated star, which had stood on a stanchion on the rooftop, had been destroyed by Maria. Humberto

had painted the mural as a patriotic gesture, and, as Ana Teresa pointed out, it was a pro-independence flag—its blue was the distinctive baby-blue of the independistas, whereas the Puerto Rican flags of those who are pro-statehood favor a darker hue.

After Hurricane Maria, Ana Teresa and her husband, Modesto, didn't go on a honeymoon but, instead, flew to Boston and sought assistance from the Puerto Rican community there. They had also met with mayors and businesspeople to solicit help for the island. Ana Teresa told me that she was happy to have helped make "a small contribution" to a fund-raising campaign, organized by several philanthropic organizations, that had raised about a million dollars for N.G.O.s involved in relief efforts on the island. But she had returned home, nonetheless, feeling extremely depressed. Looking around at the beat-up places of her Aibonito childhood, Ana Teresa also knew that, henceforth, things would probably not improve in Puerto Rico but get worse.

Like most of the other Puerto Ricans I met, Ana Teresa was outraged and wounded by the things Donald Trump had said about Puerto Rico. She felt more deeply than ever that she and her fellow Puerto Ricans were second-class U.S. citizens. During her recent U.S. trip, she told me, one politician had come up to her and said, in a whisper that was intended to be confiding as well as comforting, "Don't worry, we're going to push for statehood for you."

For Ana Teresa, a proud Puerto Rican nationalist, the remark was a crushing reminder that most non-Puerto Rican U.S. citizens are blissfully ignorant of the island's cultural heritage, its history, and some of its people's national aspirations. "I know that it didn't occur to the mayor that he was hurting my feelings, nor did it occur to him that I might possibly aspire to anything higher than full U.S. citizenship," Ana Teresa said. (Since 1917, when Puerto Rico was made an unincorporated U.S. territory, its citizens have been American citizens, but they do not have congressional voting rights, nor can they vote for President.)

Puerto Rico's neo-colonial status is shared with the U.S. Pacific territory of Guam, which, along with Cuba and the Philippines, were the Spanish colonial possessions acquired by the United States after its military victory in the Spanish-American War. Both Cuba and the Philippines eventually became independent.

As it turns out, two of the last battles of the Spanish-American War in Puerto Rico took place just outside Aibonito on the bluff overlooking the island, at the edge of the Asomante hills. On August 9, 1898, a column of American troops probing into the central highlands met heavy resistance at Asomante from Spanish troops who were dug into the hilltop along a trench line. The U.S. troops were led by Major General James H. Wilson, a celebrated veteran of the American Civil War, on the Unionist side. (He was famous, among other things, for having captured the defeated Confederate President, Jefferson Davis.) Wilson's troops retreated after coming under heavy fire; several American soldiers were wounded in the fracas. Three days later, his troops made another attempt to take the hilltop, and were again rebuffed, with several more men injured.

The war, such as it was, had already ended for the Spaniards, however. The next day, hostilities ceased when Spain agreed to surrender its forces and to relinquish Puerto Rico and its other colonial territories. A month later, on September 13, 1898, in the Protocol of Peace, as it was called, Spain formalized its defeat by a vote of 161 to 48 in the Spanish parliament, the Cortes. While Spain entered the twentieth century as a defeated nation on the world stage, the United States launched itself forth with swagger as a new and expansionist military player.

As for Puerto Rico, the U.S. victory over Spain meant a new form of political vassalage. Like neighboring Cuba, Puerto Rico had also had a pro-independence movement and launched several short-lived revolts that had been quelled by the Spaniards. Instead of receiving its emancipation, however, from 1898 onward Puerto Rico became a virtual American colony, under the authority of the U.S. military, which also appointed Puerto Rico's governor. In 1914, the U.S. Congress rejected a unanimous vote made by the rump Puerto Rican legislature in favor of Puerto Rico's independence. In 1917, by another act of Congress, Puerto Rico was made an unincorporated U.S. territory.

The place where the Asomante battles took place is known nowadays as Trinchera, or Trench. The bluff where the siege lines were laid is just a short walk downhill from the house of Ramón Rivera, a heavy-equipment operator who works for the municipality of Aibonito, and who owns the lands thereabouts. Rivera, a handsome man of

seventy-two, lives alone above the bluff in a concrete bungalow, its windows still covered with plywood, which, he said, had withstood Maria without damage. He had lost power like everyone else, and was still without electricity. He shrugged; the power would eventually come back. He was O.K. He and Ana Teresa made their introductions and swapped family names; Rivera said he knew her uncle. She smiled happily and said to me, "One way or another, we're all connected in Aibonito."

Rivera waved across the little road that led up to his house toward a small green valley; it was where he had grown up. His father had owned much of the land there, including a cattle ranch. He was living on what was left of the family property, which had been sold off over the years, and their big old house with a wraparound porch was gone, too. The valley was dotted with homes and several large polleros, the roof of one of them shattered by the hurricane.

Rivera led us downhill behind his house, past a grazing horse, to a flat area that ended where the hill fell away sharply. There were no trenches visible, and Rivera explained that years earlier, one of his brothers, who planned to build a house there, had levelled the hilltop with a bulldozer. In the process, the earth he'd removed had covered the old trench lines. "In those days nobody thought about preserving anything," he said. He had helped his brother level the hill. There was, however, a stone plinth at the edge of the bluff. It was inscribed with the following message in Spanish: "The Asomante Trenches: In this place the advance of the American troops was halted on the 12th of August 1899 when the last battle between American and Spanish troops in the Spanish-American War was waged." (The plinth had been erected by Aibonito's mayor on the centenary of the war, in 1998.)

Rivera casually mentioned that his father, who had lived to a hundred and fifteen, had been an eyewitness to the Asomante battle. His father, he explained, had died forty-eight years before. After some mental calculations, I concluded that his father had been born in the eighteen-fifties. Did that sound right? Rivera nodded. "Did he ever talk to you about the battle?" I asked Rivera wistfully. "Not really," Rivera said. His father was already old by the time he'd come along, and he had been a forbidding man. "He was old-fashioned and close-lipped, and never talked

about the past," Rivera said. "He never joked, either."

By way of further explanation, Rivera said that he was just one of his father's forty-eight children, and that they had never been close. When I exclaimed at the number, Rivera disclosed that he himself had fathered seventeen children—that he knew of—with thirteen different women. With a smile, Rivera said that he had never been rich, and always had to work for his living, but that he enjoyed his life. He wasn't pampered as a boy, like young people are today, he said. He had gone to work on neighbors' farms for his money, planting coffee or sugarcane; he left for the U.S. at eighteen, because it was so difficult to make ends meet at home. The difference in pay was dramatic—his wages in Puerto Rico had been fifty cents a day and a glass of orange juice, he recalled, while in the U.S., his first wage was six dollars a day. He named several addresses in the Bronx and in Brooklyn where he had worked in a plastics factory, on one occasion, and on another in one that made mannequins. He had also worked on a potato farm in New Jersey, driving a truck and also operating the potato weigher. He had been in New York when J. F. K. was killed. He said that people around him had stopped what they were doing and cried when they heard the news. He didn't know who J. F. K. was, so he hadn't felt anything, but he remembered the moment. The last time he had gone to the U.S. he had been around twenty-eight or thirty, but he hasn't returned since 1973, when he had been hired by the Aibonito public-works department, where he has worked ever since. He was technically retired, but still worked when he was needed. Most recently, he had helped retrieve people from their flooded houses with a front loader following Hurricane Maria.

When I asked Rivera about Donald Trump's recent critical remarks about Puerto Rico, he said that he was not much interested in politics, but assumed that Trump had been trying to "impose some respect." Rivera ventured, "I think he wants people to work, not just ask for things, even if he did say it a little strongly." He also said that he supported Puerto Rico's status as an "estado libre asociado," but believed that life would improve if the island's governments were cleaned up. He blamed the island's economic problems on corrupt officials who had enriched themselves on public-works projects, and compared them to Catholic priests who abused their parishioners.

Fourteen of his seventeen children had gone to the United States to live, Rivera said. They had gone, just as he once had, to earn better money than they could in Puerto Rico. Rivera said that he was upset about those Puerto Ricans leaving the island in the aftermath of Hurricane Maria, however. "I don't think those are real Puerto Ricans," he said. "If we're in a crisis, we have to help ourselves and each other in order to help the country move forward. How can we do that if everyone leaves? I am not in agreement."

Rivera waved at the land around his house and to the view that extended all the way to the distant sea, and he said, "I'm happy here, anyway. Why would I ever leave?"

Irving-based Fluor Wins \$240 Million Contract To Help Restore Power In Puerto Rico

By Jeff Mosier

[Dallas Morning News](#), October 18, 2017

Hurricane-devastated Puerto Rico will soon get help from Irving-based engineering and construction firm Fluor as part of federal efforts to return power to 3 million people.

The U.S. Army Corps of Engineers awarded Fluor a \$240 million contract this week to help restore the island's electric grid. A month after Hurricane Maria struck, about 86 percent of Puerto Rico is still without power.

Maria was one of the strongest Atlantic hurricanes on record and arrived just after the financially troubled island was damaged by Hurricane Irma. And Puerto Rico was already struggling with occasional blackouts caused by faltering infrastructure. Officials have said it could take six months to a year to restore electricity in some areas.

Mark Cuban, Dallas Mavericks lending more than a hand to Puerto Rico after hurricane

Fluor's role in the reconstruction wasn't immediately clear, although it's often hired for major infrastructure projects locally and globally. A FEMA news release said the company would "augment current restoration activities."

A company spokesman said a written statement about Fluor's contract was in the works.

President Donald Trump has criticized the slow pace of recovery in Puerto Rico and said on Twitter that federal help can't go on "forever." Last week, the U.S. House approved access to \$4.9 billion in low-interest loans for Puerto Rico.

Fluor has a long history with the U.S. territory. The company was a contractor on Puerto Rico's first oil refinery, which opened in 1955. More recently, Fluor provided engineering, construction and other services for a coal-fired power plant that was providing 17 percent of the island's electricity.

This recovery contract was one of a series announced this month to help the island of about 3.4 million residents. The announcement also included:

\$115 million from the corps for 50,000 poles and 6,500 miles of cable for power lines.

\$35.1 million to Pennsylvania-based Weston Solutions for two diesel turbines that will provide 50 megawatts of electricity to the San Juan metro area.

The corps has already installed 106 temporary generators in Puerto Rico and is working on 36 more.

Puerto Rico's Gov. Ricardo Rosselló said he's interested in incorporating more solar, batteries and microgrids into the territory's rebuilt grid. In 2016, just 2 percent of the its electricity came from renewable sources, according to the U.S. Energy Information Administration.

Like many islands, electricity is expensive in Puerto Rico. Residential electricity prices were about 50 percent higher than the U.S. average this summer. The commercial rate was nearly double, and the industrial rate was one and a half times higher.

The Solar Energy Industries Association and companies have shipped solar equipment to Puerto Rico as part of a humanitarian effort and to promote the technology. Tesla's Elon Musk said he would send the island battery systems to store electricity generated by solar panels.

José Andrés And Team Have Served One Million Meals In Puerto Rico

By Monica Burton

[Eater](#), October 18, 2017

Yesterday was a big day for José Andrés: After three weeks in Puerto Rico, the Washington, D.C.-based chef served an impressive one million meals with his nonprofit World Central Kitchen.

Andrés arrived in Puerto Rico days after Hurricane Maria devastated the island and left much of its population without electricity and struggling to find food and water. Over the past 21 days, the superstar chef, with help from a network of #ChefsForPuertoRico and 500 volunteers, set

up 15 kitchens around the island and partnered with 10 food trucks to feed Puerto Rico.

Through it all, Andrés used Twitter to draw attention to Puerto Rico's ongoing need for support. But yesterday, the chef's feed was full of good news. In a video update, he joyfully announced, "We are about to reach one million meals cooked by the men and women of Puerto Rico. Big day. I love you all!"

Eater has been following along since day one. Here's a look back at how Andrés made it to the one million meal mark:

September 26: José Andrés arrives in Puerto Rico and sets up shop at Jose Enrique's restaurant kitchen, in San Juan. He promises to serve 200 meals daily.

October 1: Andrés takes shots at President Trump. The chef describes what he would do about the situation in Puerto Rico if he were president, starting with actually spending time on the island. The Tweet storm is really an account of Andrés's own recovery efforts. At this point, he is delivering thousands of meals per day, including sandwiches and paella, with the help of volunteers and "activated" food trucks and kitchens in San Juan, the island's capital.

October 2: Andrés announces that World Central Kitchen will serve 50,000 meals per day and sets a goal of 100,000 meals daily for the end of the following week.

October 4: Andrés reveals a plan to activate school kitchens to feed more people on the island. He shares his idea with FEMA and the Department of Education, with the hope they can help make it happen. He also establishes a kitchen in Ponce, a city on Puerto Rico's southern coast, and makes the Coliseo de Puerto Rico in San Juan, the island's biggest stadium, the headquarters for World Central Kitchen's operations. He feeds 30,000 people in a single day.

October 5: According to World Central Kitchen, Andrés and team fed 130,000 people since arriving in Puerto Rico. Donations from Goya Foods, UPS, and Chili's help.

October 9: The chef and team surpass 350,000 meals served. Andrés sets up a kitchen in Farjado, on the northeastern part of the island, and, despite heavy rains in parts of the island, sends food trucks and volunteers to inland municipalities Naranjito, Corozal, Palmarejo, and the northern municipality of Vega Baja, "where the flooding was 10 feet high."

October 10: On Twitter, Andrés calls FEMA "the most inefficient place on earth [for] leaving the people of Puerto Rico hungry and thirsty." The World Central Kitchen team struggles to secure enough supplies to increase their sandwich output, but still manages to feed 80,000 people.

October 11: Andrés takes to Twitter to highlight areas that he says haven't gotten any help since Hurricane Maria hit. He travels by helicopter to a mountaintop town to deliver 500 meals and announces plans to set up a kitchen there, as well as in several other locations. He hopes to have 12 kitchens established before leaving Puerto Rico.

October 12: World Central Kitchen is capable of feeding 97,000 people per day. Andrés journeys to Vieques, a smaller island off the coast of Puerto Rico, to set up a kitchen there. He continues to criticize the government for failing to adequately support Puerto Rico.

October 16: Andrés reaches his initial goal: The chef announces that World Central Kitchen is doing "well above" 100,000 meals per day.

October 17: Andrés and team successfully launch kitchens in Vieques and at a church in the east coast municipality Naguabo. The chef continues to lead the efforts to prepare and deliver sandwiches and hot food to 78 municipalities in Puerto Rico.

- @chefjoseandres [Twitter]
- @WCKitchen [Twitter]

SWFL Residents Receiving Unexpected Damage Claim Letters

By Katherine Vilorio

[WINK-TV Fort Myers \(FL\)](#), October 18, 2017

CAPE CORAL, Fla. Ronald Wendt has been receiving mysterious letters in the mail concerning Hurricane Irma damage claims.

But he never applied for assistance from the Federal Emergency Management Agency.

"It looks very official, comes from the Small Business Administration (SBA), and I was wondering what it was, so needless to say I opened it up," Wendt said.

Anyone who has received a letter and didn't apply for a loan might be a victim of identity theft, according to the SBA. While the letter is legitimate, criminals are using the victim's personal information like name, phone number and social security number to request a loan.

Some of Wendt's Cape Coral neighbors have received the same letter in the mail too.

"I just hate to see anybody get money that's not entitled to them," Wendt said.

To report fraud, call the FEMA fraud hotline at 800-323-8603.

After Hurricane Irma, Preschools Find Ways To Pay Employees, Give Family Discounts

By Nadege Green

[WLRN-FM Miami](#), October 18, 2017

Latoya Williams was concerned about her first paycheck after Hurricane Irma.

She couldn't go to work for seven days because the early childcare center where she teaches was closed because of the storm and its after-effects.

"Whatever I make is what I make," said Williams. "I have no supplemental income. It really would have been hard and tight."

Like most hourly employees, Williams doesn't get paid if she doesn't show up to work— even if the reason is an act of nature. The economic impact of Irma could have a devastating affect on individuals who work hourly jobs.

And at South Florida preschools, families that still have to pay childcare costs even if they didn't go to work also feel that hit. Some local childcare providers are creating payment plans or waiving fees altogether after Irma.

At Excel Kids Academy in Miami Gardens where Williams works, all teachers were paid for the time they missed because of the storm.

"It was actually more than a week of pay they would miss," said Shawntravia Pointville, owner of Excel Kids. "A half check or a whole check can mean homelessness almost, and I wanted to make sure that did not happen to the staff."

According to the U.S. Department of Education, preschool teachers in Florida earn a median annual salary of \$24,240; that is below the poverty line for a family of four.

Pointville said the additional layer of financial stress after a storm is especially problematic when you need to focus on taking care of children.

"The caregivers have to be stable themselves in order to care for anyone else," she said. "I believe if the staff was financially stable they would recover from the emotional and material loss with less stress."

Many of the family members who bring in their kids are also hourly employees who didn't get paid for days because of the hurricane.

Most preschools charge a flat rate whether or not a child shows up for school.

After Irma, Pointville and some other preschool providers waived that rule. Parents did not have to pay for the time the school was closed. And for parents who were still struggling after they reopened, some offered discounted rates or payment plans.

"It's difficult to tell families when they as well have been out of work that they have to pay," said Rocio Leiva, who runs the ABF Learning Center in Homestead.

While some parents receive tuition assistance that covers the full cost of childcare through various state or local programs, others get partial assistance or pay out-of-pocket for the full cost.

Leiva's preschool serves an army base across the street and families living in a nearby homeless shelter. She said when people talk about how hurricanes impact schools, preschools are rarely part of that conversation.

"Everyone is focused on Dade County Public Schools. Are schools going to be open in that sense. But I think for the younger years and childcare centers and such, [it's] probably not that important."

Evelio Torres, CEO of the Early Learning Coalition of Miami-Dade and Monroe counties, said while preschool owners have created their own systems to help families and their employees after a storm, community-wide there has to be more help for hourly employees to recover after a hurricane.

"The typical response of asking people to apply for FEMA is great. It doesn't really address the immediate needs," he said. "And that's what we have to get a lot better at doing: addressing the immediate needs."

On a recent afternoon at Excel Kids Academy, Latoya Williams was watching over her students during computer time.

Williams said she was thankful that she was able to get her full paycheck to meet financial obligations after Irma.

"She didn't have to pay us," said Williams of her boss. "I appreciate that she did."

FLOODS

No stories for this edition

TORNADOES

No stories for this edition

WILDFIRES

Legal Hotline Created For Fire Victims

[Napa Valley \(CA\) Register](#), October 18, 2017

A coalition of private and public legal organizations have created a hotline in an effort to provide legal aide to fire victims across the state.

The hotline number is 415-575-3120.

Callers can also leave a message. Spanish and Chinese language attorneys will be on the hotline too.

The attorneys on the hotline will be able to guide victims through a variety of legal issues with a focus on the following:

- Landlord tenant legal issues
- Life, medical and property insurance issues
- Emergency aid applications through FEMA
- Home repair contracts
- Mortgage foreclosure issues
- Replacement of wills and other important

legal documents

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Additional legal resources related to disasters can be found on the State Bar's website.

In addition to the State Bar-run hotline, there are two others for Napa and Sonoma counties.

The Bay Area Legal Aid's Legal Advice Hotline, 1-800-551-5554, is the number for Napa County residents.

Additionally, the Healthcare Consumer Center's line, 1-855-693-7285, has been set up to aid Sonoma and Napa county residents with medical insurance coverage issues, prescription coverage issues and for those who have relocated out of state.

The groups involved in the hotline's creation include: Bay Area Resilience Collaborative or BARC (Bar Association of San Francisco, SF-Marin Lawyer Referral and Information Service and the Justice & Diversity Center; Alameda County Bar Association and the Volunteer Legal Services Corporation; State Bar of California, Bay Area Legal Aid; and Pro Bono Net), the American Bar Association Young Lawyers Division (ABA YLD), the Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA) and the Legal Aid Association of California (LAAC).

Death Toll Hits 42 In Wine Country As Residents Hope For Rain

By Patrick May

[San Jose \(CA\) Mercury News](#), October 18, 2017

Two storylines emerged early Wednesday for the wildfires that have wreaked so much destruction and pain across Northern California: the death roll continued to rise, but cooler weather and the chance of rain gave firefighters twin boosts at stopping the blazes.

By sunrise, Cal Fire said the Tubbs Fire in Napa and Sonoma Counties was 91 percent contained, even as news came out that a 42nd person has been added to the list of fatalities claimed by the multiple fires raging over the past nine days. The Tubbs Fire is the source of the devastation in Santa Rosa.

With 23 deaths, Sonoma County has proven to be the heart of the devastation. The thousands of firefighters that have descended on California's fabled Wine Country from across the West continued to make progress on other fiery fronts: The 51,000-acre Atlas Fire south of Lake Berryessa is now 83 percent contained while a separate cluster of fires north of Glen Ellen and straddling the Napa-Sonoma county line was 80 percent knocked down. That good news allowed authorities to reopen the fire-shuttered Santa Rosa Hospital after the area saw more than 54,000 acres scorched by the blaze.

Cal Fire said its crews advanced on the wildfires overnight, thanks to the moderate weather and lack of wind. And their hopes rose Wednesday as temperatures continued to cool, morning fog tamped down some of the heat, and meteorologists issued forecasts of rain for the northern stretches of the San Francisco Bay Area by Thursday.

But not all the news was good: authorities confirmed that the death toll climbed to 42 sometime between Tuesday night and Wednesday morning. Like most of the others, this death occurred in Sonoma County, said Sheriff's Deputy Brandon Jones. And while most of the 2,000 people once reported missing have now been located, 43 people remain unaccounted for in Sonoma County while 36 more are still missing in other counties affected by the fires.

Rick Canepa, a meteorologist with the National Weather Service, said as much as a quarter-inch of rain is expected in the North Bay, considered a "decent rain that gets into the

topsoil," according to AP. That dampness should help fire crews that have already controlled burns by removing brush and other fuel in the wildfires' paths.

Meanwhile, the slow and steady march of evacuees returning to their homes continued, even as more than 30,000 remain evacuated. Many of them, of course, have no homes to go back to after the wind-fueled fires that started Oct. 8 took out 6,000 structures. Federal emergency administrator Brock Long called the wildfires "a tremendous event for an urban area to have to handle," and recovery will be tough.

Also, the Press Democrat reported Wednesday that a couple living in fire-ravaged Santa Rosa has filed a lawsuit against PG&E, claiming the utility company is responsible for the wildfire that destroyed their Coffey Park home and thousands of others in Sonoma County. In their suit filed in San Francisco County Superior Court, Wayne and Jennifer Harvell allege the public utility failed to maintain and repair high-voltage power lines and they say those wires came into contact with bone-dry vegetation on the ground, igniting the Tubbs Fire and several others still burning in Wine Country. Reading this on your phone? Stay up to date with our free mobile app. Get it from the Apple app store or the Google Play store.

While that theory is one among many being explored by investigators searching for the cause of the fires, Todd Derum, Cal Fire division chief for Sonoma County, told the paper that it's far too early to know what actually sparked the blazes.

Santa Rosa Couple Sues PG&E For Sonoma Fire

By Emily DeRuy

[San Jose \(CA\) Mercury News](#), October 18, 2017

A Santa Rosa couple who lost their home in the deadly fires that tore through Sonoma County last week filed a lawsuit Tuesday blaming PG&E for the blaze.

The lawsuit is the first against the utility company for its possible involvement in the North Bay fires and comes even before investigators have determined what caused the deadly fires.

But Wayne and Jennifer Harvell say their lawsuit is the beginning of an attempt to figure out what happened.

"We lost everything," said Jennifer during a phone interview. "We lost our lives. So did

everyone we know in our neighborhood, and, basically, we want to find out the truth about this."

The Harvells allege that the utility company failed to adequately maintain power lines, leading to the destruction of their Coffey Park house and at least 1,000 others in the neighborhood as the Tubbs fire consumed the region.

The Harvells had lived in Santa Rosa for more than three decades before the blaze turned their home on Mocha Lane just west of Highway 101 to ash. They hope the lawsuit, filed in San Francisco Superior Court, will prompt PG&E to maintain its equipment and prevent similar fires in the future, they said.

Bill Robins, their lawyer, said the suit will put PG&E employees on notice that they need to preserve evidence, including any emails, related to the fires.

"We feel like there's definitely sufficient evidence to suggest that PG&E's lines and poles contributed to the fire," Robins said. "There's really, from our perspective, little doubt there were maintenance issues."

As this news organization reported last week, Sonoma County emergency dispatchers received multiple calls of electrical transformers exploding and power lines falling in heavy winds, raising questions about PG&E's maintenance of power lines and whether it cleared vegetation to reduce the risk of fire.

The power lines are only one of the many factors investigators from Cal Fire and the state's Public Utilities Commission (PUC) are looking into as they search for the cause of the fire. Officials say it's too early to determine the cause of the fires that started on Oct. 8 — a warm, dry, windy Sunday night — and spread into Santa Rosa neighborhoods early Monday morning.

The regulatory agency has already sent a letter to the utility ordering it to preserve any equipment possibly related to the fires and internal communications discussing the disaster.

In an emailed statement, Angela Lombardi, a PG&E spokeswoman, said, "As the fires continue to burn, we're focused on supporting firefighting efforts to contain the fires and protect life and property. Once it is safe to do so, restoring power and gas service safely and as quickly as possible will be our priority. We aren't going to speculate about any of the causes of the fires and will cooperate with the reviews by any relevant regulator or agency."

While the Harvells' suit is the first against PG&E related to the Wine Country fires, legal experts expect other families to file additional lawsuits against the company in the coming weeks and months.

"No question there's going to be a large number of cases filed behind this," Robins said. "We represent a number of other people already and are fielding calls quite frequently on a day-to-day basis."

In a separate suit unrelated to the fires filed Wednesday, San Francisco City Attorney Dennis Herrera sued PG&E to recover the costs, around \$8 million so far, from a landslide that destroyed a home and damaged five others he says were caused by the company's negligence.

PG&E has \$800 million in liability insurance but estimates for fire damages are ranging as high as \$3 billion already, which could affect the company's financial stability.

In the days after the fire started, the company's stock declined to \$53.43 on Monday from \$69.15 just a week ago as people questioned the company's liability. The share price had rebounded somewhat to \$56.77 on Wednesday.

In 2015, regulators fined the company \$1.6 billion for the deadly 2010 San Bruno pipeline explosion. Federal investigators said flawed record-keeping by the company and poor maintenance caused the inferno. The PUC also fined PG&E more than \$8 million for the Butte fire, which burned nearly 550 homes in Amador County and killed two people in 2015.

Fund Established For Victims Of Cascade Fire Without Insurance

[KTXL-TV Sacramento \(CA\)](#), October 18, 2017

YUBA COUNTY – Yuba County Supervisor Mike Leahy says he is helping out people impacted by the Cascade Fire by starting a fund for under-insured and uninsured victims.

Yuba County says 143 homes were destroyed in the fire.

Leahy says he started the fund – which so far has raised \$85,000 from local businesses – because he was a victim of a fire in the early '90s that took his apartment and most of his possessions.

Leahy says at some point he will announce a cutoff date for both financial and tangible donations in order to distribute them.

"I'm asking businesses, and business leaders, and government leaders to step up and help out above what FEMA and other agencies are doing," Leahy said.

Anyone interested in donating to his fund is encouraged to contact his office.

Wednesday, the Yuba County Government Assistance Center in Marysville opened its doors to fire victims.

The center is offering help from the DMV, Social Security office and other agencies where people can re-obtain lost documents.

Tuesday morning, the Yuba County Board of Supervisors waived permit fees for those who will rebuild on the property where the fire took their homes.

The county's permits normally run about \$5,000 to \$5,200, said County Planner Tony Gon.

The waived fees do not include property taxes for local schools.

WINTER STORMS

No stories for this edition

OTHER NATURAL DISASTERS

No stories for this edition

OTHER FEMA NEWS

EMERGENCY PREPAREDNESS

Product Turns Humidity Into Drinkable Water

[WTVT-TV Tampa \(FL\)](#), October 18, 2017

TAMPA (FOX 13) – There's nothing like the pre-storm panic of a hurricane to highlight the need for clean water.

Shelves are left bare as people race to stock up. But one Florida company has a unique solution for consumers – drink the air.

"The humidity is greatest after a hurricane when machines are most efficient and making the purest water." Drinkable Air's Vice President Jeff Szur shows us how it works. "What starts the process is drawing the air into the machine and we have an antibacterial filter."

The typical office water cooler sized machine sucks in air like any dehumidifier but it filters and stores the water. "This coil is coated with food grade coating so never touches metal drops into

drip trays and 7-gallon storage tank,” Szur says, adding the machine works best at 30 percent relative humidity

At the office in Saint Pete using the technology where he’s demonstrating the machine, the air inside is at more than 40 percent relative humidity, which will create about 5 gallons of water in 24 hours.

“If you see the air goes across, and the gas form of the water, humidity, touches the cold coil and you can see we’re making water,” When Szur runs his fingers along the coils they come back coated in beads of water. The machine can make about two days worth of drinking water for 20 employees.

So is pulling the water from the air clean?

“Absolutely,” Szur says. “Any time goes from gas to liquid it’s pure. Think, how do we distill water? We boil it and capture the steam – and then it’s pure. We do that without boiling. We do it with condensation.”

At 3400 dollars – it’s an investment – but will last twelve years... with filter replacements every six months.

The office manager here, where they’re developing a powdered drink by the creator of Gatorade called Cholestorade that needs to be mixed with water, says it’s easier and cheaper long term to not have to order jugs of water.

Caitlin Delanoy recalls the first time she used the machine. “I was like, I didn’t understand. Where is this coming from? Is there a drain connected to this? No, it’s just coming from the air that we’re breathing!”

Beyond office settings, Drinkable Air is releasing a tabletop version for homes. But the creator has a bigger goal – that became clear when Irma hit, and then Maria... and everyone was running out of water.

They put out on social media that anyone in need of water could come fill up three gallons per household at their facilities in South Florida. They ended up giving away one hundred gallons and selling out of their inventory of machines.

Now, he wants to work with FEMA to get these machines into hurricane-prone areas ahead of time. They can run off generators in the event of a power outage.

“If these machines were already there you wouldn’t have to worry about shipping water in,” Szur says. “When disaster hits – just turn them on.”

Turning to the clouds – as your water cooler.

NATIONAL PREPAREDNESS MONTH

No stories for this edition

AMERICA’S PREPAREATHON!

No stories for this edition

FEMA CORPS

No stories for this edition

PRIVATE SECTOR

No stories for this edition

CITIZEN CORPS

No stories for this edition

POLITICAL COMMENTARY, COLUMNS AND EDITORIALS

Editorial: FEMA Thresholds Too High For Us

[Kokomo \(IN\) Tribune](#), October 18, 2017

In April 2013, it was the 100-year flood.

In November 2013, it was the tornadoes.

In January 2014, it was the snowstorm.

During the past four years, the Federal Emergency Management Agency has denied Howard County three separate requests for aid.

And when last year’s tornadoes reared their heads once more, we didn’t even bother applying.

What, exactly, is the problem here? Was it something we said? Do they just not like the looks of us?

As Tribune reporter George Myers’ front page story in today’s paper points out, it comes down to simple math. And we, apparently, just don’t add up according to them.

“To receive funding through the Federal Reimbursement Program, the following thresholds must each be met in uninsured damage: the county’s population multiplied by \$3.57 (for instance, Howard County must have experienced \$295,425 in uninsured damage) and Indiana’s population multiplied by \$1.41, which comes to a total of \$9.2 million in uninsured costs,” reported Myers.

And, as Myers further pointed out, it isn't just the hard figures. It's also the time frame, which is artificially constricted.

"A declaration of a major disaster must also be requested by the governor within 30 days of the incident, and it must then be declared by the president of the United States," reported Myers. "To receive any funding from FEMA — which also requires meticulous record-keeping as specific as chainsaw horsepower during recovery efforts — each requirement must be fulfilled, no matter how bad the damage sustained by an individual county."

Something must be done before the next disaster. We are a resilient bunch, but these denials stung. After three separate refusals in less than 12 months, it can start to feel personal. Try telling those touched by these disasters that they weren't that bad. It hurts.

We hope our elected officials will hear this appeal and work to adjust these arbitrary standards. We rely on our federal government for protection and help recovering when the unexpected happens. In places across the country, this year has proven that Americans require this type of support.

We are the richest country in the history of the world. This is a promise we can keep if we set our minds to it.

S.C Cannot Ignore Risk Of Quakes

[Orangeburg \(SC\) Times And Democrat](#),
October 18, 2017

South Carolina has had enough of natural disasters. An ice storm in 2014. Flooding in 2015. Hurricane Matthew in 2016. Hurricane Irma's coastal surge and flooding in 2017. But there is good reason to take serious note of another potential threat.

Gov. Henry McMaster proclaimed Earthquake Awareness Week for Oct. 15-21. The S.C. Emergency Management Division encourages everyone to take the opportunity to learn about the state's seismic fault system and how best to prepare for earthquakes.

A key component of the week of preparedness is the Great Southeast ShakeOut on Thursday at 10:19 a.m. Similar to other emergency preparedness drills sponsored by SCEMD, it will begin at 10:19 a.m. with a broadcast on NOAA tone-alert weather radio and broadcast media. Schools, businesses, organizations, government agencies, communities

and households are encouraged to observe the drill.

More than 2 million people across eight states and Washington, D.C., are to take part in the Great Southeast ShakeOut, which is an international effort in which participants simultaneously practice how to stay safe during an earthquake. Worldwide, 25 million people are expected to participate.

South Carolina has good reason to take note of the risk of earthquakes:

- 10 low-magnitude earthquakes have been recorded in the state since October 2016.
- Approximately 10 to 20 earthquakes occur in the state every year, according to geologists with the College of Charleston.
- The epicenter of the largest earthquake ever recorded along the Eastern Seaboard was just outside of Charleston on Aug. 31, 1886. The 7.3 magnitude quake devastated the region and was felt from Chicago to Cuba.

According to a study commissioned by SCEMD, an earthquake of similar magnitude would result in tremendous loss of life, severe property damage and extreme economic loss. Results of the study are detailed in the South Carolina Earthquake Guide, a publication that details South Carolina-specific information on what citizens should do before, during and after a major earthquake. It is available at no cost statewide via the Senior P.R.E.P. section at every Walgreens store.

The Bowman area is considered a central point for potential earthquake activity. The town is situated on the Middleton Place-Summerville Seismic Zone which, along with the Ravenel-Adams Run-Hollywood area near Charleston, experiences about 70 percent of the earthquake activity in the state, according to the SCEMD.

And The T&D Region is no stranger to quakes.

People from Cope to Cameron felt an earthquake that hit 3.4 on the Richter scale on May 19, 1971. The only damage reported was broken windows.

On Feb. 3, 1972, an earthquake hit the area again. Residents of Bowman confirmed the quake felt stronger than previous ones they remembered.

Three earthquakes were reported in the Neeses area in 1992, the largest hitting 2.4 on the Richter scale. And a 2.3-magnitude quake occurred in Bowman in 1997.

In March 2009, another 2.6-magnitude earthquake occurred halfway between Orangeburg and Aiken counties. No damage or injuries were reported.

In 2011, as South Carolina was hearing early predictions of Hurricane Irene scoring a direct hit on the state, Aug. 26 produced the strongest earthquake felt on the East Coast in years. The U.S. Geological Survey said the quake ranks as the second strongest ever measured in Virginia. Near the epicenter, brick house walls cracked, and chimneys were thrown down or badly damaged, according to the USGS. Minor damage was observed from about Bristol, Tennessee, to Roanoke, Virginia.

Officials say they are as prepared as they can be for a quake, with rescue teams and emergency responders being trained regularly on structural collapse and emergency response. Thursday is your individual opportunity at preparedness.

The Great ShakeOut drill is open to everyone in South Carolina. You can still register. Go to www.shakeout.org/southeast. Be sure to include the total number of people taking part in the drill with you.

SOCIAL MEDIA

No stories for this edition

SPANISH MEDIA

Alcaldes Se Reúnen Con Directivo De FEMA

By Rebecca Banuchi

[Primera Hora \(PRI\)](#), October 18, 2017

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.

FEMA Dejaría De Vender Diésel A Los Hospitales

[Primera Hora \(PRI\)](#), October 18, 2017

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 contrato (con un suplidor privado de diésel)”, manifestó Jaime Plá, presidente ejecutivo de la Asociación de Hospitales. Según dijo, las facilidades hospitalarias han luchado contra viento y marea para tratar de mantenerse operando, superando numerosos obstáculos, como el mismo suplido de diésel.

“El diésel requería dinero, una liquidez rápida, y aún 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.

Según Plá, hasta la tarde de ayer habían unos 44 hospitales con energía eléctrica, aunque muchos de forma intermitente, mientras quedaban unos 25 aún sin luz.

“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.

Agregó que desde el primer día muchas de estas facilidades han podido mantener sus servicios gracias al uso de generadores eléctricos, con la coordinación y entrega frecuente de suplidos de diésel. De hecho, comentó que hay un “task force” que busca crear un sistema más fluido de diésel a hospitales, Centros 330 y Centros de Diagnóstico y Tratamiento (CDT) al establecer una mayor conexión 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 supléndole diésel a los hospitales”, insistió.

Agregó que para aliviar la carga económica de los hospitales, se les pidió a los planes médicos que hagan pagos adelantados a todos los proveedores de salud, basados en historiales previos de pagos.

Marta Rivera, presidenta de la Junta de Directores de la Asociación de Hospitales, resaltó que la ayuda de FEMA en el suplido de diésel a los hospitales ha sido vital para poder mantener el servicio.

“Ya nosotros tenemos contratos con suplidores privados y están supliéndonos con más regularidad que antes, cada dos días, pero si no hubiese sido por FEMA estaríamos en peor estado”, dijo.

El licenciado Domingo Cruz, vicepresidente senior de Operaciones del Hospital de Niños San Jorge, coincidió.

“Creo que a nivel de la industria hospitalaria no deberíamos terminar (ese suplido de diésel de FEMA)”, indicó.

Recalcó que la demanda de este producto es mucho mayor de lo que las compañías privadas suelen y pueden manejar.

“No hay estructura privada que pueda suplir tanta demanda. Mi suplidor me dijo que no tiene la capacidad para suplir tanto. Es una preocupación (si FEMA detiene este suplido)”, señaló.

En el Hospital de Niños San Jorge, sostuvo, el servicio de energía eléctrica ha estado más estable esta semana que la anterior, cuando según dijo necesitaron del apoyo de su generador para no interrumpir los servicios.

El licenciado Jorge Torres, administrador del Hospital del Maestro, comentó que aunque ya tienen servicio de energía que “va y viene”, continúan apoyándose en su generador cuando lo necesitan.

“FEMA solo nos sirvió mil 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” (evaluaciones) de ellos (FEMA), pero se quedaba ahí”, dijo.

Al cierre de esta edición, Primera Hora no logró obtener una reacción de FEMA.

Por otra parte, Cruz comentó que hay una gran preocupación en el sector de la salud ante la cantidad de personas que podrían quedarse sin plan médico privado al quedar desempleadas.

“Si muchos pierden sus empleos, van a terminar en la Reforma de Salud. Mientras más rápido se recupere el servicio eléctrico, más rápida va a ser la recuperación económica”, dijo.

Hospitales Le Requieren Diésel A FEMA

[El Nuevo Día \(PRI\)](#), October 18, 2017

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 con electricidad, aunque un servicio intermitente, y otros 25 todavía no tenían luz.

“Necesitamos que FEMA nos siga brindando este servicio, independientemente de que la organización de salud tenga contrato (con un suplidor privado de diésel)”, dijo Plá.

Anoche tarde, la portavoz de FEMA en Puerto Rico, Deliris Aquino, indicó en declaraciones escritas que “no se ha tomado una determinación final” en cuanto a si la agencia federal detendrá el suplido de combustible a los hospitales.

Marta Rivera, presidenta de la Junta de Directores de la Asociación de Hospitales, aseguró que la ayuda de FEMA ha sido vital para poder mantener el servicio.

“Ya nosotros tenemos contratos con suplidores (de combustible) privados y están supliéndonos con más regularidad que antes, cada dos días. Pero, si no hubiese sido por FEMA, estaríamos en peor estado”, dijo.

Mientras, Domingo Cruz, vicepresidente senior de Operaciones del Hospital de Niños San Jorge, aseguró que esta ayuda es necesaria, tanto por la inestabilidad del servicio eléctrico, como por la alta demanda de diésel que existe actualmente en el país.

“A nivel de la industria hospitalaria, no deberíamos terminar (ese suplido de diésel de FEMA)”, indicó sobre la alternativa que presentó la agencia federal a representantes del sector de hospitales durante una reunión el sábado pasado en el Centro de Operaciones de Emergencia (COE).

“No hay estructura privada que pueda suplir tanta demanda. Mi suplidor me dijo que no tiene la capacidad para suplir tanto. Es una preocupación (la posibilidad de que FEMA detenga este suplido)”, señaló.

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 supliéndoles 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.

Anuncian Reparación De Termoelectrica

By Laura M. Quintero

[El Vocero de Puerto Rico](#), October 18, 2017

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. Además, el Cuerpo de Ingenieros del Ejército otorgó un contrato de \$240 millones a Fluor Corporation para unirse a los esfuerzos de reparación de la red eléctrica de la Isla.

Rosselló Reafirma Que Su Plan Es Restablecer El Sistema Eléctrico

[El Nuevo Día \(PRI\)](#), October 18, 2017

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.

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 (l 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.

El Cuerpo De Ingenieros Coloca 505 Barreras De Cemento En Guajataca

[El Nuevo Día \(PRI\)](#), October 18, 2017

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.

Municipios Recogerán Escombros En Vías Estatales

By Laura M. Quintero

[El Vocero de Puerto Rico](#), October 18, 2017

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.

Activistas Exigen Al Congreso Más Ayuda Para La Reconstrucción De Puerto Rico

By María Peña

[La Opinión \(CA\)](#), October 18, 2017

WASHINGTON- Centenares de activistas comunitarios y sindicalistas de la costa Este, así como líderes demócratas, exigieron este miércoles ante el Capitolio más ayuda para la reconstrucción de Puerto Rico y la condonación de la deuda, al considerar que los gestos de la Administración Trump han sido insuficientes.

La estela de desastres que dejó el huracán María en Puerto Rico hace casi un mes oscila

entre \$45,000 millones y \$95,000 millones, o entre el 65% y el 135% del Producto Interno Bruto (PIB) de la isla, incluyendo pérdida de productividad económica, según un informe preliminar de "Moody Analytics", y el proceso de reconstrucción podría tomar años.

Alrededor de 300 activistas, provenientes de estados como Nueva York, Delaware, Florida y toda el área capitalina, llegaron hasta un predio aledaño al Capitolio para exigir la condonación de la deuda de Puerto Rico, de cerca de \$73,000 millones, y una ayuda "robusta" para su reconstrucción.

"Estamos acá para decirle al presidente (Donald) Trump: 'haga su trabajo'! Estamos luchando para conseguirle a nuestros conciudadanos estadounidenses la ayuda que merecen por parte de su gobierno federal", dijo la senadora demócrata por Massachusetts, Elizabeth Warren.

"Al pueblo de Puerto Rico y al pueblo de las Islas Vírgenes: no los hemos olvidado. Ustedes son nuestros hermanos y hermanas, nuestros conciudadanos estadounidenses, y son parte de nuestro corazón", agregó Warren.

Además de pedir alivio fiscal para Puerto Rico, Warren arengó a la multitud a gritar la consigna "Ni un centavo más!" para Wall Street ni para los "fondos buitres" que acentuaron la crisis fiscal en la isla.

Melissa Mark-Viverito, presidenta del Concejo de la Ciudad de Nueva York, dijo a este diario que los esfuerzos de la Administración Trump se han quedado cortos, en comparación con los realizados para los damnificados en Texas y Florida.

"No está haciendo la suficiente sin duda alguna. Estamos a un mes del huracán, y tenemos a gente que se está muriendo, no tenemos suficiente personal en Puerto Rico, y la distribución de los suministros es inconsistente" y difícil en zonas aisladas, explicó.

"Necesitamos la ayuda y la colaboración del gobierno federal, y esta respuesta a la crisis es insuficiente... hablar de préstamos no tiene sentido. La reconstrucción es un proyecto a largo plazo", enfatizó.

Mark-Viverito se refería al paquete de \$36,500 millones que aprobó la Cámara de Representantes la semana pasada, pero que solo incluye préstamos para Puerto Rico.

Asimismo, Mark-Viverito, de origen boricua, consideró que un momento de crisis fiscal y

humanitaria Puerto Rico no debe asumir responsabilidad por la deuda. Activistas comunitarios y líderes sindicalistas de la costa Este exigieron también la condonación de la deuda de Puerto Rico. Foto: María Peña/Impremedia.

La "Marcha por una Recuperación Justa", acompañada con mensajes en las redes sociales, busca llamar la atención sobre la precaria condición de la isla de 3,4 millones de habitantes y donde las autoridades aún no han podido restablecer por completo los servicios de agua potable, luz eléctrica o telefonía celular.

Al caer la noche, centenares de miles siguen alumbrándose con velas y linternas, o, los que tienen "suerte", con la ayuda de generadores. La crisis humanitaria, además, está provocando un mayor éxodo hacia EEUU.

Los activistas no se cansan de repetir que obtener comida, medicinas, combustible o dinero al contado se ha convertido en una tenaz lucha de supervivencia en Puerto Rico, sostenida en parte por los esfuerzos de grupos cívicos y empresariales que trabajan por su cuenta en EEUU.

Cargando carteles con mensajes como "toallas de papel no son suficientes", algunos líderes sindicalistas indicaron que la visita de Trump a la isla, el pasado 3 de octubre, no sólo se quedó corta sino que fue un "insulto" para los puertorriqueños, en particular su gesto de tirar rollos de papel toalla. Los activistas colocaron rollos de papel toalla con el mensaje de perdonar la deuda de Puerto Rico. Foto: María Peña/Impremedia

"Tirar rollos de papel y entregar paquetitos de galletas y granola no es suficiente... hay que reconstruir, dar agua, comida, medicinas, no simplemente buscar publicidad", dijo Sara Pérez, una líder del Sindicato Internacional de Trabajadores de Servicios (SEIU) de Delaware.

"Es tiempo de que luchemos para vencerlo (a Trump), y hacerle ver que valemos la pena, que no somos ciudadanos de segunda y merecemos respeto y que nos ayuden", enfatizó Pérez.

Trump ha defendido enérgicamente la respuesta de su gobierno a la catástrofe en Puerto Rico, pero sus confusos mensajes en Twitter –un día ataca al liderazgo de la isla y los culpa de la situación actual, y otro día expresa su apoyo- le ha generado más críticas que elogios en la diáspora puertorriqueña en EEUU.

Los activistas caminaron desde el Capitolio hasta la sede de la Administración Federal para la Gestión de Emergencias (FEMA, en inglés) para continuar protestando lo que consideran como una respuesta inadecuada frente a la magnitud de la crisis.

El Senado prevé votar, entre mañana y la próxima semana, un paquete de ayuda de emergencia para Puerto Rico y las Islas Vírgenes, y los estados de Texas y Florida, afectados por los recientes huracanes.

Stringer Propone Medidas Para La Recuperación De Puerto Rico

By Ana B. Nieto

[El Diario \(NY\)](#), October 18, 2017

Tomando como modelo las medidas de emergencia tras desastres como el Katrina o los atentados terroristas del 11S, el contralor de NYC, Scott Stringer, ha propuesto varias medidas para que Puerto Rico, que técnicamente está en bancarrota desde antes del paso del huracán María, recupere su pulso y reduzca las tensiones en su limitado presupuesto.

Stringer propone que el Gobierno federal garantice la emisión de deuda que se dedique a infraestructura pública. Se trata de unir esto a la financiación directa de FEMA además de ayudas a desastres con el objeto de recuperar la electricidad, las carreteras y el servicio de agua. Stringer dice que sin estas garantías, y dada la situación crediticia de Puerto Rico, no será posible captar capital para esta crítica intervención.

Además, el Congreso debería autorizar bonos para la financiación de la recuperación después del desastre como se hizo en Manhattan tras los ataques terroristas y en Nueva Orleans tras el paso del huracán Katrina y que están exentos de pagar tributos.

Stringer propone que se refuerce la red de protección social y pide que el Estado Federal asuma la totalidad del costo del Medicaid temporalmente y en el futuro se haga cargo del 83% para que Puerto Rico pueda salir antes de la crisis.

Esta mayor red pasa también por aumentar el programa de cupones de comida, SNAP, que cubre a menos personas que en otros estados y permitir que se reciba el EITC (crédito fiscal por ingresos del trabajo) a pesar de que no abonan impuestos federales.

Stringer sugiere además que los desplazados por las consecuencias del huracán en el país reciban ayuda para su educación con ayuda directa a los colegios y para apoyo a estudiantes sin techo.

El Alcalde Ángel Pérez Espera Que Lleguen Más Toldos A Guaynabo

[El Nuevo Día \(PRI\)](#), October 18, 2017

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 parte” de la ciudad tiene agua hay muchos de los sectores sin el servicio. “Nosotros estamos yendo poco a poco con unos camiones que tenemos y la ayuda de una cisterna permanente, pero lamentablemente no damos abasto para poder suplir agua”, agregó.

Sobre la distribución de agua embotellada, dijo que se reparte según le va llegando de FEMA.

De otro lado, aceptó que para bien, FEMA se “está descentralizando un poco y ha comenzado esta semana a asignarle un personal de FEMA a cada municipio para entonces ya uno no tener que sentarse quizás en diez mesas, sino que ya con ese personal es el que vamos a estar nosotros trabajando y ellos a su vez son los que van a estar interviniendo y buscando las cosas a favor del municipio”.

Precisamente le está haciendo otra solicitud a FEMA y a la Guardia Nacional a que evalúen la situación de los puentes afectados en el municipio para instalar unos de metal que son removibles.

Lo que pasó en este pueblo es que el huracán María ablandó los cimientos de muchas de estas estructuras y las lluvias de los pasados días las tumbaron.

El alcalde dijo que hay cinco puentes inservibles y otros tres que tuvieron que cerrar y que tienen que ser evaluados.

“Hay otros puentes que estamos solicitando al Cuerpo de Ingenieros y a unos ingenieros del municipio y del gobierno estatal que los revisen para evaluar sus condiciones”, indicó.

En el caso de la comunidad Las Palomas, en Hato Nuevo, ocho familias quedaron incomunicadas al caerse uno. Al momento, el municipio trabaja en un paso peatonal, pero urge la colocación de un puente allí para que puedan salir los vehículos.

Grave Inacción Ante Montañas De Escombros

By María Elena García

[El Nuevo Día \(PRI\)](#), October 18, 2017

A 28 días del paso del huracán María, se avecina la próxima crisis que afectará la salud pública y ambiental de nuestro país, la falta de un plan coherente y efectivo del manejo los desperdicios sólidos no peligrosos.

Al realizar un corto paseo por cualquier zona de la isla, pero específicamente por la zona interior montañosa, ya se puede observar el caos de la basura regular mezclada con escombros, material vegetativo y material reciclable.

Antes del paso de los huracanes Irma y María, ya Puerto Rico tenía grandes retos en esta área: un número reducido de vertederos en cumplimiento, vertederos en calendario para su cierre inminente, una baja tasa nacional de reciclaje, vertederos clandestinos, y la falta de una política pública a nivel de país. Son elementos que durante esta emergencia nos lanza hacia otra crisis. El manejo correcto de estos desperdicios no se puede dejar a cada municipio para que cada uno haga lo que mejor entienda o le plazca.

Somos una isla 100 x 35, y para evitar una situación inmanejable, necesitamos un solo plan para su manejo, no 78 planes. Esto crea una gran confusión entre la ciudadanía, los empleados gubernamentales y municipales y entorpece todo el proceso de reembolso por concepto de escombros con la Agencia Federal para el Manejo de Emergencias (FEMA).

Es urgente que el gobernador Ricardo Rosselló dicte una orden ejecutiva donde se establezca que cada municipio siga las mismas directrices en cuanto al manejo de los desperdicios sólidos no peligrosos durante y después de esta emergencia nacional. El no hacerlo implica en las próximas semanas el aumento de enfermedades como la leptospirosis.

Es deber del gobierno central comunicar protocolos claros y ejecutables para cada región, y que los municipios informen a sus respectivos ciudadanos a través de altoparlantes por cada comunidad las instrucciones a seguir para el manejo de los desperdicios.

Los municipios deben comenzar de inmediato a recoger la basura regular. A casi un mes del paso del huracán esta tarea no es una opción, ya es una prioridad y debe de ser parte integral del plan de manejo de emergencias para evitar brotes de enfermedades transmitidas por diferentes tipos de vectores como las ratas y los mosquitos. Pero para que los municipios puedan recoger la basura regular, los ciudadanos tienen que ser informados de los pasos a seguir para un recogido eficiente de los desperdicios.

Primero: Separar la basura regular, entiéndase comida, pañales, y material no reciclable. Segundo: Separar los escombros de construcción, entiéndase, madera, zinc, muebles, textiles mojados, etc. Tercero: Separar material vegetativo; troncos, ramas, hojas y grama. Cuarto: Separar material reciclable: aluminio, plástico y cartón. Almacenarlo lo más limpio posible, si las circunstancias lo permiten, hasta que el municipio reanude el recogido del reciclaje.

Los municipios pueden esperar un tiempo adicional en lo que la situación mejora y se estabiliza un poco más para el recogido los escombros, material vegetativo y el reciclaje. Pero la basura regular, la que en efecto atrae a los animales vectores, no puede esperar, los municipios deben recoger de inmediato la basura regular.

La ciudadanía puede acelerar este proceso si comienza a separar los desperdicios sólidos que generan su hogar y comunidad. En adición, al momento de acumular los escombros y el material vegetativo deben hacerlo por separado en áreas de la comunidad, urbanización o calle donde no haya desagües del sistema de alcantarillado, de no hacerlo contribuimos a las inundaciones.

Hay situaciones que se tornan en crisis y están fuera de nuestro control como lo fue el paso de dos huracanes en menos de tres semanas, pero existen situaciones que presentan signos de tornarse en crisis, que, si observamos y tomamos acción, se pueden remediar a tiempo para evitar una crisis de salud pública y ambiental.

Le toca a todos los ciudadanos que tienen acceso a esta información exigir al gobierno

central, la Autoridad de Desperdicios Sólidos, la Junta de Calidad Ambiental y las administraciones municipales, que hagan un giro radical hacia el manejo correcto, eficiente, inteligente y uniforme de los desperdicios sólidos no peligrosos. Si deseamos que Puerto Rico se levante más fuerte que nunca este es el momento de hacer las cosas correctamente y mantener los nuevos protocolos de manejo de desperdicios luego de que pase la emergencia la cual vivimos

Voluntarios Reparten Suministros En Las Piedras

By Carlos Gonzalez

[El Nuevo Día \(PRI\)](#), October 18, 2017

Las Piedras – Un grupo de empleadas municipales, así como voluntarios decidieron que estar cruzadas de brazos no era opción. En lugar de lamentar cualquier pérdida material y la ausencia momentánea de los servicios básicos, han unidos esfuerzos para ayudar a sus compueblanos.

Como todas las mañanas, se encuentran en la plaza del mercado de Las Piedras, que fue convertido en centro de acopio, para preparar unos paquetes con suministros que son distribuidos por los distintos sectores del pueblo. Cada caja contiene un paquete de arroz, acompañado por latas de salchichas, pollo procesado, galletas y dulces. También raciones de comidas que provee el ejército de Estados Unidos.

“Es gratificante lo que estamos haciendo”, compartió Marilyn Rosa Tirado, quien trabaja en la alcaldía de Las Piedras.

Las brigadas de voluntarios que han aceptado la encomienda de alimentar a los ciudadanos trabajan los seis días de la semana, de 9:00 a.m. a 5:00 p.m. Una vez las cajas están listas, las transportan en vehículos por los sectores más afectados de ese pueblo.

“Estamos ayudando la gente, y es algo extraordinario. Lo importante es que llegue y les sirva para que puedan comer”, sostuvo Rosa Tirado.

Aunque en el lugar no se reparte suministros, las voluntarias ayudan a todos aquellos que llegan solicitando comestibles o agua embotellada.

“La ayuda se está llevando a las comunidades, pero si viene, se les atiende. No se le dice 'no' a nadie”, dijo.

Aunque existe la preocupación de que los suministros se terminarán pronto, Rosa Tirado aseguró que oficiales de la Agencia Federal para el Manejo de Emergencias (FEMA, por sus siglas en inglés) han atendido las peticiones.

“La plaza del mercado estaba llena de comida que fue donada por empresas privadas y que FEMA nos trae. Aunque ha bajado un poco la cantidad, llega más para nosotras poder seguir trabajando”, concluyó Rosa Tirado.

Monsanto Dona \$250,000 A Los Centros Sor Isolina Ferré

[El Nuevo Día \(PRI\)](#), October 18, 2017

Más compañías internacionales se unen a lucha por reconstruir a Puerto Rico después del acecho del huracán María, la más reciente, Monsanto tras donar \$250,000 -para ayudar los damnificados locales- a los Centros Sor Isolina Ferré.

El presidente del Fondo Monsanto y vicepresidente de asuntos comunitarios en Monsanto, Al Mitchell, informó la gestión.

“En los próximos meses, los esfuerzos de reconstrucción y recuperación de las comunidades cercanas a nuestra estación en Juana Díaz, y al resto de Puerto Rico, serán retos difíciles”, expresó.

El donativo se utilizará para comprar alimentos, agua, suministros médicos y otras necesidades para las familias que residen en el área de servicio de la organización.

La compañía, en colaboración con la Agencia Federal para el Manejo de Emergencias (FEMA) y otros líderes de la industria, envió -a finales de septiembre- un avión de carga, abastecido con provisiones críticas, a la isla.

“Estamos comprometidos a ayudar a nuestros vecinos y apoyarlos en este trayecto”, concluyó Mitchell.

Monsanto también está invitando a los empleados a nivel mundial a donar a los Centros Sor Isolina Ferré. La idea es parear todas las contribuciones de los empleados a la organización.

Discutirán Rol De La Junta De Supervisión Fiscal Tras María

[El Nuevo Día \(PRI\)](#), October 18, 2017

El rol que jugará la Junta de Supervisión Fiscal (JSF) en la reconstrucción de Puerto Rico tras el embate del huracán María será materia de discusión la próxima semana en la capital federal,

cuando el Comité de Recursos Naturales de la Cámara de Representantes celebre una vista pública para discutir cómo el ente federal se insertará en las labores de revitalización de la isla.

A la audiencia, que se celebrará el martes a las 9:30 a.m., fueron citados todos los miembros de la JSF y el coordinador de revitalización del ente federal, Noel Zamot. Ningún funcionario del gobierno local fue citado al encuentro.

“Esta será la primera vista, quizás para las próximas vistas se citen funcionarios del gobierno. Pero, en este momento, el gobernador (Ricardo Rosselló) todavía está en labores de rescate, no es prudente que vengan acá”, expresó la comisionada residente en Washington, Jenniffer González.

“Se estarán discutiendo cuáles son las gestiones de revitalización que tienen que hacerse en Puerto Rico y cómo se van a canalizar”, añadió.

La semana pasada, el presidente de la Cámara de Representantes federal, Paul Ryan, señaló que la JSF necesitará un nuevo enfoque ya que debe ser parte de la reconstrucción del país, recordó González.

La comisionada residente no se aventuró a detallar cuáles podrían ser los cambios que enfrentaría el ente federal o la ley que lo creó, la ley federal PROMESA.

“Estamos en la fase de ver cuáles van a ser los nuevos retos y cómo será que la Junta trabaje con ellos, ya que por virtud de la ley PROMESA es el cuerpo que manejaría la revitalización de la isla”, expresó.

Ayer, González anunció que la Agencia Federal para el Manejo de Emergencias (FEMA, por sus siglas en inglés) asignó \$177,475,000 adicionales a municipios, la Autoridad de Energía Eléctrica (AEE) y la Guardia Nacional para cubrir los trabajos necesarios para atender las secuelas del ciclón.

En total, FEMA entregó \$5,275,00 a municipios para cubrir los trabajos de recuperación de la emergencia. Entre ellos, Arecibo recibió \$1,275,000 y Cayey recibió \$3 millones, detalló González.

“Cada municipio que incurre en gastos de remoción (de escombros), equipo y materiales como parte de la tarea de eliminar la amenazas inmediatas a la seguridad de los ciudadanos, va a poder facturar esos servicios a FEMA”, destacó la comisionada residente.

Asimismo, la agencia federal entregó \$171,200,000 a la AEE. De estos, \$42.8 millones se utilizarán para permitir que la corporación pública continúe operando, mientras que otros \$128.4 millones serán destinados a la compra del diésel para operar los generadores eléctricos que requieren hospitales, bombas de agua, con las cuales se evitan inundaciones, y otras instalaciones críticas, sostuvo González.

Estos fondos han permitido que la AEE formalice contratos con empresas privadas para encargarse de la recuperación del sistema eléctrico, el cual colapsó a raíz del embate de María.

Además, se entregó \$1 millón a la Guardia Nacional.

González destacó que se ha mantenido en conversaciones con diversas agencias federales que atienden temas prioritarios para la isla en medio de esta emergencia, como lo son los Centros de Servicio Medicaid y Medicare (CMS, por sus siglas en inglés). A través de esta dependencia se coordina que los 48 centros de diálisis en Puerto Rico puedan operar para dar servicios a los pacientes con condiciones renales, así como coordinar el traslado de individuos que no han podido recibir diálisis cerca de sus residencias, detalló.

Justicia Atenderá Pesquisas A Municipios

By Melissa Correa Velázquez

[El Vocero de Puerto Rico](#), October 18, 2017

La División de Integridad Pública del Departamento de Justicia tendrá a su cargo las pesquisas contra municipios que retengan suministros y o incurran en el mal manejo de estos, informó la secretaria de la agencia, Wanda Vázquez.

“Está entrando la División de Integridad Pública en estas investigaciones porque tenemos la impresión de que pueden haber otros casos y queremos que lo vea una sola unidad completa, independientemente de dónde ocurran”, indicó Vázquez a EL VOCERO.

Precisó que se designarán dos fiscales y tres agentes de la Policía para trabajar con estos casos.

“Ese mismo grupo de trabajo va a consolidar todos esos referidos que hay de otros municipios pero, de esos otros municipios que ya hablamos, (Arecibo, San Juan, Patillas y Vieques) siguen

llegado diferentes informaciones y hay que darle trabajo rápido”, expuso.

REFERIRÁ CASOS AL FEI

“Esto es un tipo de investigación que requiere rapidez. No es cuestión de mira, te cito la semana que viene. Este fiscal se tiene que tirar a la calle. Tiene que ir con el agente a investigar y levantar expediente porque si son funcionarios de la jurisdicción del Panel del Fiscal Especial Independiente (FEI), yo le voy a someter al FEI rápido y que el FEI continúe. Porque la gente quiere ver resultados y la gente se indigna porque ve estas cosas y no saben qué pasó? por qué se tardan demasiado? y queremos que estas investigaciones sean expeditas, responsables con la prueba necesaria, pero que sean rápido para que la gente vea unas respuestas del departamento”, añadió.

Anticipó que se van a dividir las pesquisas con las autoridades federales.

“Hay unos referidos que los reciben los federales que no nos llegan a nosotros y hay unos que los recibimos nosotros y nosotros lo que hacemos es que nos comunicamos (con los federales). Tú (federal) cogiste Lares, pues termina Lares para que no haya overlapping. Yo termino el mío, por ejemplo el de Patillas, yo lo termino. Ayer (lunes) hablé con Rosa Emilia (Rodríguez), cuando yo termine, yo se lo envío por si hay algo (delito) federal. Entonces así podemos maximizar los recursos. Ellos investigan unos y nosotros otros”, agregó.

En cuanto al caso de Patillas, precisó que se asignó a la fiscal del distrito de Guayama, Judith Borrás.

El lunes, Vázquez anunció que le asignó un fiscal al Municipio de Patillas para que investigue otra denuncia contra ese ayuntamiento por presuntamente retener agua y suministros provistos por la Agencia Federal para el Manejo de Emergencias (FEMA).

Vázquez se personó a Patillas para conocer de primera mano la situación.

Por su parte, la fiscal federal Rosa Emilia Rodríguez dijo a través de la portavoz de prensa, Lymarie Llovet, “como hacemos con todas las querellas que se reciben, se evalúan para ver si hay jurisdicción federal y cargos federales”.

Rescate Para Los Negocios Afectados

By José Carmona

[El Vocero de Puerto Rico](#), October 18, 2017

Más de 200 empresarios y dueños de pequeñas y medianas empresas o Pymes se

dieron cita ayer en la sede del Colegio de Arquitectos y Agrimensores en Hato Rey para buscar orientación y conocer los programas de financiamiento y ayudas disponibles para aquellos negocios impactados por el huracán María.

La actividad, denominada “Impulso Empresarial” y, organizada por el Departamento de Desarrollo Económico y Comercio (DDEC), contó además con presentaciones de otras agencias estatales y federales, así como también de entidades privadas.

“Las Pymes son parte esencial en el proceso de recuperación de la Isla. Tenemos que comenzar la transformación y la reconstrucción de Puerto Rico, y una de las formas es que las empresas tengan las herramientas y opciones para lograrlo”, dijo el secretario del DDEC, Manuel Laboy, a la audiencia.

Fuera de la necesidad de energía eléctrica y de las telecomunicaciones, Laboy destacó que el acceso a financiamiento es esencial para que Puerto Rico y las empresas se levanten.

“Préstamos, líneas de crédito, contratación federal...queremos que las empresas tengan la mayor oportunidad de competir por los contratos federales”, añadió.

Incentivos y préstamos de emergencia

Si una empresa que cualificó para la Ley 73 del 2008 y la Ley 20 del 2012 y opera en una propiedad de la Compañía de Fomento Industrial, puede solicitar el 100% de reembolso en el gasto de una planta eléctrica tras el huracán María, destacó Laboy.

Si la empresa opera en un edificio de la empresa privada, puede solicitar el 50% del reembolso. Dicho reembolso, añadió, se podría utilizar para equipo solar y de energía renovable.

“Se evaluará cada caso por separado. El incentivo es flexible”, señaló. Aquellos casos que no son elegibles bajo la Ley 73 y 20, el BDE y la Administración Federal de Pequeños Negocios (SBA) y otras agencias le podrán ofrecer financiamiento.

El BDE, por su parte, tiene disponibles préstamos de emergencia para los negocios afectados por el huracán María, destacó su presidente, Luis Burdiel. Los mismos, señaló, son de un máximo de \$50 mil y a un interés desde 5.49%. El banco está dando moratorias de 3 hasta 6 meses en estos préstamos.

“No hay cargo inicial, y solo habrá un gasto de cierre del 3% del monto del préstamo”, indicó. El BDE, añadió, también tiene un préstamo de

hasta \$50 mil desde el 4.5% para atender aquellos en la industria de la agricultura que sufrieron pérdidas. Al igual que el primer préstamo, este no tiene cargos iniciales y un gasto de cierre del 3% del monto del préstamo.

El BDE también tiene disponible su préstamo genérico de hasta \$50 mil a un interés desde el 6.99% y con un 3% de gastos de cierre. Los que se acojan a este préstamo gozarán de cero pagos mensuales por los próximos seis meses. Los que no cualifiquen para este préstamo, el BDE los ayuda a radicar con el SBA, explicó.

“Desde el martes siguiente al desastre, ya el BDE estaba trabajando al 100%. No tenemos tiempo que perder. El primer préstamo se procesó y se aprobó en 12 días, cuando la banca comercial usualmente se toma un mes o más”, comentó Burdiel.

Contrataciones federales

Los negocios en áreas declaradas como zonas de desastre por el presidente de los Estados Unidos, Donald Trump, tienen preferencia en la contratación de FEMA y otras agencias federales, destacó Pedro Acevedo, gerente del programa del Centro para la Contratación Federal, adscrita a la Compañía de Fomento Industrial bajo un acuerdo colaborativo con el Departamento de la Defensa de los Estados Unidos.

Las agencias principales en la contratación federal durante un desastre son la Agencia Federal para el Manejo de Emergencias (FEMA) y el Cuerpo de Ingenieros de los Estados Unidos. El SBA provee asistencia para que las empresas se puedan certificar y a su vez participar de las subastas con el gobierno federal como suplidores de productos y/o servicios, además de préstamos por desastres a individuos y negocios, comentó.

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From:	Arroyo, Maria </O=EXCHANGELABS/OU=EXCHANGE ADMINISTRATIVE GROUP (FYDIBOHF23SPDLT)/CN=RECIPIENTS/CN=1457D7C92C7E4172B0C5687D08BF339A-ARROYO, MAR>
To:	"DR-4339-PR All Hands </o=ExchangeLabs/ou=Exchange Administrative Group (FYDIBOHF23SPDLT)/cn=Recipients/cn=07089255a82f4e59886f6b742b6e66a0-DR-4339-PR>"
Subject:	FW: Media Analysis Report DR-4339-PR 10/17/17 (morning)
Date:	2017/10/17 11:58:16
Priority:	Normal
Type:	Note

From: Simoneau, Grace
Sent: Tuesday, October 17, 2017 11:46 AM
Subject: Media Analysis Report DR-4339-PR 10/17/17 (morning)

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

Maria- please distribute to all-hands.



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Media Analysis Report

Puerto Rico - Hurricanes Irma/Maria DR-4336/4339-PR

Tuesday, October 17, 2017, Morning Edition

Hot Issues:

- *Contaminated drinking water, empty beds on USNS Comfort*

News Clips Analysis / Trends:

- Widespread media outlets continued overnight to pick up the AP, CNN and Washington Post stories from yesterday about Puerto Ricans consuming water that may be contaminated; story text used in previous editions of this report will not be repeated today; negative tone but not criticizing **FEMA**
- CNN reports mostly empty beds on USNS Comfort, but as of midmorning, the topic had not seen additional reporting by other outlets; no federal agency blamed in story
- A Kaiser Health News story about the critical state of/lack of medical care and health risks, which we had in a previous edition, is being widely published around the country; story not repeated in this edition
- Complaints about lack of tarps appear in multiple stories

Survivor News and Quotes

- “I keep going back to the stories we Puerto Ricans tell about ourselves ...They are very powerful but very dangerous. They can build us up or tear us down. “For a long time, we told ourselves we were lazy, because that’s the story we’ve been told. That we’re not capable of building or managing the country. If you tell yourself that, you’ll start like it acting it is true. This moment when, literally, the lights go off, is a great opportunity for us to ask ourselves what stories we are telling ourselves, and what stories we want to tell.” –*Buzzfeed News*

News Clips Highlights/Summary:

- Celebrity chef slams **FEMA** on food contract situation
- Spanish - **FEMA** plans to change the maps that identify flood zones in Puerto Rico, due to the effects of Hurricane Maria on the island.
- English and Spanish - More reports on landslides and other problems from this week’s heavy rain, including complaints about no tarps yet received by residents; dozens of houses destroyed and families without access to water and food after river overflows
- Transcript of NPR’s contaminated water story from yesterday
- Jenniffer Gonzalez, Puerto Rico’s non-voting representative in Congress, is using what limited power she has to wheedle, cajole and beg agencies to help with an island territory she says has been put back a century; Politico interview headlined “We are American Citizens”
- NY Post reports 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; similar story was earlier published online by blog "[BoingBoing](#)"

- Spanish - Army Corps of Engineers proposes in the next nine days to begin powering of energy to Palo Seco with a temporary unit, while the Electrical Power Authority (EEE) concentrates on interconnecting other power generators
- Spanish - In the midst of the humanitarian crisis in Puerto Rico, the Department of Justice and FBI investigate the circumstances in which food and water provided to the victims of the village of Patillas ended in a garbage dump at the mercy of rats and pests.
- "Empty" hospital ship: Only 33 of the 250 beds on the Comfort – 13% – are being used, nearly two weeks after the ship arrived. Clinics say they don't know how to begin sending cases to the USNS Comfort...rumor that patients have to be admitted to a central hospital before they can be transferred to the Comfort.
- San Juan mayor in Huffington Post interview says Puerto Rico's status as a territory makes it easier to ignore
- Spanish - Department of Finance says many small businesses will disappear and that the big chains will survive
- 103-year-old woman survived weeks with no power and no running water in Puerto Rico. The woman, Angela Parrilla, is now reunited with family in Orlando
- Writer for BuzzFeed describes a village that collected food for itself; story contains various putdowns of **FEMA**, including "**FEMA** isn't coming."
- Thousands are fleeing Puerto Rico—Huffington Post story; contains reference to **FEMA**: As of Monday, the **Federal Emergency Management Agency** still hasn't yet reached the town of Jagueyes, one of many areas far from San Juan that government officials weren't able to communicate with for days
- Acacia Network, a health and social services organization that is among the largest founded and run by New York's Puerto Rican diaspora is collecting and sending aid to hurricane survivors
- A group of volunteers from across the Boston area recently gathered at MIT to address another shortage that is complicating relief efforts: accurate maps
- Delaware Valley University in Doylestown is collecting vegetable and fruit seeds to help PR farmers get back in business
- Senate Democrats on Monday called on **Federal Emergency Management Agency** Administrator Brock Long to provide Puerto Rico with the funding necessary to make permanent repairs to the island's tattered infrastructure; also seek tax relief for PR and VI; includes English and Spanish coverage
- Trump's approval rating fall after handling of Maria response; English and Spanish, widely reported
- Trump applauds former **FEMA** administrator Witt praising the response to hurricanes, including Maria
- **FEMA** response in PR is "admittedly slow and inadequate," writes the Rev. Jesse Jackson in a Chicago Sun-Times column after visiting here last week; he visited our JFO on Saturday and addressed **FEMA** workers
- Mainland press opinion pieces ask for end to Jones Act and implore president to help Puerto Rico

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FEMA

'The American Government Has Failed.' Celebrity Chef José Andrés Slams FEMA's Puerto Rico Response (TIME)

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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FEMA rediseñará mapas de zonas inundables (El Nuevo Día)

El huracán María provocó daños en zonas que se desconocía que podían quedar bajo agua

martes, 17 de octubre de 2017 - 12:00 AM

Por [Alex Figueroa Cancel](#)

[El Nuevo Día](#)

FEMA plans to change the maps that identify flood zones in Puerto Rico, due to the effects of Hurricane Maria on the island.

La Agencia Federal para el Manejo de Emergencias (**FEMA**, por sus siglas en inglés) prevé que cambiarán los mapas que identifican las zonas inundables en Puerto Rico, a raíz de los efectos que tuvo el huracán María sobre la isla.

En medio del embate del ciclón, residentes de diversos sectores en Puerto Rico tuvieron que ser evacuados de emergencia cuando las zonas en las que se encontraban se inundaron por sorpresa. Estos incidentes contrastaron con las decenas de desalojos preventivos que las autoridades realizaron antes del azote del ciclón en zonas costeras y lugares que son históricamente peligrosos en casos de fuertes lluvias.

"Es muy posible (que se modifiquen los mapas). Vamos con nuestros especialistas en inundaciones. Toda esa data se va a recopilar y es posible que podrían hacerse nuevos mapas, con nuevas áreas (susceptibles a inundaciones)", indicó el director de **FEMA** en Puerto Rico y el Caribe, Alejandro de la Campa.

"Cabe recordar que es el desastre más grande en nuestra generación o 100 años, así que puede haber cambios", agregó.

En caso de que se modifiquen los mapas, quedaría por verse si **FEMA** tendría que cambiar el lugar donde construirían las casas de las personas que perdieron sus hogares y cualifiquen para el subsidio.

Precisamente, De la Campa indicó que comenzó la planificación de esos programas, el enfoque principal de la segunda fase de las labores de **FEMA** en la isla.

“Una vez terminemos la fase de respuesta con comida, agua y generadores, vamos a pasar a la fase de recuperación, que ya se está iniciando, en parte por eso me salí de la coordinación”, dijo De la Campa, al hacer referencia que a la entrada de Michael Byrne como coordinador de **FEMA** en la isla.

“Todas estas familias que perdieron sus hogares tenemos que ver cómo las vamos a ayudar, no solo con la ayuda financiera, sino con la construcción de vivienda”, sostuvo De la Campa en entrevista con este diario.

“Vamos a activar unos programas para que las familias que estén interesadas, construirles unas nuevas viviendas en cemento, a código, fuera de áreas inundables, de alto riesgo, con la condición de que no se pueda volver a construir donde vivían”, afirmó.

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WATER

Puerto Rico Health Officials Worry About Contaminated Water Effects (NPR)

By [Adrian Florido](#) • Oct 16, 2017

[NPR](#)

Originally published on October 16, 2017 8:13 am

[To listen to the story, click on NPR link]

It's been nearly a month since Hurricane Maria ripped across Puerto Rico. Nearly a third of the island still lacks potable water which is raising health concerns.

RACHEL MARTIN, HOST:

It's been almost a month since Hurricane Maria hit Puerto Rico. And nearly a third of the island still doesn't have any running water. This is raising health concerns, as you would think it would, especially in rural communities where restoring water service could take weeks, even months. NPR's Adrian Florido visited one of these communities in the mountains of central Puerto Rico.

ADRIAN FLORIDO, BYLINE: As we drove the narrow, winding road to Orocovis, every few miles, we came across a piece of PVC pipe sticking out of the mountainside, water flowing out as if from an open tap. They call these ojos de agua. Before the communities up here had water lines, people ran these pipes from nearby streams as a source of water. These days, they're more of a backup for when storms knock out the electricity needed to pump water up the mountain. Many people use them for bathing and cleaning. Some, like Ramon Luis, drink from them, too.

(SOUNDBITE OF WATER FLOWING)

RAMON LUIS: (Speaking Spanish).

FLORIDO: "This is the best there is," he says. "This is a blessing from God." Right now, though, it's also a nightmare for health workers like Dr. Alfredo Ayala.

ALFREDO AYALA: (Speaking Spanish).

FLORIDO: He says these ojos de agua are important culturally and socially here. But Hurricane Maria was so destructive that it killed lots of wildlife that's ended up in the rivers and streams that feed these pipes.

AYALA: (Speaking Spanish).

FLORIDO: Ayala and his colleagues fear outbreaks of disease from contaminated water. They were with a convoy of volunteer aid workers that we ran into as they were preparing to fan out across

mountain communities that have received little government aid since the hurricane hit. Among the group was Nurse Erin Carrera.

ERIN CARRERA: The only way we're going to prevent an epidemic here is that we need to get the word out to everybody that the water that they think is OK - like, here in this town, where the water is so pure and beautiful, and people have been drinking it all their lives. And they need to understand that it's not the same water they were drinking before.

FLORIDO: We hop into the massive Humvee leading the volunteers up a road that, until recently, was impassable because of the landslide. It wasn't long before we came across another ojo de agua. As we drove up, we startled Cynthia Torres...

CYNTHIA TORRES: (Laughter).

FLORIDO: ...Who was about to dip a head full of shampoo back under the pipe. A social worker, Cynthia Bojito, hopped out clutching a bag of chlorine tablets.

CYNTHIA BOJITO: (Speaking Spanish).

FLORIDO: She told Torres that even to bathe with this water should be treated. Some of the diseases the medics fear can be transmitted through small cuts in the skin, she said.

TORRES: (Speaking Spanish).

FLORIDO: Torres said she didn't know that. And she left for home with a soapy head. It could be weeks or months before Orocovis and other rural communities get their water restored. It's hard to say for sure. For drinking, many here have been seeking out bottled water. But it's still hard to find. And help from the government has been slow to arrive in many rural towns. The island's water authority has been able to power one pump here. It installed several faucets along the side of a road. And all day, people like Rafael Maldonado show up to fill buckets, bottles and jugs.

RAFAEL MALDONADO: (Speaking Spanish).

FLORIDO: This water he drinks straight from the faucet - no boiling, no chlorine. But there's disagreement between Puerto Rican environmental officials and water officials about whether that is safe to do. So that's created uncertainty for Puerto Ricans turning on the tap, one uncertainty among many still facing the island as it tries to recover from the storm. Adrian Florido, NPR News, Orocovis, Puerto Rico.

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WEATHER

Mudslide Hits Puerto Rico Neighborhood That Trump Visited (CNN)

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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Desamparo en Dorado (Primera Hora)

Bárbara J. Figueroa Rosa

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

Primera Hora

Dozens of houses destroyed and families without access to water and food after overflowing a river near their residences.

Dorado.- Toldos donados, ropa donada, comida donada. Eso es lo único que tienen los vecinos del sector Corea de este municipio a 27 días del paso del huracán María por Puerto Rico.

En esta zona, el viento y el agua de un caño cercano que se desbordó hicieron escante en decenas de casas. Como en la de don Carlos Rivera Vega, de 71 años, quien ha vivido siempre en el área, donde lo que abundaban eran palmas de coco y no casas humildes como ahora.

El hombre quien trabajó muchos años en los hoteles del litoral doradeño y ahora está retirado, perdió todo lo que tenía en su casa de madera, en los altos de otra residencia, cuando el viento arrancó gran parte del techo de zinc.

“Todo se me dañó... El toldo me lo regaló un muchacho que no lo quiso y yo le dije: ‘pues, dámelo’... Mientras tanto, todo se seguía mojando... Y lo lindo no es eso, es que el agua que entra aquí se filtra al primer piso... Él tampoco sabe ya qué hacerse cada vez que llueve”, dijo enseñando muebles que perdieron su forma original y colchones mojados.

Para poder trabajar la situación tuvo que hacer pequeños desagües en las paredes para sacar el agua que se estaba acumulando, pero se corre el riesgo de que por allí mismo ahora entren sabandijas.

Hace una semana y media acudió a una cancha bajo techo donde personal **de la Agencia Federal para el Manejo de Emergencias (FEMA)**, por sus siglas en inglés) estaría ayudando a gestionar las reclamaciones de daños. Llegó a las 3:00 a.m. haciendo el turno número 50. Cuando por fin lo atendieron la persona “fue bien repugnante”.

“No me trató bien... cuando me preguntó por los cuartos esos allí arriba, que le dije que era para cuando mis hijos venían de Estados Unidos tuvieran dónde quedarse, me dijo que no tenía derecho a nada. Yo sé que tampoco es así. Si ahora no me queda nada”, lamentó.

Don Carlos contó que solo come una vez al día... o menos. Depende de que su hermana acuda a su casa cuando puede y le lleve algo preparado.

“Nadie de **FEMA**, ni del municipio, ningún vecino me ha dicho a mí: ‘¿quieres algo de comer o de beber?’. No está fácil la cosa. Esta tormenta nos ha dado bien duro”, expresó.

Algunas calles más cercanas al caño está la familia de Alfredo Maysonet, de 42 años y padre de cuatro. Ellos también viven gracias a donaciones tras la inundación que dejó que el agua llegara alrededor de siete pies dentro de su casa, dañándoles camas, ropa, gabinetes, enseres y el auto.

“El agua entró, pero fue con la rapidez que entró, eso fue en nada. Ahora lo único que tenemos es porque de la iglesia nos lo dieron”, indicó. “Todo es regalado... porque nos quedamos con lo que teníamos puesto”.

Su reclamación ante **FEMA** está “en proceso”. “Estamos esperando... a ver qué deciden. Hay que llamar la semana que viene y, pues, hay que quedarse aquí porque es lo único que tenemos”, afirmó.

Al lado, vive Juan R. González, de 70 años, y su hijo de 43. La mitad de la casa se cayó. La pared de la cocina sigue ahí, pero está inclinada desafiando la gravedad.

En días recientes logró tapan el espacio abierto con unos toldos que no son de **FEMA**.

“Fue alguien que me dijo: ‘tengo unos toldos, ¿los quieres?’ Y vino y me los dio para mi casa. Son donados. **FEMA** no ha llegado aquí. Y comida me han dado una sola vez aquí”, indicó.

Juan asegura que seguirá hacia adelante porque todas sus pérdidas, son cosas materiales. Aunque eso implique que él y su hijo tengan que dormir en pequeños catres que también consiguió por donaciones.

Está lloviendo y a Marta no le ha llegado un toldo (Metro PR)

El Servicio Nacional de Meteorología emitió una vigilancia de inundación hasta el miércoles; FEMA no ha tenido premura en proveer el material para que los boricuas sin techo resguarden sus hogares

Por Ronald Ávila Claudio

lunes 16 de octubre del 2017, a las 20:29

[Metro PR](#)

With the National Weather Service issuing a flood watch until Wednesday, FEMA has not been in a hurry to provide tarps. Marta is a resident of La Central in Canóvanas, waiting 27 days for a FEMA canopy.

Llueve. Margarita “Marta” López Hiraldo aún no tiene un techo sobre sus pertenencias, luego de que hace 27 días el huracán María destruyó parte de su residencia en el barrio la Central en Canóvanas.

Su casa por cerca de 65 años ahora se reduce a un grupo de escombros mojados, que una y otra vez se vuelven a humedecer con la constante precipitación que cae en la isla. A casi un mes del temporal, Marta comentó que en el suelo de su casa crece un “babote” y que no ha podido limpiar sus cosas.

Al parecer, la mujer no estuvo entre las 38,518 personas que según la oficina de comunicación de la Agencia Federal de Manejo de Emergencias (**FEMA**) han recibido un toldo. Tampoco estuvo entre los 439 ciudadanos que recibieron, según la misma fuente, asistencia del Cuerpo de Ingenieros de los Estados Unidos para resguardar sus posesiones. La alcaldesa de su municipio, Lorna Soto, tampoco ha llegado a la calle 2 de la Central para tenderle la mano a Marta.

“Esto fue una cosa que nadie se esperó, eso [el huracán] fue un monstruo. Por el momento que me techen mi casa es lo único que necesito, lo demás uno lo hace poco a poco”, sostuvo.

Marta contó que ahora mismo “no se siente bien, porque a veces le da depresión a uno. Tengo a mi nena, paciente de salud mental y estoy viviendo en una casa que no es mía porque aquí no me puedo quedar”.

Ayer, de acuerdo a Ián Colón Pagán, Meteorólogo del Centro Nacional de Meteorología, cayeron de tres a cuatro pulgadas de lluvia en el país. Se supone, agregó, que al menos hasta el miércoles persista una vigilancia de inundaciones para toda la isla.

Mientras el mal clima continúa, Rosa Cruz Suárez, vecina de Marta, también se ve afectada. Su caso, sin embargo, es distinto porque aún reside en su vivienda mojada.

Uno de los cuartos, mostró la vecina de la Central a este medio, lo techó con varias planchas de zinc que se encontró en la carretera. En el interior del lugar hay una cama y un colchón que ahora tendrá que tirar a la basura. Cuando camina, la fémica lo hace con mucho cuidado para evitar un resbalón, pues el techo que su exmarido improvisó para la habitación tiene goteras significativas y el suelo está siempre mojado.

“Ni siquiera puedo botar las cosas mojadas porque aún **FEMA** no me ha visitado. De hecho, hace catorce días llené la solicitud por teléfono. Me dijeron que llegarían en nueve días, pero aún los estoy esperando”, denunció Cruz Suárez.

Cruz Suárez afirmó que comparte la frustración de Marta. Desea, sobre todas las cosas, poder deshacerse de sus cosas y pasar la peor página de su vida. El huracán lo vivió allí mismo, sus ojos vieron como el techo se desprendió, como todo se mojó.

“Al segundo día me fui en shock. Empecé a gritar y a darle a las paredes puños”, soltó la mujer.

Calle abajo vive María Alejandro, de 45 años, y quien ha visitado en tres ocasiones la alcaldía de Canóvanas para solicitar un toldo, pero tampoco lo ha recibido. Mientras, su ropa tiene moho por la constante lluvia. Sus perritos, sin remedio, se esconden en una esquina de la cocina que aún tiene un pedazo de zinc.

“Había más ropa mía, pero la saqué porque con el agua sigue poniéndose bien fea”, acotó.

Aunque la gente se moja, **FEMA** va a paso lento

Ayer, el secretario del Departamento de la Vivienda, Fernando Gil, detalló que su agencia solicitó a **FEMA** unos 200,000 toldos tres días después del huracán María. Hasta la fecha, el organismo federal solo ha entregado 3,5000 al gobierno estatal, el resto los han entregado ellos mismos a los alcaldes, explicó Gil.

Al cuestionarle sobre la tardanza, el secretario manifestó que **FEMA** quedó corto del material por el impacto de los huracanes en las Islas Vírgenes, Texas y Florida. Agregó que la paciencia del gobierno local se agotó y que “tienen que resolver esta situación, porque si fuera en cualquier otro estado esto no pasaba”.

“Al principio uno es paciente, pero ya estamos a 26 días del huracán”, agregó.

De acuerdo a Gil, hasta el momento se registran unas 175,000 viviendas con daños mayores y unas 38,500 que son pérdida total. Esta cifra es preliminar, pues son predicciones basadas en el número de solicitudes que recibe **FEMA**, que solo tiene unos 260 inspectores trabajando durante la emergencia, demarcó el secretario.

La isla, mencionó el también abogado, requiere de unos 1,600 inspectores para poder cubrir la demanda actual de personas que necesitan asistencia; **FEMA** tampoco ha tenido premura en aumentar el número.

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RESPONSE and RECOVERY

Los toldos de emergencia no dan abasto en Dorado (El Nuevo Dia)

El FBI repartió hoy, lunes, 30 toldos que se acabaron rápidamente

lunes, 16 de octubre de 2017 - 4:59 PM

Por Melisa Ortega Marrero

[El Nuevo Dia](#)

30 tarps delivered to Dorado, which ran out quickly; story features elderly couple who have not yet received a tarp to cover their home

La pareja de adultos mayores no ha recibido aún un toldo para cubrir su casa

DORADO - “Lo más que yo necesito es una casa. Aunque sea un rancho. Pero, por lo menos, un lugar donde no me moje”.

A casi un mes del despiadado paso del huracán María por nuestra zona, Hilda Luz Sierra, de 77 años, pasa sus días y sus noches en la única habitación de su vivienda, en el barrio Santa Rosa de este municipio, que quedó en pie.

Durante los días de lluvia, como hoy, lunes, el agua se acumula en lugares donde antes ubicaban la sala, la cocina y otros cuartos. Los aguaceros penetran, incluso, la habitación -en cemento- a la que quedó reducida la humilde estructura, también elaborada con madera y zinc.

Hoy, 25 días después del ciclón, Hilda y su esposo, José M. Melecio, de 80, no han recibido ni siquiera un toldo con qué proteger sus pocas pertenencias.

“El que tiene y empuja, a ese lo atienden primero. El pobre es último, ahora, después y siempre. Lo único bueno que puede tener el pobre es la honradez y la decencia”, replicó José, quien carece de la visión, a preguntas sobre si había recibido la asistencia de la [Agencia Federal para el Manejo de Emergencias \(FEMA\)](#), por sus siglas en inglés).

Hilda reconoció que, en ocasiones, toma tiempo para observar lo que quedó de la casita y llorar. Dijo estar convencida de que su pérdida es parte de un ‘plan divino’.

Relacionados:

[María deja sin casa a miles de personas](#)

[Las lluvias provocan derrumbes y desbordamientos de ríos en la isla](#)

[Investigan mal manejo de ayudas de FEMA en Patillas](#)

Mientras, José, también amparado en la esperanza, confía en poder reconstruir la vivienda, pero esta vez en cemento.

“Me dio trabajo construirla. Trabajar día a día, sol a sol, para juntar unos chavitos para buscar un carpintero y empezar a hacerla. No fue fácil”, rememoró Melecio.

A solo minutos del hogar de Hilda y José, las autoridades federales -encabezada por personal de [Negociado Federal de Investigaciones \(FBI\)](#), por sus siglas en inglés)- repartían en el barrio Maguayo un puñado de toldos sencillos. El operativo se produjo sin notificación previa. Hilda y José nunca supieron de la entrega.

El contingente tenía disponible solo 30 toldos y todos fueron entregados rápidamente, precisó Elizabeth Bowditch, del FBI.

Cifras del [Departamento de Vivienda](#) federal y **FEMA** apuntan a que de 25,000 a 30,000 viviendas fueron destruidas totalmente por María. Según publicado hoy por El Nuevo Día, otros análisis coinciden en que la cantidad de casas con daños parciales asciende a 250,000.

Sin embargo, el director de **FEMA** en Puerto Rico, Alejandro de la Campa, reconoció el pasado viernes que no había, ni en Puerto Rico ni en los Estados Unidos, inventario de toldos suficiente para atender la emergencia. Precisó que, como consecuencia de los daños causados por el huracán Harvey en Texas, y el huracán Irma en Florida, los almacenes de los toldos especiales no tenían suficientes reservas para enviar de inmediato a la Isla.

La agencia federal informó hoy, a través de su portavoz de prensa local, Deliris Aquino, que han distribuido 38,518 taldos sencillos alrededor de la Isla.

Por su parte, el [Cuerpo de Ingenieros](#) (USACE) ha instalado, hasta hoy, 429 lonas de mayor resistencia. Asimismo, cuentan con 3,799 autorizaciones de propietarios de viviendas para proceder a la instalación de las cubiertas.

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Puerto Rico to Trump: ‘We Are American Citizens’ (Politico)

The island territory’s top representative in Washington says the president’s efforts to blame Puerto Rico for its desperate hurricane recovery are “shocking.”

By [EDWARD-ISAAC DOVERE](#)

October 17, 2017

[Politico](#) (magazine)

Just before the interview starts, Jenniffer Gonzalez tries four different numbers she’s been trying to reach back home in Puerto Rico. She gets the same error message for all of them. Can’t connect.

One call that does come through is from the White House, which is trying to explain away the president’s tweets warning that the federal response wouldn’t go on forever. Her reaction was off the record.

Gonzalez, Puerto Rico’s non-voting representative in Congress, is using what limited power she has to wheedle, cajole and beg agencies to help with an island territory she says has been put back a century—some 86 percent of Puerto Ricans are still without electricity, three weeks after the hurricane knocked out the island’s power grid, and 29 percent don’t even have potable water.

She’s calling in favors and firing off text messages to get patients dialysis or chemotherapy, with no time to think about the damage to her own house. Gonzalez happened to be home during the storm, and she was literally holding the door closed. Now in Washington to lobby for a more vigorous relief effort, she’s anxious about all the damage that continues to mount from rain that keeps coming down on homes that don’t have roofs anymore.

“Your life,” Gonzalez told me with tears in her eyes during an interview for POLITICO’s Off Message podcast, “is like stopping without knowing what is going to happen next.”

Days after we spoke, on Monday, President Donald Trump was standing in the Rose Garden of the White House, explaining why he shouldn’t be blamed for a lackluster hurricane response that has exasperated Puerto Ricans and infuriated many other Americans back on the mainland.

Trump cited the pre-existing debt, said the island “was in really bad shape” before the storm, ripped local authorities for making the military participate in handing out food in a way that “they shouldn’t have to be doing,” and insisted he’d been doing an “outstanding job.”

The word Gonzalez—a lifelong Republican—kept using to describe presidential statements like this is “shocking.”

Two weeks ago, she hitched a ride on Air Force One to San Juan, and came back with a red Make America Great Again hat signed by the president and what seemed like commitments to the recovery. She doesn’t understand why the president, having seen the disaster with his own eyes, hasn’t prioritized federal resources and instead issued threats.

Does the president get what is going on? I asked her.

“You know what?” she answered. “Maybe I’m going to be nice here: I don’t know.” She was clearly choosing her words carefully.

“This is not the time to be talking about withdrawing the help,” she continued, a flash of anger in her voice. “This is not the time to talk about how much it’s costing the U.S., because we are American citizens.”

Before she was in Congress, Gonzalez was the Republican Party chair in Puerto Rico, and though she started out backing Jeb Bush, and then Marco Rubio, eventually supported Trump for president.

Click [here](#) to subscribe to the full podcast, to hear Gonzalez speak about what she made of President Trump's promise to wipe away Puerto Rico's debt, what she thinks will happen now that the White House has backtracked on it, and the new kind of community thinking that's taken root since Hurricane Maria.

She doesn't criticize him for that viral moment tossing out the paper towels and cans of chicken on his visit to the island two weeks ago—"you are dealing with a president that is always off the script, that says what he thinks," she said—but she refuses to accept his repeated suggestions that somehow Puerto Rico brought the situation on itself through its debt crisis or management failures.

"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," Gonzalez said. "If we were a state, we already would have a lot of the help that Florida did."

She said the president's hostile statements make even less sense in light of the engaged, serious conversation she had with him on the plane, and the action on the ground since: "He's sending the resources. He's granting everything that has been asked. He's having daily briefings on the island. He's sending the troops."

But the cost of rebuilding Puerto Rico is likely to be enormous—the House recently voted for \$4.9 billion in relief funds for what estimates are pegging at an overall need north of \$90 billion.

And Trump, as he manages to do on every issue, has turned his Puerto Rico response into a frenzy of raging feelings. The day before sitting for the interview, Gonzalez spoke at a rally near the Capitol hosted by a group called Unite for Puerto Rico that repeatedly descended into shouting and shouting about stopping the shouting. Rep. José Serrano, a New Yorker who was born in Puerto Rico, ripped into the president, prompting Wisconsin Republican Rep. Sean Duffy, who spoke next, to rush to Trump's defense.

"President Trump spent more time on the island than Barack Obama!" he declared to boos, and shouts of "It's not about politics!"

"I don't care about what the letter is behind your name, I care about what we're going to do for the island of Puerto Rico. To come in here and listen to that crap, I think undermines a bipartisan mission to bring people together," Duffy said in an interview after the speech, touting the funding bill. "It's going to be Republicans that are going to deliver."

That's the problem, argued Rep. Adriano Espaillat, a Dominican-born Democrat from New York: The president and the Republicans haven't been delivering on what he says "is becoming the Caribbean Katrina."

"This is a humanitarian crisis. This should not have a political label on it. But President Trump is the commander in chief. The Department of Defense should have gone out there and handled this like a war zone," Espaillat said, in an interview after his own remarks at the rally. As for Trump's claims of doing a great job, Espaillat added, "He's done a horrible job."

A major subplot of the crisis has been San Juan Mayor Carmen Yulín Cruz's frequent TV hits, sometimes in custom-made T-shirts, to make attacks like this right to the camera, and a spun-up Trump channeling his anger into tweets attacking her.

It's clear Gonzalez doesn't think the mayor is helping the situation.

"Everybody on the island is frustrated because we never expected to be hit by this kind of hurricane and we never expected to be for so long without power. So everybody is using their frustration in different ways. I know a lot of mayors there are around the clock, working, and calling," Gonzalez said.

Gonzalez admits to some guilt in going home to her apartment in Washington and having a working shower, or just being able to get a bottle of water—the kinds of things that are now major

luxuries in Puerto Rico. She's making several trips back home every week, accompanying official delegations with the president, the vice president and the speaker of the House and each time packing bags full of supplies. She even loaded up Air Force One with medicines, a diesel can and dry food.

On a desk covered in papers and notes that comes with being the main point of contact between the crisis and Washington, she also has two books: Arizona Sen. Jeff Flake's "Conscience of a Conservative," and Jill Lepore's "The Secret History of Wonder Woman."

The decoration in her office that gets the most prominent display is an American flag with 51 stars. Despite multiple referendums showing heavy support for statehood, she doesn't see that happening anytime soon. But maybe there's a silver lining to the storm clouds, she said, in making the country more open to the idea.

"The only good thing this hurricane brought us is that now everybody knows that we are American citizens," she said. "And we are 3.4 million American citizens, actually."

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The big picture on Puerto Rico (Axios)

Oct. 16, 2017

[Axios](#)

Nearly four weeks after Hurricane Maria first made landfall in Puerto Rico, the island is still far from recovered. 86% of the island is still without power, 28% is without potable water, and 13% of grocery stores are still closed.

The official death toll has risen to 48, but the actual number is expected to be much higher as several parts of the island remain cut off from communication. Reps. Nydia Velazquez (D-NY) and Bennie Thompson (D-MS) [issued a request](#) Thursday to audit the death count, stating that the misreported number is "distorting the grim realities facing the Island." Meanwhile, roughly 117 people are unaccounted for after last month's hurricane, [per CNN](#).

What they're saying

- **President Trump, during a press conference today:** "We now actually have military distributing food [in PR] — something that, really, they shouldn't have to be doing."
- **Rep. Nydia Velazquez (D-PR)** warned that "this could become another Flint" in an interview with CNN. "We're talking about contaminants, toxins, material, oil that are in this water. You're telling me that this water can be used for — as drinking water? I don't think so."

The facts

The latest on what we know from Puerto Rico, [per FEMA](#) and the [PR government site](#):

- **Boots on the ground:** More than 20,000 federal civilian personnel and military service members, including more than 1,700 FEMA personnel, are on the ground in Puerto Rico and the U.S. Virgin Islands.
- **State help:** 31 U.S. states are helping in PR, and 20 in the U.S. Virgin Islands.
- **Electricity:** 13.7% of the island has power, up from 9% Friday. Roughly 43% of cell towers have been restored.
- **Food:** Approximately 87% of grocery stores are open (396 of 456).
- **Gas:** Roughly 79% of retail gas stations are operational (872 of 1,100).
- **Shelter:** 5,037 people remain in shelters across the island, down from 5,602 Friday. 105 shelters are open and operating.
- **Transportation:** Only 392 miles of Puerto Rico's 5,073 miles of roads are open. All commercial airports and federally maintained ports are open, some with restrictions.

- **Water and waste:** Approximately 72% of Puerto Rico Aqueduct and Sewer Authority (PRASA) customers have potable water, up from 63% Friday. 56% of waste water treatment plants are working on generator power, the same as Friday.
- **Medical care:** 95% (64/67) hospitals are open, down from 97% Friday. Many remain on backup power systems, and are without air conditioning. 95% (46/48) of Dialysis Centers are open, the same as Friday.
- **Banks:** 50% of bank branches (157 of 313) are open and operating.

Go deeper: The storm has passed, but Puerto Rico's health faces prolonged recovery ([STAT News](#)); Sending Relief by Air and Sea to Puerto Rico From the Bronx ([NY Times](#)); Puerto Rico struggles with massive environmental crisis ([Washington Post](#)).

This post is being updated with the latest information on the Puerto Rico recovery efforts.

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Imperdonable descuido de alimentos en Patillas (Primera Hora)

Bárbara J. Figueroa Rosa

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

[Primera Hora](#)

In the midst of the humanitarian crisis in Puerto Rico, the Department of Justice and the Federal Bureau of Investigation (FBI) investigate the circumstances in which food and water provided to the victims of the village of Patillas ended in a garbage dump at the mercy of rats and pests.

En medio de la crisis humanitaria que se vive en Puerto Rico, el Departamento de Justicia y el Negociado Federal de Investigaciones (FBI) investigan las circunstancias en que alimentos y agua provistos para los damnificados del pueblo de Patillas terminaron en un basurero a la merced de ratas y sabandijas.

La pesquisa se lleva a cabo luego que la Secretaria de Justicia, Wanda Vázquez, y el Secretario de Estado, Luis Rivera Marín, realizaran una inspección en el municipio tras recibir información confidencial alertando sobre el negligente y bochornoso escenario.

“Fuimos personalmente porque queríamos verificar si era correcto y, en efecto, al llegar observamos un contenedor que tenía cajas rotas y mojadas con comida, artículos de primera necesidad y agua a la intemperie que si no nos dicen que eran suministros, cualquiera pensaba que era basura... estaban todas enchumbadas y expuestas a roedores”, dijo a Primera Hora la secretaria de Justicia al especificar que dentro de los productos había comida enviada por la Agencia Federal para el Manejo de Emergencias (**FEMA**).

Casi simultáneamente, explicó, llegó también al lugar el alcalde de Patillas, Norberto Soto Figueroa, quien supuestamente justificó la situación diciendo que las cajas fueron colocadas en el contenedor pues se habían mojado con los aguaceros caídos el domingo. Este diario trató de comunicarse con el alcalde y su portavoz de prensa, Félix Rivera, pero al cierre de esta edición no se había logrado comunicación.

Agregó que, ante lo acontecido, se solicitó la presencia en el lugar de la Fiscal de Distrito de Guayama, Judith Borrás, y de agentes de la Policía de Puerto Rico para iniciar de inmediato una pesquisa dirigida a investigar las razones por las cuales empleados del Municipio -incluyendo al alcalde- manejaron de forma indebida las provisiones que, con alta probabilidad, tendrán que ser decomisadas.

Hasta anoche se desconocía la cantidad de artículos y alimentos en descuido, pero la secretaria dio instrucciones de realizar un inventario.

“Además, esta tarde (ayer) hablé con Rosa Emilia Rodríguez (jefa de Fiscalía Federal) para trabajar en conjunto una vez levantemos toda la información. Si hay alguna violación de un

funcionario, por haber cometido negligencia en el cumplimiento del deber, también será referido a la Oficina del FEI (Fiscal Especial Independiente)”, expresó.

Vázquez indicó que al alcalde se le dieron instrucciones de tomar medidas correctivas para que se proteja cualquier otra mercancía en riesgo, incluyendo la que se encuentra en una cancha bajo techo que sirve como centro de acopio en el pueblo del sureste.

Mientras, la secretaria advirtió que se llevarán a cabo otras “inspecciones sorpresas” en otros municipios.

“Es bien triste ver que estas cosas estén sucediendo. Realmente indigna. Queremos que los alcaldes sean bien rigurosos con el cuidado de estos suministros. Y quiero ser enfática en que las personas y empresas privadas que están ayudando a Puerto Rico sepan que esto es una excepción. No queremos que se inhiban de seguir ayudándonos porque realmente necesitamos las donaciones”, manifestó.

La semana pasada trascendió que el FBI investigaba a varios municipios y funcionarios del Gobierno por mal manejo y apropiación indebida de abastecimientos otorgados por el Gobierno a los afectados del huracán María. Entre los ayuntamientos bajo pesquisa se había mencionado a Patillas, Arecibo, San Juan, Aguadilla y Vieques.

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San Juan Mayor: It May Be Easy To Disregard Puerto Rico Because We're A US Colony (Huffington Post)

“We will no longer be able to hide our poverty and our inequality with palm trees and piña coladas,” Carmen Yulín Soto told HuffPost.

Oct. 16, 2017

[Huffington Post](#)

SAN JUAN, Puerto Rico — A month after [Hurricane Maria](#) ravaged Puerto Rico, many of the 3.4 million citizens on the island are desperate for aid as they struggle daily to find basic necessities like food, drinking water, medicine and consistent forms of communication.

The island’s capital, San Juan, has fared better than the other 77 municipalities. But just outside the metropolitan areas, impoverished communities in towns like Canóvanas and Loíza are still impatiently waiting for FEMA or any government aid to arrive four weeks after the storm.

San Juan Mayor Carmen Yulín Cruz Soto, 54, says she has visited towns like Loíza and Comerío outside of her municipality and witnessed bleak scenes, and has called the Federal Emergency Management Agency’s [response to the hurricane inefficient and bureaucratic](#). She’s also [criticized President Donald Trump’s leadership](#) during the current crisis in Puerto Rico.

During a sit-down interview on Sunday, Cruz Soto told HuffPost she has “theories” about why federal aid has been slow to arrive to towns no more than than 30 minutes from the capital. She also painted a picture of the stark conditions Puerto Ricans are facing in the metropolitan area and beyond.

“I have learned in this disaster of a situation many things,” Cruz Soto said. “One is that we will no longer be able to hide our poverty and our inequality with palm trees and piña coladas; and two, that the dialogue, the discourse and what you’re seeing have to go hand in hand.”

We will no longer be able to hide our poverty and our inequality with palm trees and piña coladas.

“Before you could go somewhere and all these green trees and palms trees would be literally hiding away the more disadvantaged areas of San Juan and of Puerto Rico,” she said. “They are raw there [now] for us to see.”

In San Juan, like on the rest of the island, most residents lead their lives under the sweltering Caribbean heat with no electricity to run air conditioning or fans. Many gather inside some of the

small number of businesses with generators but head home as soon as the midnight curfew kicks in. Cell service is spotty at best, but phones are only useful if you're able to find a place to charge them.

At least [84 percent](#) of the metropolitan area has running water, according to the Puerto Rico government website. But that doesn't mean much for those living in high-rise buildings.

"Because San Juan is a lot of buildings, people have not seen the devastation," Cruz Soto said. "Those buildings have become human cages, especially for the elderly and the sick. You don't have food, you don't have water, you don't have electricity, so the water does not pump up to the 14th and 15th floor."

The mayor said her administration has cleaned more than 66 million pounds of debris, vegetative material and domestic waste since Sept. 19. But there is a lot more left to do, particularly since the city's priority continues to be the well-being of its residents, she said.

"You think when the hurricane is gone and you go outside [that] you'll be able to start rebuilding but you can't," Cruz Soto explained. "You have to make sure you save lives first and then start cleaning the debris."

On the outskirts of San Juan

Cruz Soto said she and her team have canvassed 37 communities outside of San Juan and 12 municipalities have gone to her directly for help.

"The mayors have come to us and they say 'Mira Yulín, we have no food, no water, no one has gone to see us,'" she said. "What am I supposed to do? Just say, 'Oh, go on your merry way because what I have is for San Juan'? Whatever San Juan gets, we make sure to service our people but we make sure that we have enough to share with other people."

HuffPost visited a community in Canóvanas, approximately 19 miles from San Juan, during which multiple people came up to reporters asking if we were FEMA. While describing the scene to Cruz Soto, she interjected: "What does that tell you? Where is FEMA, right?"

Many officials, [including the Puerto Rican governor](#), have justified FEMA's slow response on the island since Maria hit by pointing to logistical issues, including road damage and port closures.

"That is the most ludicrous, ridiculous, offensive explanation," Cruz Soto said of the explanation. "The most powerful country in the world cannot get supplies to [an island that is] 100 miles by 35 miles wide? They don't want to get the supplies there. That's a different story. How have I been able to get to these towns? I take my trucks, if there's a tree in the way we get it out and move it out of the way, we push on."

The most powerful country in the world cannot get supplies to [an island that is] 100 miles by 35 miles wide?

An absent federal government

When asked why the federal government would not want to get the supplies to these areas, Cruz Soto says she can think of no other explanation for why the response has been so lacking.

"It's unthinkable that they cannot, so it must mean that they do not want to," she said.

Though she does have at least one theory as to why the federal government's response has been so halting on the island.

"It may be easy to try to disregard us," Cruz Soto said. "It may be easy because we're a U.S. territory and a colony of the United States. But we are people dammit and I don't care what the political status is."

Cruz Soto compared the federal response in Puerto Rico to the one [after the 2010 earthquake in Haiti](#), where she says the world saw "how the U.S. did everything they could."

San Juan Mayor Carmen Yulín Cruz outside the Coliseo Roberto Clemente, a stadium that's been functioning as the city's headquarters for supply distribution.

She also said that there are more than 300 people from the U.S. mainland — including organizations like the AFL-CIO, the Teamsters and the UFCW, who are working to bring aid to people — which she described as the "true spirit of the United States."

“But why would you systematically deny food and water and medication to a group of people?” Cruz Soto continued. “It’s close to genocide. And I know it’s a strong word but it is close to genocide.”

Why would you systematically deny food and water and medication to a group of people? It’s close to genocide.

“Rather than dying from a horrendous act of nature, we’re dying from the horrendous inaction of men and women — of one particular man — because I’ve seen the **FEMA** people who are out on the field,” she said. “Their hearts go out. They want to do more.”

In response, Cruz Soto said she’s asked the United Nations to stand by Puerto Rico.

“It is a human rights violation to deny people to access to drinking water,” she said. “And dammit we’re dying. This is not a hyperbole; you saw it. This is not getting better as the days go by.”

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Private security mercenaries are now moving into Puerto Rico (NY Post)

By Larry Celona and Danika Fears

October 16, 2017 | 5:34pm

[NY Post](#)

- **Similar report Oct. 15 on [BoingBoing](#)**

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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Puerto Rico Desperate For Supplies, FEMA Aid (CNN)

[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. Source: CNN

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POWER / INFRASTRUCTURE / COMMUNICATIONS

Refuerzan medidas para energizar a Puerto Rico (Primera Hora)

Bárbara J. Figueroa Rosa

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

[Primera Hora](#)

The Corps of Engineers of the United States Army (USACE) proposes in the next nine days to begin to powering of energy to Palo Seco with a temporary unit, while the Electrical Power Authority (EEE) concentrates on interconnecting other power generators

Como si se tratara de un muñeco inflable al que se le intenta “dar vida” por secciones, el Cuerpo de Ingenieros del Ejército de los Estados Unidos (USACE) se propone en los próximos nueve días comenzar la generación de energía desde la planta de Palo Seco con una unidad temporera, mientras que la Autoridad de Energía Eléctrica (AEE) se concentra en interconectar otras plantas generadoras.

Esta dinámica pretende enlazar la zona del sur, que es la que produce la mayor generación de electricidad, con la del norte, que requiere mayor demanda. Y, si se añade el generador de 50 megavatios que ya está en Puerto Rico, mediante un contrato de la USACE con la empresa Weston Solutions, las autoridades aseguran que podrían dar estabilidad a la zona norte que diariamente sufre apagones que han dejado sin electricidad a zonas críticas como el Centro Médico.

Para ello, el USACE concedió ayer un contrato de \$240 millones para reparar el sistema energético, el segundo de quizás media docena que se propone conceder. Mientras, la AEE se propone a interconectar entre el fin de semana y principios de la semana próxima las primeras líneas de los sistemas del norte y el sur para aumentar, del 13.7% de clientes que ayer tenía el servicio, al 30%.

“Esas líneas son importantes y esas interconexiones son indispensables para levantar el motor económico del país. Las farmacéuticas son una tercera parte del producto nacional bruto de Puerto Rico. Eso es un cluster (grupo) indispensable hacia donde la Autoridad tiene que enfocar sus recursos”, señaló Fernando Padilla, gerente de Proyectos de la AEE.

Ese 30%, dijo, debería incrementar a un 50% para mediados de noviembre. Mientras, para principios de diciembre, la cifra debería llegar al 80% hasta alcanzar el 95%, la meta impuesta por el gobernador Ricardo Rosselló para el 15 de diciembre.

A pesar de que, diariamente, brigadas de la AEE trabajan a través de toda la isla, Padilla reconoció que esa generación de energía adicional impactará, mayormente, a clientes del área metro.

Cuerpo de Ingenieros del Ejército de los Estados Unidos

José Sánchez, director de Operaciones de Campo y Seguridad del Cuerpo de Ingenieros, dijo que la prioridad es energizar hospitales y las plantas de bombeo, filtración y tratamiento de aguas y, luego, conectar las líneas del sur con el norte “para dar más estabilización a la energía del área metropolitana”.

Con ese enfoque coincide Padilla, aunque agregó a la lista de prioridades la conexión de la zona industrial.

Sánchez precisó que se necesita conectar las tres líneas de transmisión más importantes de la AEE. Una de ellas, la de Costa Sur hasta Arecibo, ya fue reparada. Resta la línea de Aguirre hasta Bayamón y la de Costa Sur hacia Manatí, precisó.

La línea de Aguirre hasta Bayamón tiene 13 torres caídas y la de Costa Sur hacia Manatí tiene cuatro torres en el suelo. “Definitivamente, hay una viabilidad en cuanto a poder traer energía al área metropolitana”, expresó.

Ricardo Santos, expresidente de la Unión de Trabajadores de la Industria Eléctrica y Riego (UTIER) afirmó que los trabajos de conexión entre las plantas del norte y el sur están avanzados. Resaltó, sin embargo, que es una medida temporera. “Va a haber todavía debilidad”, sentenció.

¿Palo Seco, sí o no?

En cuanto a la posibilidad de utilizar la sección que no está clausurada de la central de Palo Seco para generación, Sánchez recordó que la AEE determinó cerrarla tras un estudio de la compañía aseguradora.

Sánchez indicó que esos eventos fueron previos al huracán María y el USACE debe reparar todo lo averiado o dañado tras el evento atmosférico. Se concentran en ubicar en Palo Seco el generador que ya trajo a la isla Weston Solutions por \$53.1 millones y que esperan tener conectado antes del 25 de octubre.

Recordó que la central de San Juan está en funciones, pero junto con Palo Seco no es suficiente para la demanda del área norte. “La planta de San Juan está en operación aunque no está energizada completamente y, cada vez que se trata de aumentar un poco la demanda, se cae la planta. Y eso es lo que va a traer esa planta (Palo Seco, con el generador de Weston Solutions), una estabilización a eso en lo que se van trayendo las líneas de transmisión y se energizan”, explicó.

Padilla reafirmó la posición administrativa de la AEE de no energizar Palo Seco, ya que “no es segura” y existe un plan para “sustituir ese voltaje sin incurrir en unos riesgos fundamentales de seguridad”.

Santos opinó de forma contraria. “Deben hacer toda la gestión para meter a servicio las unidades uno y tres de Palo Seco”, indicó y añadió que, a su juicio, es “fundamental” para estabilizar el sistema eléctrico en el área metro.

Respiro temporal

La paciencia de ciudadanos y comerciantes por la falta de electricidad se agota al tiempo en que las alternativas para restaurar el servicio son reducidas, tanto en el plano legal como el operacional.

En el plano legal, buena parte de las decisiones más trascendentales de la AEE –como los proyectos de energía a través de alianzas público privadas– dependerán del curso que tome el ajuste de obligaciones que persigue la Junta de Supervisión Fiscal (JSF) a través del Título III de PROMESA.

El pasado viernes y ante la precaria situación que enfrenta la isla, las aseguradoras Assured Guaranty y National Public Finance Guarantee (NPF) decidieron dejar a un lado el proceso adversativo que incoaron contra la AEE el pasado 7 de agosto.

Assured y National, al igual que Syncora Guaranty, pedían a la corte levantar la suspensión automática de litigios que protege a la AEE a la luz de PROMESA, para que ese foro nombrara un síndico para la corporación pública y se procediera con un alza en la tarifa de electricidad. Ello, porque, según el contrato de bonos de la AEE, cuando la corporación pública no genera suficientes ingresos, viene obligada a subir la factura de la luz para pagar a los bonistas y, a su vez, debe remitir los recaudos que apliquen a las cuentas de reserva para pagar a los bonistas.

“Instamos a la (JSF) y a la AEE a que tomen esta oportunidad para trabajar colaborativamente con los acreedores, como hicimos anteriormente, para producir un plan de reconstrucción abarcador que asegure que se restablezca la electricidad en Puerto Rico lo más pronto posible y que la AEE proceda con un plan de desarrollo de largo plazo que pueda ser trabajado en consenso con todos los interesados”, indicó el principal oficial ejecutivo de Assured, Dominic Frederico.

“Si bien tenemos derechos legales fuertes y creemos que la AEE está requerida a enviar los recaudos comprometidos al fiduciario de la deuda, también creemos que sería inapropiado continuar litigando este asunto mientras la AEE está totalmente inmersa en los esfuerzos para restaurar la electricidad a través de la isla”, indicó por su parte, Bill Fallon, principal oficial ejecutivo de NPF.

El retiro de ambos litigios da cierto respiro a la AEE, pero no significa más ingresos para la utilidad pública.

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Fewer Puerto Ricans Have Power Restored Than A Week Ago (CNN)

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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Puerto Rico hurricane shows islands must have renewable energy (Climate Home News)

As the world resumes climate talks in Bonn next month, island states will use the devastating hurricane season to fuel calls for expanded renewable energy investment

Published on 17/10/2017, 7:25am

By [Thoriq Ibrahim](#)

[Climate Home News](#)

It is an exciting time for renewable energy with the price of solar and wind now outcompeting fossil fuels in many markets around the world and the technology getting better by the day.

But the recent onslaught of hurricanes in the Caribbean, which killed scores and led to an estimated \$40 billion in losses reminds us that, although we have made important progress, we're not acting nearly fast or boldly enough.

The two Category 5 storms that made direct hits across Antigua and Barbuda, Dominica, Cuba, and Puerto Rico left parts of the islands uninhabitable and completely wiped out their electrical grids. Weeks later, power remains scarce.

First and foremost, we urge the international community to do whatever is necessary to provide the lifesaving aid still needed in Puerto Rico and the short-term assistance that will be essential to get life back to normal in the affected areas.

In the longer-term, and what islands will be discussing at a ministerial climate meeting in Fiji this week, is the need to use these storms as an impetus to reimagine power generation in a warming world.

[All the news from COP23: Sign up for our daily newsletter from Bonn](#)

Last week, 14 environment and energy ministers representing small island and low-lying coastal communities from around the world gathered in the Maldives for the inaugural meeting of the Initiative for Renewable Island Energy (IRIE).

Developed in partnership with International Renewable Energy Agency (Irena), IRIE's objective is to enhance political coordination and outreach to development partners with a

view to mobilising the resources – finance, technology, and capacity building – that small islands need to make a rapid transition to renewable energy.

At the core of the UN Paris Agreement are nationally determined contributions (NDCs). Small islands have submitted some of the most ambitious NDCs, and renewable energy is one of the prominent sectors featured in almost all our NDCs.

The recent storms remind us of the many advantages of renewables and one solution in particular stands out: microgrids. These localised electric grids allow communities to keep power even if centralised systems go down. The technology essentially acts as a small-scale power plant – combining solar panels and wind turbines with batteries to keep electricity flowing. Transmission lines can even connect microgrids to the larger grid – in some cases leading to a monthly check for homeowners.

The idea was floated by renewable energy entrepreneur Elon Musk, who described the opportunity renewable technology offers Puerto Rico, which essentially has to now rebuild its entire electric grid from scratch. Puerto Rico governor Ricardo Rosselló is [reportedly](#) in talks with Musk now.

Microgrid technology has been proven on smaller scales than Puerto Rico, but with the necessary financial and political support there is really no limit to its scalability.

Moving to integrated renewable energy sources makes economic sense too. It avoids the high cost of installing transmission lines, which could simply be knocked down next hurricane season. For other islands, such as my own, the Maldives, which spend a disproportionate amount of our budgets on fossil fuels, the technology is an attractive alternative.

But, even as renewable energy becomes cheaper and more reliable, islands still face significant hurdles, especially financing. That is where efforts like IRIE come in. It will streamline support across multiple partnerships to avoid duplication and maximise efficiency. At the same time, it will identify common obstacles and best practices for implementation.

We know making this transition will require sustained support from international partners for years to come. But the beauty of renewables is when implemented with the appropriate technology and capacity building, small islands will be able to cut costs and become energy independent.

Our challenge in Fiji this week and at COP23 next month is to accelerate the political momentum to this end so that islands are better equipped to manage climate change impacts that increasingly seem now impossible to avoid.

Thoriq Ibrahim is the energy and environment minister for the Maldives and chair of the Alliance of Small Island States.

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HEALTH / DEATHS / ENVIRONMENTAL

Floating Hospital Sits Empty Near Puerto Rico (CNN)

[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. Source: CNN

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There's A Hospital Ship Waiting For Sick Puerto Ricans – But No One Knows How To Get On It (CNN)

By Leyla Santiago And Mallory Simon

[CNN](#), October 16, 2017

San Juan, Puerto Rico (CNN) Sammy Rolon is living in a makeshift clinic set up at a school. He has cerebral palsy and epilepsy and is bedridden. He's waiting for surgery that was scheduled before Hurricane Maria smashed into Puerto Rico. Now, he can't even get the oxygen he needs.

There is help available for the 18-year-old – right offshore. A floating state-of-the-art hospital, the USNS Comfort, could provide critical care, his doctor says.

But nobody knows how to get him there. And Sammy is not alone.

Clinics that are overwhelmed with patients and staff say they don't even know how to begin sending cases to the ship. Doctors say there's a rumor that patients have to be admitted to a central hospital before they can be transferred to the Comfort. Only 33 of the 250 beds on the Comfort – 13% – are being used, nearly two weeks after the ship arrived.

The hospital ship was deployed as part of the federal response to the storm and its aftermath that has left 3.4 million Americans facing power and communications outages, water and food shortages and at risk for worsening health conditions.

The USS Comfort is waiting. But Puerto Rico's Department of Health has to decide which patients can get care aboard the ship. And referrals have been minimal.

CNN's Leyla Santiago asked Ricardo Rosselló, governor of Puerto Rico, why so many are in need of help and yet a ship with operating rooms and intensive care units sits nearly empty.

"The disconnect or the apparent disconnect was in the communications flow," Rosselló said.

He acknowledged that the system must get better.

"I asked for a complete revision of that so that we can now start sending more patients over there," Rosselló said.

For doctors and medics in hospitals and makeshift clinics, time is of the essence. It is difficult for them to watch patients suffer, and not be able to provide answers or direction about whether the USNS Comfort is an option.

Dr. Jorge Rosado, who oversees Sammy's care at the clinic and works at the San Jorge Children's Hospital, says the young man is a prime example.

"He can become acutely ill if he continues to be (at the school)," he said. "It's very frustrating. I know they have the capacity; they have the medical staff; they have the supplies. ... To hear there's only 33 patients in such a big mobile hospital – it's tough."

Capt. Kevin Robinson, the Comfort's mission commander, says help is waiting.

"I know that we have capacity. 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," he said. "Every time that we've been tasked by (Puerto Rico's) medical operation center to respond or bring a patient on, we have responded."

For Sammy's father, Jose Cruz, the waiting for a plan is heartbreaking.

"I feel horrible," he says. "Because I can't help him."

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[The U.S. hospital ship Comfort is anchored off Puerto Rico, mostly empty \(The Week\)](#)

6:07 a.m. ET Oct. 17, 2017

[The Week](#)

The USNS Comfort, a floating state-of-the-art hospital, is anchored off the coast of hurricane-ravaged Puerto Rico, with 250 hospital beds for patients in the U.S. territory unable to be served by overcrowded hospitals and clinics lacking supplies and reliable electricity. Only 33 of those beds, or 13 percent, are filled, [CNN reports](#), two weeks after the Comfort's arrival. The problem, Gov. Ricardo Rosselló told CNN, is "the communication flow" between clinics, doctors, and Puerto Rico's Department of Health. "I asked for a complete revision of that so that we can now start sending more patients over there," he said.

"I know that we have capacity," Capt. Kevin Robinson, the Comfort's mission commander, [tells CNN](#). "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."

Almost a month after Hurricane Maria crawled across Puerto Rico, [86 percent of the island has no electricity](#), 28 percent have no drinking water, most cell towers and antennas are down, and the [official death toll stands at 48](#). President Trump's approval rating on hurricane response has dropped 20 points from mid-September, [according to a CNN poll](#) conducted Oct. 12-15, to 44 percent from 64 percent after Hurricanes Irma and Harvey. A 47 percent plurality now disapprove of Trump's hurricane response, the poll found, and his hurricane approval number among Hispanics is 22 percent. The national poll of 1,010 adults has a margin of sampling error of ± 3.5 points. [Peter Weber](#)
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Dialysis Nurses Volunteer for Puerto Rico Relief Effort (Renal and Urology News)

Oct. 16, 2017

By Jody Charnow, Editor

[Renal and Urology News](#)

Weeks after Hurricane Maria ravaged the island, Fresenius Kidney Care is flying dialysis nurses to relieve staff and help patients at the company's 27 operational dialysis centers.

In the aftermath of Hurricane Maria, which left Puerto Rico in ruins, nearly 100 Fresenius Kidney Care dialysis nurses have volunteered to relieve staff and help care for patients at 27 of the 28 dialysis centers that the company operates on the island of 3.4 million American citizens. Fresenius Kidney Care is scheduled to transport the first 12 nurses to Puerto Rico by passenger plane on October 22.

Much of Puerto Rico is still without electricity and fresh water remains scarce after the hurricane made shambles of the island 3 weeks ago. Nineteen of the 27 operational centers are relying on diesel generators for electricity, and eight centers have municipal electricity available, said Bob Loeper, Head of the [Disaster Response](#) Team at Fresenius Medical Care North America (FMCNA). One center was completely destroyed by the hurricane.

The centers are staffed by more than 1000 employees and provide dialysis care to approximately 4000 patients.

A major problem in Puerto Rico is a shortage of gas and diesel fuel. FMCNA rented gas trucks and purchased pods and placed them around that island at six strategic locations so staff could get gas to go back and forth to work, Loeper related. "If we don't take care of our staff, then we can't take care of our patients," he said.

According to Federal Emergency Management Agency, power will not be restored to the entire island for about six months.

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BUSINESS

Hacienda asegura que muchos negocios pequeños desaparecerán (Metro PR)

Miladys Soto

lunes 16, octubre 2017 19:10

[Metro PR](#)

Department of Finance says many small businesses will disappear and that the big chains will survive after the impact of Hurricane Maria

El secretario del Departamento de Hacienda, Raúl Maldonado, opinó que las cadenas grandes sobrevivirán la emergencia causada por el huracán María, pero que al contrario, muchos negocios pequeños podrían desaparecer.

Las expresiones del funcionario se dieron durante un taller a más de 300 empleados públicos para aprender a llenar la solicitud de **FEMA** y, además de llenar la propia ayudar a otros ciudadanos a llenar la suya en unos recorridos que realizarán en diversos municipios del país.

Maldonado expuso que junto con Unidos por Puerto Rico buscan entregar 1,000 plantas a pequeños comerciantes que se han visto afectados por el huracán María. "Bajo Unidos por Puerto Rico que es una iniciativa de la Primera Dama que está potenciada por non profit privado se ha evaluado que el sector del pequeño comerciante es el que más se ha afectado, qué más difícil de le ha a ser levantarse", expuso.

Según el titular de Hacienda, a través de Unidos por Puerto Rico se les ha dado dinero a los dueños de PYMES, entre otras ayudas.

Capacitan a empleados para llenar la solicitud de FEMA

Diversos funcionarios de Gobierno recibieron una orientación con el propósito de conocer cómo llenar la solicitud de ayuda de **FEMA**.

Maldonado agregó que ya han entrenado a más de 1,000 empleados con el objetivo de que sigan ayudando a otras personas a llenar las formas.

Buscan alternativas para recaudos tras emergencia

"Estamos mirando diversas alternativas, levantar un sales tax en este momento va a tomar tiempo, porque todo el mundo necesita un punto de venta con electricidad, con Internet y que el comerciante trabaje normalmente con su contabilidad. Donde podemos cobrar temporalmente en un momento de crisis es en los puertos, porque se puede hacer hasta manual", comentó Maldonado.

Este compartió que otra alternativa es reducirle el costo de cumplimiento al empresario. "Sabemos que los costos se han disparado por la crisis. La estructura del sales tax implicaba un costo alto para los comerciantes, tenían que tener un contable para hacer planillas mensuales lo del IVU, lo de los créditos y queremos buscar una alternativa donde el periodo de transición sea más reducido", dijo.

Finalmente, Maldonado destacó que la pérdida de recaudos desde el huracán asciende a \$1,000 millones.

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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)

October 16, 2017

[El Nuevo Herald \(FL\)](#),

In the midst of a lack of electricity in Puerto Rico, cash, fans and washboards become necessary (Same article appeared in a previous Media Analysis in English)

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 período 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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SURVIVOR' STORIES

Team evacuates 103-year-old woman from Puerto Rico (WESH)

Updated: 11:09 PM EDT Oct 16, 2017

By [Robert Lowe Reporter](#)

[WESH NBC Orlando](#)

ORLANDO, Fla. — Safe in the Sunshine State: A 103-year-old woman survived weeks with no power and no running water in Puerto Rico.

The woman, Angela Parrilla, is now reunited with family in Orlando.

It was no easy task to bring her to Florida.

Arriving in Florida from Puerto Rico, Parrilla is finally safe.

Because she was 103 years old, her family knew time was running out to rescue her and her special needs granddaughter from the hurricane-ravaged island.

The two lived in a remote part of Puerto Rico. Their chances for survival were slim.

For nearly four weeks, Parrilla faced scorching temperatures and a dwindling supply of food, water and medication.

"Food items got spoiled the following the day because there was no electricity. All the food was gone. She couldn't bear being (in the) dark at 6 p.m. and having no water," Parrilla's interpreter said.

Her family credits a local medical organization for helping to save Parrilla's life.

A nurse brought some necessary supplies, but Parrilla said every day was a struggle as she suffered from a serious blood disorder, a heart condition and is nearly blind. But her dire situation never impaired her will to live.

"You must believe in God in situations like this," Parrilla said.

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How One Small Town In Puerto Rico Found Food And Community After Maria (Buzzfeed)

I visited the village of Mariana, where two friends have brought the community together to cook for and support each other in the wake of the hurricane.

Posted on October 16, 2017, at 5:06 p.m.

Molly Crabapple

BuzzFeed Contributor

[BuzzFeed News](#)

[Note: BuzzFeed News is rated by MediaBiasFactCheck.com as "Factual Reporting: MIXED"]

When Hurricane Maria crashed into Puerto Rico on September 20, I knew I would have to go back. I had not been to Puerto Rico since I was eight. My recollections of the island were the scattered sense memories of childhood — my sweat on the clear vinyl slipcovers that protected the couches in my grandparents' house in Bayamón, uncomprehended Spanish cartoons, the competitive clack of dominoes, the stringy texture of sugarcane that my abuelo cut for me from the field behind his house, a panoply of cousins whose faces I barely recall.

Otherwise, until a few years ago, I lived both mentally and physically far from the island. My Spanish was poor. I did not “seem” Puerto Rican, non-Puerto Ricans liked to remind me, though they never defined what that meant. I believed them anyway, until I stopped “seeming” Puerto Rican even to myself. Then Maria hit me with a force I could never have imagined. Obsessively, I watched the images of desperate people drinking from springs and wading through floodwater while the San Juan mayor, Carmen Yulín Cruz, said through tears that the country she knew was no longer, until I bought a round trip plane ticket to San Juan for 10 times the pre-Maria price, loaded two suitcases with D batteries and water filters, and boarded a plane entirely filled with Puerto Ricans — each as weighed down as I was — who were returning to their country.

By October 2, the day I arrived in Puerto Rico, San Juan had stabilized into a new abnormal. The streets were pitch black, almost no one had power or water, endless lines formed for necessities, and in hospitals, generators were low on diesel and oxygen was running out — but cellphones worked there, kind of. Governor Ricardo Rosselló had lifted the liquor ban he imposed after Maria. A few restaurants had started to open in Santurce and the wealthy neighborhood of Condado, and customers were bringing power strips to charge vast retinues of devices. Rosselló also pushed the 6 p.m. curfew back to 9 p.m. This did not help the small bars and restaurants that had already, I heard, gone bankrupt in the previous 12 days.

Everyone knew the real crisis was going down in the countryside, but the knowledge of its magnitude was blunted by lack of communication. Phones, let alone internet, didn't work outside of the vicinity of San Juan, and 14-hour lines at gas stations helped keep people in place. The news trickling out was bad. I heard stories about elderly people thrown out of nursing homes after the power went off, patients dying in ER wards when the generators ran out of fuel, people crowded in hurricane shelters with no toilets. Eighty percent of the island's crops vanished. The mighty El Yunque rainforest now seemed made of matchsticks. Homes had flooded or turned to tinder and their zinc rooftops blew off. No power, no water, no **FEMA**, no government above the municipal level, little to no outside help.

I met up with Christine Nieves at a coffee shop in Santurce, where she was checking the internet with her boyfriend, the musician and activist Luis Rodríguez Sanchez. Christine and I had first met two years before at a creative conference and kept in touch. A 29-year-old native of Ponce, in Puerto Rico's south, Christine moved back to the island a year ago from Tallahassee, determined to help build her country.

After falling in love with Luis, she moved to his hometown, a small mountain town called Mariana, in the municipality of Humacao. On Facebook, she posted photos of the valley outside her balcony. Jungle, sky, technicolor flowers.

Christine spent the hurricane in the tiny bathroom beneath the staircase, with Luis, his cousin Omar, two dogs, and a cat. The power died. The windows shattered and the walls screamed. The exterior doors snapped open under pressure, filling the house with rain. Luis played his guitar. Omar played his drums.

When they finally stepped out, they saw that their beautiful valley was now naked. They had neither electricity nor water nor cellphone signal. Their ground floor was flooded with glass-laced water, their fruit trees had toppled, and their reservoir tank had drained, but, except for broken windows, their house was basically intact. On the blasted tree in their courtyard, they raised a Puerto Rican flag.

After a week of cleaning out their flooded home, FEMA had not come, potable water was running out, and what food remained was rotting in people's refrigerators; one of their elderly friends had confessed to eating spoiled ham. Christine and Luis came up with an idea.

Some of the couple's friends were involved in comedores sociales, or social kitchens — soup kitchens in which those who ate generally also helped, and which were organized in the spirit of solidarity and mutual aid rather than charity. A comedor social had already sprung up in Caguas, a city not far from San Juan, where it was feeding hundreds of people every day. Christine and Luis decided to learn from their model and apply it to Mariana.

“Before the storm, I knew political work should be done through food,” Christine told me, “but I had never taken the responsibility for talking to people and organizing. After the hurricane, the devastation was so great we needed to start.”

After I met up with Christine and Luis in San Juan, we drove 45 minutes to Caguas, where we visited El Centro de Apoyo Mutuo, which may be the prettiest soup kitchen on earth. In front of a squat building, whose signage was painted the same bright tones as the candy-colored streets, perhaps a hundred people queued beneath shade tents. A guitarist sang for them, and an old man danced along with him. Organizers had even laid out coloring books for kids.

Inside, the kitchen was a hive of activity. Two young men staffed a table soliciting donations, while working-class older folks stood alongside tatted-up punk girls and spooned delicious arroz con gandules. Diners ate at long tables, washing the food down with lemonade. While they ate, many women cooled themselves with Spanish fans. In the stupefying heat, there was neither electricity nor running water, but there was beauty and community.

In the back sat piles of donated food, all given by locals. Neither government nor NGOs provided for El Centro. This was not charity, given by the high to the low, but mutual aid, provided by the same people it was meant to serve.

El Centro was organized by seasoned activists: veterans of student strikes, workers' strikes, and protests against the US bombing of Vieques, and the décor and clothes showed the usual symbols of Puerto Rican nationalism — the black and white flag that indicates opposition to US-government-imposed austerity, and the cardboard cutout of independence fighter Oscar López Rivera (himself a volunteer at the kitchen). As Christine and Luis took notes, I spoke to Kigne Cubero Garcia, one of El Centro's organizers. “My philosophy is to work with the people to give them the tools and experiences of self-organization,” he told me. “Instead of taking power from the top, from institutions, we prefer to make changes from the bottom.”

As we drove the 23 miles from Caguas to Humacao, the cellphone signal dropped. Humacao was the first municipality Maria hit. The storm's eye fell over the beachfront town of Punta Santiago, sending the sea flooding till it met the river, destroying cars, homes, roads, and possessions in a torrent of sewage and salt. We passed downed trees and telephone poles and destroyed houses, but

the roads were clear, thanks to barrio residents and crews of workers hired by Puerto Rican companies.

Puerto Rico's economy (itself malformed by over a century of colonialism) has spent the last several years battered by a debt crisis and US-government-imposed austerity. With unemployment high, one-third of Puerto Ricans receive EBT (the card version of food stamps), but, without power or internet, stores could not process their cards. Credit cards didn't work, either. Communication was one-way, doled out by the single functioning radio channel, on which pharmaceutical companies made announcements to tell their employees whether they should show up for work. Those employed by smaller companies were often out of luck. Lines at ATMs stretched for hours, but with so many workplaces closed, and workers unable to get to those that were still open because they lacked gas, the savings of already cash-strapped people began to dwindle. In Humacao, friends and family kept each other alive.

Outside the car window, people waited in endless lines before ATMs, grocery stores, gas stations, and drug stores, and behind them lay an infinity of naked trees. The car wound up the roads until at last we reached Barrio Mariana.

A village of 3,300 clinging to hills of the Cordillera Central, Mariana is best known for its annual breadfruit festival. It is a poor town, and elderly, whose residents largely work in Humacao's pharmaceutical factories, or collect social security. Some supplement their income by brewing cañita (illegal moonshine). Mariana's homes were battered concrete boxes, surrounded by downed trees and curling ruined power lines. Many flew the Puerto Rican flag. Someone — an elderly woman, I later learned — scrawled "SOS Agua Comida Mariana" on the pavement.

The municipal government did not visit Mariana until September 30, 10 days after Maria. A truck pulled up at the bottom of the hill, and when people spent their scarce gas to drive down to it, they were handed two small bottles of water, a tin of Virginia sausages, a Nutri-Grain bar, and a pack of tropical Skittles. More aid, in the form of MREs and water delivered by the military and the FBI, would not arrive again until October 8.

Luis was born in Mariana. His grandfather cut sugarcane and brewed cañita, using the money to buy a plot of land that he divided between his 12 children. Luis moved away for university, but returned 20 years later, and now lives on that same plot, across a hill from his aunt, in a house owned by his father, who designed its airy expanse of skylights, balconies, and tea green walls. Luis's father was an intellectual and activist — he founded a community organization that was the predecessor to the 30-year-old Communal Recreational and Educational Association of Mariana (ARECMA), organizers of the famous breadfruit festival. Luis and Christine knew ARECMA would be an essential partner in setting up a comedor social.

We stopped in the backyard of one of ARECMA's founding members, Ruli Laboy Abreu, to discuss their plans for a kitchen. Ruli was a broadly built man in his fifties, a devoted communist who had spent countless unpaid hours building La Loma, ARECMA's community center, and cooking feasts for the breadfruit festival. His face conveyed strength and vitality, but he moved with difficulty; even before the hurricane, his bad knee had needed surgery, and now, with all the extra physical work, he could barely walk. He helped clear hurricane debris anyway. "Ruli's the type of person who will keep working even if he doesn't have limbs to do it," Christine told me later.

"Camaradas," Ruli called us, his smile generous. His sweat-soaked T-shirt bore an image of Oscar López Rivera. He led us to a garage where he was fixing up some cars. From a crowded corner he produced a huge bunch of plantains, then severed several neatly with his machete and offered them to us. Ruli enthusiastically agreed to Luis and Christine's idea for the kitchen. "Que la patria te bendiga," he told us as we departed: May the nation bless you.

In the first days after Maria, people in Mariana cooked all the food in their refrigerators to prevent it from rotting — great feasts of perrito shared with the neighbors, garnished with fallen avocados and washed down with coconut water from the palm trees that Maria had downed. As this

food ran out, people shared their canned goods and whatever they could find at the nearly bare grocery stores, checking on relatives to see that they were fed. Those with underground cisterns shared their water with their neighbors. Water also came from communal taps, or from a spring that gushed from the mountain — though with rotting animal corpses leaking into the water supply, these sources became increasingly dangerous. To bathe and flush the toilet, we collected rain. Those lucky enough to have generators waited for hours to buy diesel.

These conditions hit the elderly hardest. In Humacao, I met Ivette Vazquez, whose 81-year-old mother had been kicked out of her nursing home after the building lost power, and she could no longer obtain her medicine. Ivette's mother suffered from dementia and Alzheimer's. She was a skeletal, silent figure who could barely eat the soup Ivette spooned into her mouth. "This is an urgent situation," Ivette told me, her voice tight with exhaustion. "What are they waiting for?"

Days now revolved around the maintenance of life. Wake up with the sunrise, the insect bites, the stultifying heat. Fetch and purify buckets of water. Make coffee, if you have coffee, on a sterno. Wash clothing in a bucket, shower in a bucket, scrub dishes in a bucket. Clean out your hurricane-wrecked house. Clear the downed trees with a machete. Cook on a fire. Sleep at nine, because there is no light. Don't get sick — the hospitals are hazardous because there are too many bodies rotting in the morgue. Don't tell yourself it will get better anytime soon.

Against these difficulties, Luis and Christine began to carry out their plans for a comedor social. They didn't just want to feed people, but to build a space that would kindle their senses of self-sufficiency, community, and pride. Several times each day, they climbed the hill to La Loma, ARECMA's outdoor community center. Maria had smashed La Loma's stage and playground, but spared the kitchen and water tank, as well as a massive mosaic with the words: "All Glory to the Hands that Work." The ground was a chaos of felled trees. Small boys gathered and cleared the branches.

Because of ARECMA's decades of work, Mariana has a strong tradition of self-organization, and with the help of Ruli, ARECMA's board president Rosalina Abreu González, and others, resources began to appear. Someone had a truck and could get a tank of water. Someone else knew how to cook food for large groups. Others had paint and would make signs requesting donations and volunteer work, and explaining that the kitchen was made by and for the people of Mariana. Tech Lady Mafia, a feminist group for women in the US tech industry, sent Christine money, and other donations came in. Every few days, Christine and Luis drove down to Caguas, where there was cell service, and parked on the side of the road, sweltering in the sun, so that they could respond to potential helpers and Christine could post Facebook Live videos describing life in the village.

This human help contrasted with governmental neglect. Rosalina told us she had driven down to Humacao, the nearest large town, to ask a FEMA representative for water, but was told that they could not get her anything until they had approval from San Juan, which could not come until early next week. Meanwhile, shipping containers full of aid — including private donations from the Puerto Rican diaspora — sat untouched in the ports and warehouses of San Juan. The day after Trump made his only visit to the island, Rosalina arrived at La Loma furious. "He wants to humiliate us," she said. "He went to one of the richest towns in Puerto Rico and threw toilet paper rolls at people's heads."

Over the last two weeks, Trump had called Puerto Ricans many things. They are "ingrates," who "want everything done for them" — Latino and thus lazy colonial charges, pleading for the strong men of the US to keep them alive. He shamed them for a financial crisis "largely of their own making," and threatened to pull FEMA, the military, and, bizarrely, "First Responders" from the island. Trump evoked a stereotype born in 1898, when the United States first took control of the island from the Spanish — and one that has reinforced the US government's refusal to grant Puerto Ricans citizenship until 1917, or to let them elect their own Puerto Rican governor until 1947. For nearly 120 years, eminent US politicians and public figures have argued that Puerto Ricans are deficient children, too Spanish, brown, and feckless to be granted either independence or statehood.

It doesn't matter that the men, women, and children of Mariana cleared their own roads with machetes. A Puerto Rican is lazy because they are Puerto Rican.

That day, two women in a car stopped Luis as we walked down from La Loma.

"Are you from FEMA?" one asked.

"FEMA isn't coming," he answered.

A date was set. Mariana's comedor social would open in four days, on Monday, October 9, with the goal of giving out about 200 meals. They would cook in La Loma's kitchen, though it lacked running water. Rosalina had wrangled some water from the municipality to give out to drink. Luis would get a sound system from his music contacts in San Juan and use it to announce the kitchen. We drove down to Humacao, where an artist friend pulled a plastic table out to her lawn and we ate turkey legs and sweet amarillos by candlelight, a neighbor came by with a sack of lukewarm beer, and a Spanish version of Leonard Cohen's "Hallelujah" played on the car radio.

The next day, we learned that the water at La Loma was gone.

Perhaps someone had stolen it, but logistically, it was far more likely it had been allowed to drain out of the tank, in a self-destructive gesture by desperate people angered that La Loma had water and they did not. "This just shows we need to have better communication with the community," Luis said to Christine on the long drive down to San Juan to get supplies. "This mindset is an extension of colonialism, of scarcity, of the way the system is rigged against you," she answered, sadly. It was the day of Mike Pence's visit, and traffic snarled, with police blocking off entire neighborhoods. The internet signal snapped on, and they fell upon their phones, lines to their people, scattered around the globe, who would help when the government would not.

Like many activists, Luis and Christine saw in Maria the potential for change. "Hurricane Maria is an opportunity to see the power is in ourselves and not America," Christine told me. "This is a great educational experience for us, to prove to ourselves we're actually capable of rebuilding. That's in complete dichotomy of generations on generations believing we needed another country to survive."

On October 9, Proyecto de Apoyo Mutuo Mariana opened without a hitch. Former cafeteria workers helped cook the food. Friends drove in from San Juan with pickup trucks full of rice and beans and water. 145 people ate delicious meals, while Luis, Christine, and the other organizers collected their information and told them that this food did not come from the government, from FEMA, or from the United States. It came from the community itself. They plan to continue providing daily meals as long as they are needed.

"I keep going back to the stories we Puerto Ricans tell about ourselves," Christine told me one night during my visit, as we sat on the porch of her house, listening to the coquíes sing in the vast and star-filled night. "They are very powerful but very dangerous. They can build us up or tear us down."

"For a long time, we told ourselves we were lazy, because that's the story we've been told," she said. "That we're not capable of building or managing the country. If you tell yourself that, you'll start like it acting it is true. This moment when, literally, the lights go off, is a great opportunity for us to ask ourselves what stories we are telling ourselves, and what stories we want to tell." ●

Molly Crabapple is an artist, journalist, and author of Drawing Blood: A Memoir. Her next book, a collaboration with Syrian war journalist Marwan Hisham, will be published by One World Random House in Spring 2018.

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EMIGRATION

Thousands Are Fleeing Puerto Rico. Some Don't Know If They'll Ever Return (Huffington Post)

“It was not my plan to come to the mainland, it was never in my options,” says one who has relocated to Miami after Hurricane Maria.

By Sarah Ruiz-Grossman

Oct. 16, 2017

[Huffington Post](#)

Deborah Drahus Capo knew she'd have to leave Puerto Rico the moment she emerged from the bathroom where she had holed up throughout Hurricane Maria last month.

For eight hours straight, the San Juan-based attorney had listened to the wind “howling like a monster,” waiting for the windows in her apartment to break. When the storm subsided, the streets in her neighborhood were blocked with debris and the supermarkets were empty. Her daughter's house nearby had been flooded. There was no electricity or running water.

Ten days after the storm devastated the island, Drahus Capo boarded a flight to Florida with her daughter and granddaughter in tow. For now, they're staying at a friend's home in Miami.

“It's like they pulled the rug out from under me: I had my life, my clients, and all of a sudden I'm on plane to Miami,” she told HuffPost last week. “What do I plan on doing? I don't know.”

Since Hurricane Maria hit Puerto Rico almost one month ago, thousands of residents have left the U.S. territory. Many are like Drahus Capo — not knowing when, or if, they'll return.

The storm, which killed at least 48 people, has cut power for most of the 3.4 million residents of the island and deprived more than a quarter of residents of access to clean drinking water. Most of the recovery seen on the island so far has been concentrated around the capital of San Juan. Entire areas inland remain inaccessible, many supermarkets still don't carry fresh produce or meat, and many hospitals and clinics are without electricity, leading them to depend on unreliable generators to provide care to the most vulnerable patients.

It's hard to know the exact number of Puerto Ricans who have fled the island, or how many of those will eventually return, said Edwin Meléndez, economist and director of the Center for Puerto Rican Studies at Hunter College in New York.

Puerto Rican news outlet El Nuevo Día estimates tens of thousands of residents have left, and The New York Times reported Florida alone has braced for as many as 100,000 arrivals.

Meléndez and his colleagues, who have analyzed previous migration numbers for Puerto Rico, as well as evacuation patterns from New Orleans after 2005's Hurricane Katrina, estimate that between 114,000 and 213,000 Puerto Ricans will eventually depart.

Being able to leave and find a place to live elsewhere takes resources, and connections. Flights were difficult to come by after the hurricane, as hundreds of people were stranded at the island's largest airport in San Juan, which was damaged and closed for days.

“Nobody decides to leave everything just because, and hop on a plane with a load of clothes and whatever else you can fit in a bag,” Drahus Capo said. “I have privilege: I have friends [in the mainland], I have savings in place. But that's not the case for a lot of people.”

A neighborhood in Canovanas, Puerto Rico, damaged by Hurricane Maria.

Before the hurricane, Drahus Capo had never considered moving away from her native San Juan — but that is now a possibility for her and her family.

“It was not my plan to come to the mainland, it was never in my options,” she said. Her move was a minute-to-minute decision, but one that might turn out to be a lifelong one.

Drahus Capo's granddaughter now hopes to enroll in school in Florida, and the attorney may take the bar exam in February, so she can continue practicing law.

Once steps like new jobs and children's schooling are put into motion, it can be hard to move back, especially to an island that will certainly still be in recovery mode for a long time to come.

"What do I plan on doing? I don't know," Drahus Capo said. "But I can't sit here and do nothing, and in Puerto Rico there's not much you can do — the uncertainty is very bad."

For those who have left, the question becomes when living conditions on the island have returned close enough to normal for them to return — or whether it will even make sense for them to do so, if they've started to build a new life on the mainland.

In some parts of the island, the recovery has barely begun.

"Our people are dying," Dennis Flores, a human resources administrator based in New York, told HuffPost in tears over the phone. Flores has been in Jagueyes, a small town in the island's central region, for the past few days checking on his mom, aunts and cousins.

"They are proud people, this is where they're from, they're never going to leave," he said. "This is all they know. They want to rebuild. All I see is people working hard where government is failing them."

Flores said that as of Monday, the **Federal Emergency Management Agency** still hasn't yet reached the town, one of many areas far from San Juan that government officials weren't able to communicate with for days after the hurricane. Flores said there remains no running water in his family's community, and when people go to the supermarket there is little food available. They often are able to only purchase one gallon of water and perhaps a small amount of gasoline for a generator. The house he had been building for his mother was also destroyed in the storm, he said.

The family's struggles are unlikely to disappear anytime soon.

Is the U.S. going to abandon its citizens of Puerto Rico in a time of great need? Por favor! Edwin Meléndez

The U.S. House approved \$36.5 billion in emergency relief for Puerto Rico and other areas hit by recent disasters last Thursday. But Puerto Rican Gov. Ricardo Rosselló estimated there is \$95 billion worth of damage on the island.

Puerto Rican officials have pleaded with the government for more help, and San Juan Mayor Carmen Yulín Cruz has harshly criticized the Trump administration for its slow response.

"Damn it, we are dying," Mayor Yulín Cruz said in a recent video interview with HuffPost. "This is not getting better as days go by."

Meanwhile, President Donald Trump — who last month referred to the San Juan Mayor as "nasty" after she called out the government's slow response — recently threatened to pull out **FEMA** aid.

Yanira Rios collects spring water for use in her house last week in Utuado, Puerto Rico. Most of the municipality has been without running water or electricity since Hurricane Maria hit the island on Sept. 20.

Puerto Rico's exodus comes after the island has already seen its population drop by about 400,000 over the past decade because of a crippling economic recession. With the island more than \$70 billion in debt and with an unemployment rate hovering around 10 percent in the last year — more than twice the national rate — many had been fleeing to the mainland for better job opportunities before the hurricane.

The new departures will further hinder the recovery efforts.

"As an economist, my assessment is this economy is in the tank right now," Meléndez told HuffPost. "How many people want to vacation and see devastation? The tourism season is lost, this winter is lost, [employers] won't call people to work. It's going to be a while before you get some normalcy."

Stranded tourists and Puerto Ricans line up at the International Airport in San Juan on Sept. 25 as they try to leave after Hurricane Maria devastated power and communications across the island.

Some residents believe that precisely because of the myriad challenges, and the government's failure to address them adequately in the past, it is important to stay and help the island rebuild.

Dayani Centeno Torres, a communications professional and native Puerto Rican, has been working with local nonprofits in the town of Humacao, which was hit hard by the storm.

She said she doesn't judge anyone who wants to move — the current conditions are tough for vulnerable groups like senior citizens and small children. But Centeno Torres and her husband, an attorney, want to help make sure the island rebuilds with a more sustainable, cooperative future in mind.

"There's a lot of injustice, a lot of poor people — a lot of things that were not caused by the hurricanes, but by a system that didn't work," she told HuffPost. "It shouldn't be rebuilt in the same way."

Community members with nonprofit P.E.C.E.S. in Humacao, Puerto Rico, help provide aid after the hurricane — and look toward building a more sustainable future

"Puerto Ricans are not waiting for others to come fix this — they're stepping up every day, going outside their doors with saws, cutting trees out of the roads," said Ward Osborne, a Louisiana-born consultant who has been living in Puerto Rico with his ex-wife and two children for the past five years.

Osborne and his family left the island in the first days after the storm, but plan to return around January, once he can rely on computer service to work.

"Puerto Rico is very community-oriented, and our neighborhood is doing the best we can to rebuild," Ward told HuffPost, calling from Lake Texoma, Texas, where he and his kids have relocated to his parents' house in the interim. "Every person I know in Puerto Rico is working every day, all day to make it better."

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CHARITY / HUMAN INTEREST / VOLUNTEER EFFORTS

Sending Relief by Air and Sea to Puerto Rico From the Bronx (NY Times)

By [RICK ROJAS](#)

OCT. 16, 2017

[New York Times](#)

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. Albers, 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. Albers 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. Albers 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. Albers 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. Albers 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. Albers'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.

"Things that are needed, we're sending," said Raul Russi, the chief executive of Acacia. "We're just going to try it our way and see if we can get it done."

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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How 800+ College Students Are Coming Together To Help Rebuild Puerto Rico (Forbes)

Guest post written by Katie Sanders

Oct. 16, 2017

[Forbes](#)

For Boston College student Alberto Medina, who is from Mayaguez, Puerto Rico, it has been a hellish five weeks. He is among thousands of Puerto Rico natives who were studying at campuses across the United States when Hurricane Maria ripped through the island on September 20.

It took him five days to get in touch with his family back home. "I was calling every phone number I could think of, even trying a hotline and listening in for hours to see if they would say my family's name," Medina says. "There was one person who had a working Internet connection and used the walkie talkie app Zello to communicate updates. People were asking, 'Do you know Maria from this area?' or 'Have you spoken to this person?'"

Students across the country are banding together to help Puerto Rico relief efforts.

Upon finding out his loved ones were okay, Medina's focus shifted to supporting the relief efforts, which have been stymied by water, food, and fuel shortages, combined with the near total loss of power for Puerto Rico's 3.5 million residents. Some experts estimate that there will be no water or electricity for four to six months and that it will take up to three years to rebuild the island.

Medina joined "[Students With Puerto Rico](#)," a group mobilizing students across the mainland United States to raise awareness and funds for Puerto Rico. Within the first month, Students With Puerto Rico's [GoFundMe campaign](#) has raised more than \$200,000 (with \$113,000 coming in the first week alone).

It all started the night after Hurricane Maria made landfall in Puerto Rico; a group of University of Pennsylvania students connected by phone with 2016 graduate Sebastián E. Negrón Reichard, a San-Juan-based financial analyst. Led by Penn undergraduate Jose Diego Toro, along with Andrea Barreras and Gustavo Hachenburg, the group made a plan to mobilize fellow Puerto Ricans studying in the mainland U.S. and "use university communities as a platform to create awareness of the disaster," says Negrón-Reichard.

Next, they looped in Puerto Rican students from other campuses – starting with Beatriz Martínez-Godás Fordham University and American University's Raquel Lucca – and grew the ranks from there. Five universities ballooned to 115, and they have used a Facebook group with upwards of 800 members to spread key messages and calls. Each of the 115 schools has a student leader reporting to the central organizing team.

While most of the thousands of donations have been for around the cost of a restaurant meal, the campaign got a major boost when Jimmy Fallon kicked in \$20,000.

The money is headed straight to [Unidos Por Puerto Rico](#), a public-private initiative started by the office of Puerto Rican First Lady Beatriz Isabel Roselló and a group of companies to help the victims of the storm.

This all started with a goal of raising a conservative \$10,000, says Negrón-Reichard. After the initial flood of support, they raised their goal to \$50,000, and then to \$150,000. Negrón-Reichard also appeared on [CNN](#) talking about the relief efforts after he met anchor Wolf Blitzer on a plane.

"It's really hard," says Medina, who has been working with fellow Boston College students to organize local fundraisers driving additional donations. "I have a ticket home for Thanksgiving but don't know if I'll be able to go because of the water and electricity situation. You want to be there and help. It's tough to focus on school when you've seen the images and you know what's happening."

To continue making a difference, Students With Puerto Rico is now in search of organizations willing to match the funds it has raised and focused on ensuring the money goes to those most in need.

For Negrón-Reichard, this is about more than the hurricane recovery efforts alone. "The momentum we have created is a wonderful way of spreading awareness of what Puerto Rico is and why and how to help the island in the long run."

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Mapathon seeks to direct humanitarian aid for Puerto Rico (MIT News)

October 16, 2017

[MIT News](#)

Hurricane Maria caused catastrophic damage across Puerto Rico when it made landfall on Sept. 20. As the second hurricane to hit the island in a two-week period, the powerful storm devastated the territory's already-strained infrastructure and left behind a humanitarian crisis affecting the entire island.

The lack of power and water across the majority of Puerto Rico has been widely reported. A group of volunteers from across the Boston area recently gathered at MIT to address another shortage that is complicating relief efforts: accurate maps.

Galvanized by news coverage of an effort at Columbia University, 45 volunteers recently gathered in MIT's Dewey Library for a "mapathon." Drawn from MIT, Harvard University, Maptime Boston, and the wider Boston/Cambridge community, the diverse group shared a common goal: to contribute skills in geographic information systems (GIS) to help develop a [thorough map of the island's structures](#).

Assessing the damage to critical infrastructure is a complicated challenge because many of the locations most impacted by Hurricane Maria are absent from maps, according to Lily Bui, a doctoral student in the Department of Urban Studies and Planning, and one of the event's co-organizers. This lack of accurate data about the built environment of the area translates into slower and less effective aid reaching those who need it the most.

As a result, the American Red Cross in Puerto Rico urgently requested maps of pre-disaster buildings to provide a better operating picture of island. Having a map with structures, classification of structures, and density of buildings, enables aid workers to make decisions about where to concentrate the delivery of relief and aid efforts on the ground, says Bui, who was joined as a co-host by fellow graduate student Chaewon Ahn, GIS instructor Eric Huntley, and Daniel Sheehan, a senior GIS specialist in the MIT Libraries.

Utilizing the OpenStreetMap platform, the leadership of the event were able to quickly teach volunteers — many of whom had no previous mapping experience — how to trace and tag structures to create maps of pre-disaster Puerto Rico. Working in grids, volunteers referenced a variety of satellite imagery databases as a blue print for their OpenStreetMap. The end result is an evolving, community-sourced map with professional-level detail, made for a fraction of the cost.

"We were elated to find we could take skills we've developed at MIT and create meaningful change for the people affected by the storm in Puerto Rico," says Bui. "It's also been uplifting to see how participants are taking the skills they learned from us, spreading them inside their networks, and hosting mapathons of their own. It is aid going viral."

To find out more about the maps or to contribute to the ongoing work, visit:

tasks.hotosm.org/project/3684

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University Finds Unique Way To Help Puerto Rico Recover After Hurricane Maria (CBS Philly)

October 16, 2017 9:00 PM By Lynne Adkins

[CBS Philly/KYW-KWPSG-WPSG](#)

DOYLESTOWN, Pa (CBS) — A local university has found a unique way to help Puerto Rico recover from the devastating hurricane.

More than 8,000 acres of crops were destroyed in Puerto Rico when Hurricane Maria devastated the island. Now Delaware Valley University in Doylestown is collecting vegetable and fruit seeds to help farmers get back in business.

"The idea is to get varieties that will grow well in the tropics," said Dr. Sarah Dohle, an assistant professor of Plant Science. "So seeds that grow in southern Florida type growing conditions will also grow well in Puerto Rico, but we also want varieties that will fit in with their cultural practices, with how they farm and what they eat."

Dohle says seed donations will be kept at the university until conditions in Puerto Rico improve.

“Because we have electricity and we have volunteers and we can get them organized and then once Puerto Rico is a little more established and secure then they can give us the go ahead that they’re ready to receive the seeds,” she said.

She says once they receive the green light to send the seeds they will be put on ships and sent down within a week or two weeks.

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WHITE HOUSE / CONGRESS / POLITICS

Post-Maria, Trump’s approval rating on hurricanes down 20 points (CNN Wire, The Hill, Washington Examiner)

Posted 7:30 pm, October 16, 2017,

[CNN Wire](#)

- [Similar coverage in The Hill: Poll: Trump approval on hurricane response down 20 points](#)
- [Similar coverage in TIME](#)
- [Similar coverage in Washington Examiner,](#)

President Donald Trump’s approval rating for handling the federal government’s response to recent hurricanes has dropped 20 points in the aftermath of Hurricane Maria, according to a [new CNN poll conducted by SSRS](#).

In mid-September, 64% of Americans said they approved of Trump’s handling of the US hurricane response. That finding followed his administration’s handling of hurricanes Harvey and Irma, which hit the US mainland in late-August and September. Now, as many Puerto Ricans remain without access to clean water or electricity nearly a month after Maria hit, just 44% say they approve.

In the weeks since Maria devastated the island, Trump’s response has vacillated between criticism and praise. He has used his [Twitter account](#) to contend that local officials aren’t doing enough to help and has threatened to withdraw assistance from the island entirely. At other times, he has praised the work of the military and first responders there.

In a Rose Garden news conference Monday, Trump mixed [praise for the federal government’s response](#) to the situation with criticism of local efforts, saying that ample supplies had reached the island but were held up by distribution issues.

“We have massive amounts of water,” Trump said. “We have massive amounts of food, but they have to distribute the food, and they have to do this. They have to distribute the food to the people of the island.”

The poll found Trump’s numbers on this score have dipped across party lines. His ratings are down 9 points among Republicans, 22 points among independents and 25 points among Democrats.

The decline also includes a steep drop in his approval rating on handling hurricanes among non-whites, from 52% in September to 25% now. Among Hispanics, approval for Trump’s handling of hurricane response has dropped from 49% in September to 22% now.

In the September poll, majorities of men and women and majorities across age groups approved of the way Trump was handling the Hurricane response. Now, among women, just 36% approve, while only 32% of those under age 45 approve.

The 64% approval rating Trump held on this issue in September was the highest the President had received for any issue in CNN’s polling since he took office in January, exceeding his previous high of 55% approval for handling the economy in March by 9 points.

The CNN Poll was conducted by SSRS by telephone October 12 to 15 among a random national sample of 1,010 adults. The margin of sampling error for results among the full sample is plus or minus 3.5 percentage points; it is larger for subgroups.

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Califican respuesta de Trump a huracanes recientes (Primera Hora)

lunes 16 de octubre del 2017, a las 20:57

Metró Puerto Rico

Primera Hora

President Donald Trump's rating on handling the federal government's response to recent hurricanes fell to 20 points after Hurricane Maria, according to a new SSN CNN survey.

La calificación de aprobación del presidente Donald Trump en el manejo de la respuesta del gobierno federal a los huracanes recientes, se redujo a 20 puntos tras el huracán María, según una nueva encuesta de CNN realizada por SSRS.

A mediados de septiembre, el 64% de los estadounidenses dijeron que aprobaron el manejo de la respuesta por parte de Trump en los huracanes Harvey e Irma que azotaron a Estados Unidos a fines de agosto y septiembre.

Ahora, que muchos puertorriqueños permanecen sin acceso a agua limpia y electricidad a casi un mes de que María golpeará la isla, solo el 44% de los encuestados dice que lo aprueban.

Y es que las semanas desde que María devastó a Puerto Rico, la respuesta de Trump ha girado entre la crítica y los elogios.

Trump ha utilizado su cuenta de Twitter para indicar que los funcionarios locales no están haciendo lo suficiente para ayudar, y hasta ha amenazado con retirar la asistencia de **FEMA** y los militares por completo de la isla.

Sin embargo, en otras ocasiones, ha elogiado el trabajo de los militares y de los socorristas en la isla.

En conferencia de prensa el lunes, Trump elogió la respuesta del gobierno federal a la situación, criticando los esfuerzos locales, y dijo que los suministros habían llegado a la isla, pero que fueron retenidos por problemas de distribución.

"Tenemos grandes cantidades de agua", dijo Trump. "Tenemos grandes cantidades de comida, pero tienen que distribuir la comida. Tienen que distribuir la comida a la gente de la isla".

En la encuesta se encontró que los números de Trump han sumergido en las líneas del partido.

Sus calificaciones bajaron 9 puntos entre los republicanos, 22 puntos entre los independientes y 25 puntos entre los demócratas.

La disminución también incluye una fuerte caída en su índice de aprobación para el manejo de huracanes entre los no blancos, de 52% en septiembre a 25% en la actualidad.

Entre los hispanos, la aprobación para el manejo de la respuesta de huracán por parte de Trump ha bajado del 49% en septiembre al 22% en la actualidad.

En la encuesta de septiembre, la mayoría de los hombres y las mujeres, y la mayoría en todos los grupos de edad aprobaron la forma en que Trump manejaba la respuesta del huracán.

Ahora, entre las mujeres, solo el 36% lo aprueba, mientras que solo el 32% de los menores de 45 años lo aprueba.

La calificación de aprobación del 64% que Trump mantuvo en este tema en septiembre fue la más alta que el presidente había recibido por cualquier tema en las encuestas de CNN desde que asumió el cargo en enero, superando su anterior aprobación del 55% para manejar la economía en marzo en 9 puntos.

La encuesta de CNN fue realizada por SSRS por teléfono del 12 al 15 de octubre con una muestra nacional aleatoria de 1,010 adultos.

El margen de error de muestreo para los resultados entre la muestra completa es más o menos de 3.5 puntos.

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Trump can't stop blaming Puerto Ricans for the island's humanitarian crisis (Think Progress)

During a press conference the president once again avoided any accountability for the disaster.

[E.A. Crunden](#) Oct 16, 2017, 4:38 pm

[Think Progress](#)

President Donald Trump renewed his claim that Puerto Rico's humanitarian crisis is one of its own making during a press conference on Monday, while defending his administration from growing accusations over the slowness of federal efforts on the island.

"Puerto Rico is very tough because of the fact that it's an island. It's also tough because, as you know, it was in very poor shape before the hurricanes ever hit," Trump said.

The president went on to reference relief efforts in the mainland states of Texas and Florida where recovery efforts from Hurricanes Harvey and Irma have been underway for over a month, as well as the U.S. Virgin Islands.

"We are working right now, as you know, relief funds were just approved, [and are] in the process of becoming approved. That includes Texas, that includes Florida. It also includes Puerto Rico, the U.S. Virgin Islands. But," Trump said, circling back to Puerto Rico, "it was in really bad shape before."

The White House is facing an onslaught of criticism over its handling of Puerto Rico's crisis. Almost a month has passed since a Category 4 hurricane devastated the island, [leaving 87 percent of residents without power and more than 25 percent without potable water](#). Puerto Ricans have been advised to boil their water as an added safety precaution and [warned away from toxic waste sites](#) after a number of desperate islanders attempted to drink from wells containing hazardous industrial waste. The island is also reportedly suffering from food shortages, something officials from the Federal Emergency Management Agency (**FEMA**) [have avoided confirming](#).

Trump has done little to improve the situation. The president initially [opted to tweet about the National Football League rather than the hurricane](#). Eventual acknowledgement of the crisis [centered on Puerto Rico's pre-existing debt](#), as well as the island's long-suffering electrical grid. That talking point resurfaced Monday, with Trump again dodging responsibility.

"Their electrical grid was destroyed before the hurricanes got there. It was in very bad shape. [It] was not working," Trump said during the press conference, linking the island's financial struggles to the grid's condition. "Now, you're going to have to build a whole new electrical plant system... The fact that, their electrical system was in horrible shape before and even worse shape after. So we are working right now, as you know, relief funds were just approved, in the process of becoming approved."

The grid's condition, like much of Puerto Rico's ongoing problems, have more to do with neglect from the mainland than anything else — an oversight stretching back decades before Trump took office. But the White House is being criticized for [botching rebuilding efforts](#), angering activists [who have advocated for a sustainable and climate resilient recovery effort](#).

After laying blame for the grid's historical and contemporary condition firmly on the shoulders of the island's residents, Trump went on to acknowledge Puerto Rico's water and food shortages — which he also blamed on islanders.

“People don’t have drinking water. [But] we’ve delivered tremendous amounts of water,” Trump said. “What you have to do, you have to have distribution of the water, but by the people on the island. We have massive amounts of water. We have massive amounts of food. But they have to distribute it. They have to do it. They have to distribute the food to the people on the island. What we’ve done, we now have military distributing food, something that really they shouldn’t have to be doing.”

Following his assertion that federal officials sent specifically to assist with the crisis should not be expected to oversee the distribution of vital necessities, Trump returned to praising his administration’s efforts. Referencing praise from Governor Ricardo Rosselló, who has in reality repeatedly begged Trump for more aid for Puerto Rico, the president congratulated the federal relief response once again.

“If you look at the governor, who’s a good man... But you look at the governor of Puerto Rico, he has said we’ve done an outstanding job,” Trump said, before emphasizing again, “Puerto Rico is a tough one.”

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[White House](#)

Trump gives his own performance a Trump-sized endorsement (Politico, CBS, NBC)

The president called an impromptu Rose Garden press conference on Monday to sell reporters and the public on his job performance.

By [JOSH DAWSEY](#)

10/16/2017 06:23 PM EDT

[Politico](#)

[Excerpt from longer story]

- *Similar coverage, full story from [CBS Evening News](#)*
- *Similar report on [NBC News](#)*

Friends say President Donald Trump has grown frustrated that his greatness is not widely understood, that his critics are fierce and on TV every morning, that his poll numbers are both low and “fake,” and that his White House is caricatured as adrift.

So on Monday, the consummate salesman — who has spent his 71 years selling his business acumen, golf courses, sexual prowess, luxury properties and, above all, his last name — gave the Trump White House a Trump-sized dose of brand enhancement.

...

He bragged in the Rose Garden that James Lee Witt, a FEMA administrator under President Bill Clinton, gave his performance on hurricanes an “A-plus” — including Puerto Rico. “I’ve always had a lot of respect for him,” Trump said of Witt. Several Trump aides said they’d never heard of Witt before Monday’s remarks.

Trump has been stung by the consistent and widespread negative attention his administration has gotten for its lackluster response to the devastation in Puerto Rico following Hurricane Maria, and he has grown frustrated by the continued criticisms.

[Story trimmed for space and relevancy]

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Clinton FEMA Director Praises Trump’s Hurricane Response - Including for Puerto Rico (CNSNews, Daily Caller)

By Melanie Arter

October 16, 2017 | 5:20 PM EDT

CNSNews.com

- **Also on [Daily Caller](#)**

Despite the criticism that President Donald Trump has received over his handling of hurricane relief efforts in Puerto Rico, the Clinton administration's **FEMA** director, James Lee Witt, thinks Trump and his team deserve an "A+" - a fact that Trump pointed out during a press conference in the White House Rose Garden Monday.

Witt told the Washington Post that he would give the federal government response to the hurricane - including Puerto Rico - the highest grade.

"They've maxed out probably how many people they could put there," Witt said. "I know they're all working frantically, but sometimes that's not enough."

Trump praised Witt for his assessment, saying it means a lot because Witt's approval "takes it out of the realm of politics."

"I was very honored to see a man that I've had a lot of respect for - James Lee Witt of the Clinton administration, the head of **FEMA**. He gave us an A+," Trump said. "I just see-- it just came out, and I've always had respect for him.

"He gave us-- he's the **FEMA** director of the Clinton administration, gave us an A+ for how we responded to the hurricane aftermath, all of the hurricanes, and that includes Puerto Rico. So I just want to thank Mr. Witt wherever you may be now, wherever you may be listening," the president added.

"I just want to say I appreciate it, because that took it out of politics, out of the world of politics, in that he was from the Clinton administration and I'm sure remains loyal to the Clinton administration. I hope he does," Trump said.

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Trump: Former FEMA Head Gave Me An A+ (CNN)

[CNN](#), October 16, 2017

President Donald Trump says former **FEMA** Director James Lee Witt, who served under President Bill Clinton, gave him an A+ grade for recent hurricane relief efforts. Source: CNN

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Democrats Seek Tax Relief For Puerto Rico, Virgin Islands (AP)

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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Senate Democrats Ask FEMA To Fully Fund Puerto Rico Repairs

(Washington Examiner)

By Susan Ferrechio

[Washington Examiner](#), October 16, 2017

Senate Democrats on Monday called on **Federal Emergency Management Agency** Administrator Brock Long to provide Puerto Rico with the funding necessary to make permanent repairs to the island's tattered infrastructure.

"The scale of damages across the island is clear, and Puerto Rico should not have to wait any longer for this assistance to be granted so they can begin the process of rebuilding their infrastructure and communities," Democrats wrote Long in a letter. It was signed by Senate Minority Leader Chuck Schumer, D-N.Y., and six other Senate Democrats.

The senators specifically called on **FEMA** to approve Permanent Work Public Assistance available, which is aid that can be used to repair infrastructure. Democrats said Puerto Rico asked for this aid more than a week ago, but that **FEMA** has not responded yet.

"Permanent Work funding from **FEMA** is the main source of federal assistance to help a community repair and rebuild its public infrastructure after a natural disaster and there should be absolutely no ambiguity that the federal government intends to provide this crucial assistance to help Puerto Rico build back after Hurricane Maria," they wrote.

They also said **FEMA** should work on funding 100 percent of all recovery efforts in Puerto Rico, instead of the 25 percent that localities are usually required to pay.

Puerto Rico Gov Ricardo Rosselló applied for the funding in early October.

Speaker Paul Ryan, R-Wis., toured the island on Friday. He suggested to reporters that the federal government would help make permanent repairs to Puerto Rico, which is a U.S. territory, but he did not specifically guarantee 100 percent federal funding for the massive undertaking.

The island's infrastructure had been crumbling under years of poor governance that resulted in the appointment of a federal control board to manage Puerto Rico's debt and install fiscal reforms.

The House last week approved a \$4.9 billion loan to help Puerto Rico continue operating in the wake of the two storms. Lawmakers acknowledged the loan will likely never be repaid.

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Líderes Demócratas Del Senado Piden Que FEMA Libere Fondos Para Reconstrucción De Puerto Rico (La Opinion)

María Peña)

October 16, 2017

[La Opinión \(CA\)](#),

Democratic senators told FEMA administrator Brock Long that Puerto Rico's governor, Ricardo Rossello, made a formal request for funding more than a week ago for infrastructure reconstruction work, but the agency has not yet put his " seal of approval "

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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HURRICANE SEASON

The Case For Comprehensive Disaster Relief (The Hill)

By Sergio M. Marxuach

[The Hill](#), October 16, 2017

This hurricane season has been particularly bad with major storms hitting Florida, Texas, Puerto Rico, the United States Virgin Islands, and several Gulf states. Total damages are estimated to exceed \$200 billion. The **Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA)** is doing the best job it can with the resources it has at its disposal, but it is clearly reaching the limits of its capabilities. Under the American constitutional system only Congress has the authority to enact a comprehensive relief and reconstruction package to address this situation.

The devastation in Texas, Florida, the United States Virgin Islands, and Puerto Rico has been well documented. The destruction of public infrastructure and the loss of private property affect millions of US citizens. A well-financed, broad-based recovery and reconstruction program would provide a much-needed boost to economic activity in these heavily damaged areas and help many hard-working families get back on their feet.

In the case of Puerto Rico it is particularly important that the relief bill approved by Congress include the \$4.9 billion emergency liquidity facility requested by President Trump. That funding is essential for Puerto Rico. A municipal or state government shutdown on top of the damage already wreaked by Maria would be positively catastrophic for the island. Relief efforts would come to a standstill, cleanup of heavily damaged areas would stop, and the potential for epidemics and other public health threats would increase exponentially. This would only lead to increased migration to mainland, which would only further weaken an already anemic economy and erode the island's tax base.

In addition to disaster relief, funding will be required for rebuilding and improving the damaged infrastructure in the disaster zones. It would be extremely difficult to jumpstart economic activity in the affected areas without this additional recovery funding. Some critics may complain that earmarking federal tax funds for these specific areas is unfair to taxpayers in the other areas of the country. But this thinking is myopic and ignores the fundamental principle upon which the union was founded: e pluribus unum—out of many one.

While today federal help is largely targeted to those jurisdictions affected by hurricanes, tomorrow it could be for wildfires in California, for tornadoes in the Midwest, or for blizzards in New England. Therefore, it is in the interest of every governor, senator and representative that the federal government always be ready, willing and able to lend a helping hand in the event of a major natural disaster.

Furthermore, helping disaster victims is completely consonant with the immortal, life-affirming values that shaped and forged this great union. Helping the weak, the downtrodden, the ones that have lost everything they had, should have nothing to do with income, wealth, party affiliation, race, ethnicity or even paying taxes. It is about treating each individual with the essential dignity and respect she deserves as a human being. In short, it is a matter of acting with basic human decency. It is our sincere hope that Congress will be up to this task.

Sergio M. Marxuach is Policy Director of Center for a New Economy.

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OPINION

Ending shipping restrictions for Puerto Rico would help the U.S. island, Pennsylvania (WHYY)

By Will Gonzalez

October 16, 2017

[WHYY \(Philadelphia NPR\)](#)

Permanently exempting Puerto Rico from the Jones Act will help the U.S. territory recover from Hurricane Maria by widely opening its market for exports from the mainland, including Pennsylvania.

The 1920 [Jones Act](#) requires all shipping between two U.S. ports to be via naval vessels owned, built, and flagged in the U.S. It was enacted at a time when the size of a country's naval prowess was the measure of a nation's might. Its usefulness in protecting our national interests is outdated in the age of globalization and technological advancements. The steep decline in the number of ships eligible to carry cargo under the act demonstrates its ineffectiveness. According to the U.S. Department of Transportation, the number of U.S.-flagged oceangoing freighters dropped from 2,926 to 169 between 1960 and 2016, while the total number of freighters navigating the planet's oceans increased from 17,317 to 41,674.

The laws of supply and demand, plus myriad other factors, make U.S. shipping one of the most expensive modes of moving ocean cargo. This cost is detrimental to Puerto Rico. A 2010 University of Puerto Rico study concluded that the island lost \$537 million per year as a result of the Jones Act. Although some experts claim the act's effect on the Puerto Rican economy is "uncertain," most agree that the net effect is negative. A 2012 report by the Federal Reserve Bank of New York stated that the act boosts the cost of imported goods to island residents, makes exports less competitive, and diminishes the viability of Puerto Rico as a major regional trans-shipment port.

Hurricane Maria, the fifth-strongest storm ever to hit the U.S., washed away any doubts about the need to permanently exempt Puerto Rico from the Jones Act. The storm left the island without electricity, [killed at least 48 people](#), destroyed thousands of homes, and caused more than [\\$95 billion in damages](#). Puerto Rico does not have the options of interstate trucking, rail, or pipelines to transport the large volume of material, food, and fuel needed to rebuild the island following the storm. It is inhumane to let the Jones Act bottleneck progress when there are 3.5 million U.S. citizens in distress. Permanently exempting Puerto Rico from the Jones Act also would help the island address its \$72 billion debt.

The U.S. Department of Homeland Security granted Puerto Rico a 10-day emergency exemption that expired Oct. 11. Analysts project that it will take at least 10 years for Puerto Rico to recover from Hurricane Maria and several decades more to fully address its debt, barring another major storm during those periods.

A permanent exemption from the Jones Act for Puerto Rico would not only boost the island's ability to address its economic challenges but also increase commerce with its neighbors on the mainland.

The port of Philadelphia stands to gain from increased exports to Puerto Rico. For example, cheaper freight rates between it and San Juan can lead to stronger commercial ties between two of the nation's largest traders in pharmaceutical products. Pennsylvania is the [largest exporter in the country of nucleic acids and salts](#), the building blocks of the modern pharmaceutical industry (\$374,605,896), while Puerto Rico is the U.S.'s largest importer of such chemicals (\$1,401,139,108). The island is [one of the world's biggest centers for pharmaceutical manufacturing](#), according to the Pharmaceutical Journal. Puerto Rico hosts more than 500 medical production facilities and produces [nearly 10 percent](#) of all drugs consumed in the U.S. Increased trade in these materials between Puerto Rico and Pennsylvania will help the island rebuild from where its economy is strongest.

Another opportunity for increased trade between Pennsylvania and Puerto Rico is in the area of natural gas. As the second-largest producer of natural gas in the country, Pennsylvania can put itself in a position to export liquefied natural gas to Puerto Rico as demand for the product is likely to increase on the island. Puerto Rico has been discussing the transition from oil to gas to generate electricity for years. Elimination of the Jones Act trade barrier and the need to totally rebuild the island power grid may be the factors that accelerate that transition. The port of Philadelphia has the