

advantage to seize this opportunity as it is closer to San Juan (1,508 nautical miles) than the ports of Houston (4,334 nautical miles) and New Orleans (3,892 nautical miles).

Pennsylvania shipbuilders will not lose buyers for their ships if Puerto Rico is exempted from the Jones Act. There will still be enough hauling companies that need vessels to serve the hundreds of other U.S. ports that remain under the purview of the act. Exempting a U.S. territory from the act is not a novel idea. The Virgin Islands, American Samoa, and the Northern Mariana Islands have been exempt for decades.

Permanently exempting Puerto Rico from the Jones Act would be good for the island and good for Pennsylvania. It would eliminate a barrier to addressing two momentous crises on the island while developing stronger commercial ties between Puerto Rico and Pennsylvania.

Will Gonzalez, Esquire is the executive director of [Ceiba](#), a coalition of Latino community-based organizations in Philadelphia. He has over 30 years of experience working on the housing, economic, and civil rights of low- to moderate-income families. He grew up in Puerto Rico and has family on the island.

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Jackson: Government isn't stepping up in Puerto Rico (Chicago Sun-Times)

[Columnists](#) 10/16/2017, 04:54pm

By [Jesse Jackson](#)

[Chicago Sun-Times](#)

Millions of Americans still face perilous conditions in Puerto Rico. Three weeks after Hurricane Maria savaged the island, over 80 percent still have no electrical power. Forty percent are without running water. Millions are in dire need of food. Water purification systems can't work without electricity.

Gas stations have reopened, but the island's economy remains moribund. Only a few hundred miles of the island's 5,000 miles of road are open to traffic. Disease is spreading, with the health care system still in miserable condition. These are Americans in extreme distress. It is time to step up.

Last weekend, I joined religious leaders to deliver more than 150,000 pounds of food, water, medicine and generators supplied by volunteer donations in Chicago. FedEx CEO Fred Smith generously answered my call for help and, with COO David Bronczek and Senior Vice President Shannon Brown, arranged to supply the plane and flight crew, one of more than 70 relief flights FedEx has sponsored.

From across America, nurses, firefighters, church groups, unions, athletes and entertainers have donated time, energy and resources to their fellow citizens in Puerto Rico.

But a crisis this severe requires a massive governmental response, and the reaction of **FEMA, the Federal Emergency Management Agency, has been admittedly slow and inadequate.** Americans on the island face a horrible food crisis. As the Guardian reported, **FEMA** officials admit they are supplying 200,000 meals a day to meet the daily food requirements of 2 million people. That's a shortfall of nearly 2 million meals daily. Americans without electricity, their homes destroyed, struggle to find clean water and minimal food. That is a recipe for disease, with children and the elderly and the sick most at risk.

Donald Trump has treated the crisis mostly as a public relations problem. He slurred the Mayor of San Juan as "weak" when she begged for assistance because people were dying. He suggested that the island's residents want "everything to be done for them." He threatened an early departure of **FEMA** and the military, and boasted about what has been a shameful response: "Nobody could have done what I've done for #PuertoRico with so little appreciation," he tweeted.

But this isn't a public relations problem for the president; it is a human crisis for millions of American citizens. It can't be addressed in tweets and stunts. Real action is needed. In conjunction with **FEMA**, the U.S. military has finally begun to deploy the troops and helicopters needed to clear roads and supply emergency food and water. And, contrary to Trump's jibe, the general in command, Army Lt. Gen. Jeffrey Buchanan, reported that the island's residents have responded valiantly: "Communities are very tight and family is very important," he reported, "Everywhere I go I see neighbors out helping neighbors. That's what it is going to take to help this island get back on its feet."

In my discussions with them, San Juan Mayor Carmen Yulin Cruz and Governor Ricardo A. Rossello were forceful and clear about what was needed now. The immediate need is still for supplies that will sustain life — water, food, medicine and generators. Solar installations to run water-filtering systems are essential while the electrical grid is rebuilt, a process that will take months.

Second, the mayor called for waiving the Jones Act at least for a year. The Jones Act requires that U.S. merchants deliver shipments to Puerto Rico. Countries across the world from South Africa to Mexico have volunteered to ship in emergency supplies. The Trump administration waived the act for 10 days. It should be waived at least until the emergency is over.

Third, the mayor needs accelerated visa procedures for those who are volunteering from across the hemisphere and the world to help rebuild the country. At the same time, arrangements should be made to evacuate the sick to hospitals on the mainland, and to move children so they will not lose a year of school. This was done in New Orleans after Katrina and in Texas after Harvey, and Puerto Rico should be no different.

Beyond immediate relief, the larger question is how Puerto Rico can rebuild. Even before the hurricane, the country was in the midst of a dire debt crisis and suffering severe austerity under the grip of a fiscal control board that creditors had elevated above the elected officials. Obviously, the previous agreements on debt repayment have to be revised now that Puerto Rico's economy has collapsed. The debt should be renegotiated and dramatically reduced, if not forgiven; creditors should bear part of the loss.

In the end, Americans in Puerto Rico need what Americans in Louisiana, Texas and Florida need: a long-term recovery package. Public investment to rebuild the sinews of the economy — roads, bridges, water systems, the electric grid, hospitals and schools — will put people to work and kick-start the economy. As we witnessed with Europe after the devastation of World War II, massive aid for rebuilding will generate jobs and growth.

The Americans living in Puerto Rico have little political clout. They can't vote in presidential elections. They are, however, American citizens, not second-class citizens. They should not suffer second-class treatment. Across the country, Americans have responded generously to the crisis in Puerto Rico. Now it is time for Washington to step up.

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Editorial: Way to kick 'em while they're down (Columbus Dispatch)

Oct 16, 2017 at 6:26 AM

[Columbus Dispatch](#)

President Donald Trump appears to awaken in the wee hours of the morning asking the very question that the patriots, great thinkers and war heroes who have held his office must have wondered: What to tweet, whom to bash today, to supply himself with the attention he craves?

No, President Trump, the men who carried the burden of this office — from Washington to Obama — recognized the awesome responsibility they held to protect the lives of every American. It

is an unstated contract we Americans have with our government that if we are endangered by foreign powers or by a natural disaster, our government will come to our aid.

To refuse to do so isn't merely heartless; it's an abdication of office.

Roughly a month ago, two massive hurricanes slammed into the U.S. territory of Puerto Rico; first came Irma, the most-powerful Atlantic Hurricane on record, which pummeled Puerto Rico as it carved a merciless path of death and destruction through the Caribbean. Two weeks later came Hurricane Maria, compounding the damage and hindering recovery efforts.

Puerto Rico faces a staggering humanitarian crisis. But instead of offering reassurance, consolation and a helping hand, Trump suggests that the crisis is of Puerto Rico's own making. He shrugs his shoulders and says relief workers can't stay long.

Many of the island's 3.4 million American citizens are without electricity or fresh water. It's not hard to imagine that disease will soon take hold, or that mainland states like Florida will be overrun with storm refugees.

After first visiting the island and playfully tossing paper towels like he was shooting basketballs, Trump stunned the nation by suggesting that maybe Puerto Rico's debts might be forgiven: "wiped out."

This was a bad, unaffordable idea. But it got worse. He then turned on the island, becoming, in effect, the third tropical storm to leave residents feeling flattened and helpless.

Thursday, he shamed the territory for its circumstances, tweeting: "Electric and infrastructure was a disaster before the hurricanes." He quoted a conservative TV show host as saying Puerto Rico's "financial crisis looms largely of their own making."

Trump also wrote, "We cannot keep **FEMA**, the Military & the First Responders, who have been amazing (under the most difficult circumstances) in P.R. forever!"

The president's threats to abandon the devastated Puerto Ricans left them gasping.

As with most economic disasters, the blame for Puerto Rico's financial woes aren't simple. Yes, the island's debt pile exceeds \$70 billion; it's America's "Greece in the Caribbean." Decades of mismanagement and government corruption have contributed to this mess, but so have recession and federal laws that have hamstrung Puerto Rico's ability to control its own finances and economy.

If Trump — given his background in business — is talking about putting Puerto Rico on a path to alleviate its fiscal problems, this would be noble. But that's not what is coming across. What Puerto Ricans and other Americans are hearing is, "Buddy, you're on your own."

This is ugly and heartless. It is beneath his office. And it is not who we are as Americans. Congress should quickly supply leadership to help our storm-battered fellow Americans.

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Witcover: Trump's 'Love' For Puerto Rico Will Be Tested As Territory Recovers (Baltimore Sun)

By Jules Witcover

[Baltimore Sun](#), October 16, 2017

When Republican Sen. Bob Corker of Tennessee charged the other day that the White House had become "an adult day care center" — with three former generals there babysitting President Donald Trump — he added: "Someone obviously missed their shift."

On Thursday, the president proved Mr. Corker's point by tweeting a politically toxic threat to diminish federal relief to hurricane-hammered Puerto Rico. It followed his highly publicized visit to the island the previous week during which he pledged undying love and succor. Where were the Trump watchdogs when he needed to be saved from making this boneheaded warning?

In three consecutive tweets, the president charged that the U.S. territory had been "a disaster before (the) hurricanes," with its electrical grid and infrastructure already severely damaged.

He added: “We cannot keep **FEMA**, the Military and the First Responders, who have been amazing (under the most difficult circumstances) in Puerto Rico forever!” He quoted a television reporter saying the island had “survived the hurricanes” and “now a financial crisis looms largely of their own making.”

Only days earlier in San Juan, the capital, Mr. Trump was tossing paper towels to the natives as if he were shooting basketballs and pledging his love and support with an incredibly callous and mocking display.

Earlier, he had castigated the city’s Mayor Carmen Yulin Cruz for “poor leadership,” but now he commended her as having “come back a long way” in coping with Hurricane Maria.

Still earlier, he had proclaimed: “We will not rest, however, until the people of Puerto Rico are safe. We want them to be safe and sound and secure and we will be there every day until that happens.”

Vice President Mike Pence followed with his own visit, pledging that the Trump administration would be there “every step of the way. ... We will be with you every single day until Puerto Rico is restored bigger and better than ever before,” he said.

However, most of the island’s 3.4 million residents, American citizens by virtue of Puerto Rico’s territorial status, remain without electric power, water and other essentials of life. Mr. Trump has even sought to make lemonade out of a lemon by congratulating Puerto Rico for having sustained a lower death toll than New Orleans suffered from Hurricane Katrina in 2005.

Mr. Trump has informed the Puerto Ricans that it will be up to Congress to determine how much the federal government will authorize as its share of the huge recovery effort required. The observation that the island was in terrible financial shape before Maria hit brought him back to his earlier theme castigating the natives for the shape they’re in.

The president’s profession of deep sympathy and concern over the Puerto Ricans’ fate was already in doubt, given his long delay in visiting their stricken island, in contrast to his haste to visit Texas, Louisiana and Florida on the heels of their hurricanes.

After his tardy visit to Puerto Rico, Mr. Trump quickly pivoted to Las Vegas last week to demonstrate his grief over the mass shooting murder of civilian targets there. It did not go unnoticed or unmentioned that Mr. Trump has had real estate interests in America’s gambling capital, as well as friends among the owners and operators of luxury hotels.

It remains to be seen how energetically the president will press the Republican-controlled Congress to meet the huge financial challenge of putting Puerto Rico back on its feet.

His sharp criticisms of its local public officials as poor custodians, while professing his affection for the island and its inhabitants in their hour of need, tests his compassion and sincerity. He often reassures his trusting crowds with the words “Believe me.” Will the Puerto Ricans do so, as they remain in the dire aftermath throes of Maria?

Jules Witcover is a syndicated columnist and former long-time writer for The Baltimore Sun. His latest book is “The American Vice Presidency: From Irrelevance to Power” (Smithsonian Books). His email is juleswitcover@comcast.net.

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Sent Date:	2017/10/17 11:57:24
Delivered Date:	2017/10/17 11:58:16



FEMA

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

Compiled by Janell Cole, Janell.Cole@FEMA.dhs.gov and Rossyveth Rey, Rossyveth.Ray@FEMA.dhs.gov

- 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 to 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 Día)

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 Día](#)

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”, recordó 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. Preciso 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 toldos 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,"

Espaillet said, in an interview after his own remarks at the rally. As for Trump's claims of doing a great job, Espaillet 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 | 00:00 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 Rodriguez, 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.

Rodriguez 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 (NPFPG) 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 NPFPG.

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 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."

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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 truck 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 periodo sin electricidad.

Después que María destruyó el taller de chapistería donde trabajaba, Eddri Serrano, de 20 años, comenzó a fabricar tablas de lavar, como las de antes, pero ahora de plástico.

El sábado, él y su primo caminaban junto a una carretera vendiendo las tablas en \$15 cada una.

"Y tenía que hacer algo", dijo Serrano, quien afirma que ha llegado a vender 70 tablas en un día. "Tenía que hacer esto o robar, y prefiero no robar".

Una cliente 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”.

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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 pernil 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 Jagüeyes, 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. Albors, for her part, has been propelled by a sense of duty, her own bond with Puerto Rico. Work, though, has also given her a place to channel the despair and anxiety that the storm has stirred. She had heard from her nieces on the island; one, who spent the summer with her in New York, wiped tears from her eyes in a videochat with her aunt. Ms. Albors still had not talked to her mother.

"I can tell you that I can deal with everything in my life, except when my island is in crisis," Ms. Albors said in her office a week after the hurricane made landfall. "There's this deep-rooted love for Puerto Rico, and my family — everyone's there. I'm the only one here."

By a window, Ms. Albors had one more whiteboard. Any time she felt like Acacia had accomplished something, she wrote it there. She needed the reminder that progress was being made.

"We're so committed to the island," she said, her voice cracking. She repeated a line heard often in New York since the hurricane: "It is personal."

The Acacia Network has a complex of buildings in the Mount Hope neighborhood of the South Bronx. Its work includes physical and mental health care services, alcohol and substance abuse treatment, vocational training, day care and nursing homes. Among its projects is an affordable housing residence for older people being built in the Puerto Rican city of Toa Alta.

After Hurricane Maria made landfall, on Sept. 20, organization officials said they decided almost immediately to start their own effort.

They began with a fund-raiser, with their own donation of \$1 million. (So far, they have raised another \$700,000.) Then, Ms. Albors heard from a children's hospital that had enough food for its patients but not for relatives and others who were also in the hospital. Three days after the storm, she said, the organization found a supplier that was still open and paid for food.

And then there was the container. In a neighborhood of narrow streets, stubby blocks and pedestrians crossing wherever they please, the 53-foot long blue cargo container, through a feat of truck driving, had been delivered to a slice of pavement outside one of Acacia's buildings. A Puerto Rican flag hung off the front.

"Things that are needed, we're sending," Raul Russi, the chief executive of Acacia, said. "We're just going to try it our way and see if we can get it done."

On a recent evening, a crew loaded construction supplies and solar lights into the container. A truck on its way from Texas carrying 60 generators was somewhere near Philadelphia. As soon as those were placed inside, the container would be sealed, setting off for Puerto Rico in the morning.

Mr. Russi said he knew the container was a gamble, acknowledging the accounts of other shipments stalled at the port in San Juan. Even so, he was optimistic. If the supplies were not delivered to the intended recipients, he figured, it was likely they would end up with someone who needed them.

“If we can get through with one shipment,” Mr. Russi said, “then I’m going to keep working and send these shipments until either we run out of money or things get situated in Puerto Rico.”

The shipment carried items that had been on Ms. Albors’s list. Her cellphone is always in hand, almost always buzzing. “Every five minutes,” she said, “somebody gets access to Wi-Fi.” And like clock work, another message asking for help lands in her inbox. Some were sent directly to her, and others took a more circuitous route, funneling their way through the city’s Puerto Rican community.

One of those messages came from Christopher Young and Rosa de la Sota, the architects designing Acacia’s senior complex in Toa Alta.

“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

Metro 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 advantage to seize this opportunity as it is closer to San Juan (1,508 nautical miles) than the ports of Houston (4,334 nautical miles) and New Orleans (3,892 nautical miles).

Pennsylvania shipbuilders will not lose buyers for their ships if Puerto Rico is exempted from the Jones Act. There will still be enough hauling companies that need vessels to serve the hundreds of other U.S. ports that remain under the purview of the act. Exempting a U.S. territory from the act is not a novel idea. The Virgin Islands, American Samoa, and the Northern Mariana Islands have been exempt for decades.

Permanently exempting Puerto Rico from the Jones Act would be good for the island and good for Pennsylvania. It would eliminate a barrier to addressing two momentous crises on the island while developing stronger commercial ties between Puerto Rico and Pennsylvania.

Will Gonzalez, Esquire is the executive director of Ceiba, a coalition of Latino community-based organizations in Philadelphia. He has over 30 years of experience working on the housing, economic, and civil rights of low- to moderate-income families. He grew up in Puerto Rico and has family on the island.

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Jackson: Government isn't stepping up in Puerto Rico (Chicago Sun-Times)

Columnists 10/16/2017, 04:54pm

By Jesse Jackson

[Chicago Sun-Times](#)

Millions of Americans still face perilous conditions in Puerto Rico. Three weeks after Hurricane Maria savaged the island, over 80 percent still have no electrical power. Forty percent are without running water. Millions are in dire need of food. Water purification systems can't work without electricity.

Gas stations have reopened, but the island's economy remains moribund. Only a few hundred miles of the island's 5,000 miles of road are open to traffic. Disease is spreading, with the health care system still in miserable condition. These are Americans in extreme distress. It is time to step up.

Last weekend, I joined religious leaders to deliver more than 150,000 pounds of food, water, medicine and generators supplied by volunteer donations in Chicago. FedEx CEO Fred Smith generously answered my call for help and, with COO David Bronczek and Senior Vice President Shannon Brown, arranged to supply the plane and flight crew, one of more than 70 relief flights FedEx has sponsored.

From across America, nurses, firefighters, church groups, unions, athletes and entertainers have donated time, energy and resources to their fellow citizens in Puerto Rico.

But a crisis this severe requires a massive governmental response, and the reaction of **FEMA, the Federal Emergency Management Agency**, has been admittedly slow and inadequate. Americans on the island face a horrible food crisis. As the Guardian reported, **FEMA** officials admit they are supplying 200,000 meals a day to meet the daily food requirements of 2 million people. That's a shortfall of nearly 2 million meals daily. Americans without electricity, their homes destroyed, struggle to find clean water and minimal food. That is a recipe for disease, with children and the elderly and the sick most at risk.

Donald Trump has treated the crisis mostly as a public relations problem. He slurred the Mayor of San Juan as "weak" when she begged for assistance because people were dying. He suggested that the island's residents

want “everything to be done for them.” He threatened an early departure of **FEMA** and the military, and boasted about what has been a shameful response: “Nobody could have done what I’ve done for #PuertoRico with so little appreciation,” he tweeted.

But this isn’t a public relations problem for the president; it is a human crisis for millions of American citizens. It can’t be addressed in tweets and stunts. Real action is needed. In conjunction with **FEMA**, the U.S. military has finally begun to deploy the troops and helicopters needed to clear roads and supply emergency food and water. And, contrary to Trump’s jibe, the general in command, Army Lt. Gen. Jeffrey Buchanan, reported that the island’s residents have responded valiantly: “Communities are very tight and family is very important,” he reported, “Everywhere I go I see neighbors out helping neighbors. That’s what it is going to take to help this island get back on its feet.”

In my discussions with them, San Juan Mayor Carmen Yulin Cruz and Governor Ricardo A. Rossello were forceful and clear about what was needed now. The immediate need is still for supplies that will sustain life — water, food, medicine and generators. Solar installations to run water-filtering systems are essential while the electrical grid is rebuilt, a process that will take months.

Second, the mayor called for waiving the Jones Act at least for a year. The Jones Act requires that U.S. merchants deliver shipments to Puerto Rico. Countries across the world from South Africa to Mexico have volunteered to ship in emergency supplies. The Trump administration waived the act for 10 days. It should be waived at least until the emergency is over.

Third, the mayor needs accelerated visa procedures for those who are volunteering from across the hemisphere and the world to help rebuild the country. At the same time, arrangements should be made to evacuate the sick to hospitals on the mainland, and to move children so they will not lose a year of school. This was done in New Orleans after Katrina and in Texas after Harvey, and Puerto Rico should be no different.

Beyond immediate relief, the larger question is how Puerto Rico can rebuild. Even before the hurricane, the country was in the midst of a dire debt crisis and suffering severe austerity under the grip of a fiscal control board that creditors had elevated above the elected officials. Obviously, the previous agreements on debt repayment have to be revised now that Puerto Rico’s economy has collapsed. The debt should be renegotiated and dramatically reduced, if not forgiven; creditors should bear part of the loss.

In the end, Americans in Puerto Rico need what Americans in Louisiana, Texas and Florida need: a long-term recovery package. Public investment to rebuild the sinews of the economy — roads, bridges, water systems, the electric grid, hospitals and schools — will put people to work and kick-start the economy. As we witnessed with Europe after the devastation of World War II, massive aid for rebuilding will generate jobs and growth.

The Americans living in Puerto Rico have little political clout. They can’t vote in presidential elections. They are, however, American citizens, not second-class citizens. They should not suffer second-class treatment. Across the country, Americans have responded generously to the crisis in Puerto Rico. Now it is time for Washington to step up.

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Editorial: Way to kick ’em while they’re down (Columbus Dispatch)

Oct 16, 2017 at 6:26 AM

[Columbus Dispatch](#)

President Donald Trump appears to awaken in the wee hours of the morning asking the very question that the patriots, great thinkers and war heroes who have held his office must have wondered: What to tweet, whom to bash today, to supply himself with the attention he craves?

No, President Trump, the men who carried the burden of this office — from Washington to Obama — recognized the awesome responsibility they held to protect the lives of every American. It is an unstated contract we Americans have with our government that if we are endangered by foreign powers or by a natural disaster, our government will come to our aid.

To refuse to do so isn’t merely heartless; it’s an abdication of office.

Roughly a month ago, two massive hurricanes slammed into the U.S. territory of Puerto Rico; first came Irma, the most-powerful Atlantic Hurricane on record, which pummeled Puerto Rico as it carved a merciless path of death and destruction through the Caribbean. Two weeks later came Hurricane Maria, compounding the damage and hindering recovery efforts.

Puerto Rico faces a staggering humanitarian crisis. But instead of offering reassurance, consolation and a helping hand, Trump suggests that the crisis is of Puerto Rico's own making. He shrugs his shoulders and says relief workers can't stay long.

Many of the island's 3.4 million American citizens are without electricity or fresh water. It's not hard to imagine that disease will soon take hold, or that mainland states like Florida will be overrun with storm refugees.

After first visiting the island and playfully tossing paper towels like he was shooting basketballs, Trump stunned the nation by suggesting that maybe Puerto Rico's debts might be forgiven: "wiped out."

This was a bad, unaffordable idea. But it got worse. He then turned on the island, becoming, in effect, the third tropical storm to leave residents feeling flattened and helpless.

Thursday, he shamed the territory for its circumstances, tweeting: "Electric and infrastructure was a disaster before the hurricanes." He quoted a conservative TV show host as saying Puerto Rico's "financial crisis looms largely of their own making."

Trump also wrote, "We cannot keep **FEMA**, the Military & the First Responders, who have been amazing (under the most difficult circumstances) in P.R. forever!"

The president's threats to abandon the devastated Puerto Ricans left them gasping.

As with most economic disasters, the blame for Puerto Rico's financial woes aren't simple. Yes, the island's debt pile exceeds \$70 billion; it's America's "Greece in the Caribbean." Decades of mismanagement and government corruption have contributed to this mess, but so have recession and federal laws that have hamstrung Puerto Rico's ability to control its own finances and economy.

If Trump — given his background in business — is talking about putting Puerto Rico on a path to alleviate its fiscal problems, this would be noble. But that's not what is coming across. What Puerto Ricans and other Americans are hearing is, "Buddy, you're on your own."

This is ugly and heartless. It is beneath his office. And it is not who we are as Americans. Congress should quickly supply leadership to help our storm-battered fellow Americans.

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Witcover: Trump's 'Love' For Puerto Rico Will Be Tested As Territory Recovers (Baltimore Sun)

By Jules Witcover

[Baltimore Sun](#), October 16, 2017

When Republican Sen. Bob Corker of Tennessee charged the other day that the White House had become "an adult day care center" — with three former generals there babysitting President Donald Trump — he added: "Someone obviously missed their shift."

On Thursday, the president proved Mr. Corker's point by tweeting a politically toxic threat to diminish federal relief to hurricane-hammered Puerto Rico. It followed his highly publicized visit to the island the previous week during which he pledged undying love and succor. Where were the Trump watchdogs when he needed to be saved from making this boneheaded warning?

In three consecutive tweets, the president charged that the U.S. territory had been "a disaster before (the) hurricanes," with its electrical grid and infrastructure already severely damaged.

He added: "We cannot keep **FEMA**, the Military and the First Responders, who have been amazing (under the most difficult circumstances) in Puerto Rico forever!" He quoted a television reporter saying the island had "survived the hurricanes" and "now a financial crisis looms largely of their own making."

Only days earlier in San Juan, the capital, Mr. Trump was tossing paper towels to the natives as if he were shooting basketballs and pledging his love and support with an incredibly callous and mocking display.

Earlier, he had castigated the city's Mayor Carmen Yulin Cruz for "poor leadership," but now he commended her as having "come back a long way" in coping with Hurricane Maria.

Still earlier, he had proclaimed: "We will not rest, however, until the people of Puerto Rico are safe. We want them to be safe and sound and secure and we will be there every day until that happens."

Vice President Mike Pence followed with his own visit, pledging that the Trump administration would be there "every step of the way. ... We will be with you every single day until Puerto Rico is restored bigger and better than ever before," he said.

However, most of the island's 3.4 million residents, American citizens by virtue of Puerto Rico's territorial status, remain without electric power, water and other essentials of life. Mr. Trump has even sought to make lemonade out of a lemon by congratulating Puerto Rico for having sustained a lower death toll than New Orleans suffered from Hurricane Katrina in 2005.

Mr. Trump has informed the Puerto Ricans that it will be up to Congress to determine how much the federal government will authorize as its share of the huge recovery effort required. The observation that the island was in terrible financial shape before Maria hit brought him back to his earlier theme castigating the natives for the shape they're in.

The president's profession of deep sympathy and concern over the Puerto Ricans' fate was already in doubt, given his long delay in visiting their stricken island, in contrast to his haste to visit Texas, Louisiana and Florida on the heels of their hurricanes.

After his tardy visit to Puerto Rico, Mr. Trump quickly pivoted to Las Vegas last week to demonstrate his grief over the mass shooting murder of civilian targets there. It did not go unnoticed or unmentioned that Mr. Trump has had real estate interests in America's gambling capital, as well as friends among the owners and operators of luxury hotels.

It remains to be seen how energetically the president will press the Republican-controlled Congress to meet the huge financial challenge of putting Puerto Rico back on its feet.

His sharp criticisms of its local public officials as poor custodians, while professing his affection for the island and its inhabitants in their hour of need, tests his compassion and sincerity. He often reassures his trusting crowds with the words "Believe me." Will the Puerto Ricans do so, as they remain in the dire aftermath throes of Maria?

Jules Witcover is a syndicated columnist and former long-time writer for The Baltimore Sun. His latest book is "The American Vice Presidency: From Irrelevance to Power" (Smithsonian Books). His email is juleswitcover@comcast.net.

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FEMA

Media Monitoring Report

October 19, 2017

FEMA Region 2

This report is a compilation of news media stories pertinent to Region 2 and the Sandy recovery efforts in New York and New Jersey for FEMA employees and a small number of government officials working on FEMA's issues. To be added or removed from this distribution, please e-mail gina.callaghan@fema.dhs.gov

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HURRICANE MARIA PUERTO RICO

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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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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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 deliveries 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 Utuado, 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.

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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. Jenniffer 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.”

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OTHER PUERTO RICO NEWS

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.'"

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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.

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'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.”

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HURRICANE MARIA USVI

Governor Tours St. John, Sees What’s Been Done and What Remains to Be Done

By Judi Shimel

St. Thomas Source, October 19, 2017

After spending three hours on the ground on St. John – one month after the second of two catastrophic storms dealt their blows – Gov. Kenneth Mapp said reassured the island’s residents that extra help was on the way. Accompanied by his chief of staff and half a dozen cabinet members, Mapp toured stops from Cruz Bay to Coral Bay; along a portion of Coral Bay Harbor, returning west along North Shore Road, and through the heart of the Virgin Islands National Park.

That tour took top officials past the closed Myrah Keating Smith Clinic, the expanded Susannaberg Landfill, past federally contracted clean-up crews and to the ravaged Coral Bay Fire Station, where firefighters have handed out relief supplies daily since Hurricane Irma on Sept. 6.

Mapp declared the fire house a total loss and said a new one would have to be built elsewhere. Fire Service Corporal Robert Hyde led the walk-through, past the blown out windows in what once was the firehouse kitchen, through the empty bunk area that suffered flooding and the office where masked firefighters battled mold with rags and mops.

Government House Chief of Staff Erroll Farrel said he wanted to do something about Coral Bay Fire House several months ago when he was the designated Fire Services director. Similar conditions made life rough for firefighters at Hotel Company, in Fort Christian on St. Thomas, he said.

But when Irma struck, a newly built facility at Estate Ross Taarnberg was ready to receive them. That was not the case in east St. John.

“They’re going to need a new station. That can’t be a build-back,” Mapp said. But there was no immediate answer about what to do to relieve first responders now in hardship.

More immediate plans were shifting into place Wednesday to hasten waste management. Waste Management Authority Director Roger Merritt III stood by as the governor said reinforcements were on the way.

“We have to put more assets, more manpower into household trash removal,” he said. That would be done with help from the Federal Emergency Management Agency with manpower already on island.

Mapp spoke from a point a few miles from where a backhoe operator hoisted loads of trash into a dump truck at the foot of King’s Hill Road. About a month ago, around the passage of Hurricane Maria, trash heaps rising 18 feet overwhelmed two dumpsters stationed there.

It was there the entourage surveyed some of the worst devastation, along Route 107 and the shore of Coral Bay Harbor, with shattered buildings, shorn mangroves and sailboats washed ashore. They also stopped at an affordable housing community which survived the storms unscathed.

That included the wastewater treatment plant at the Calabash Boom Housing Community, a low-to moderate income private development. Merritt and the governor had a first-hand look at the system, as the WMA director produced an update.

The pump station in Cruz Bay, public housing at George Simmonds Terrace, at Pond Mouth and Power Boyd were all running on generator power, he said. FEMA provided generators for public housing, Pond Mouth and was planning to install a permanent generator at Power Boyd, he said.

Traveling back up Route. 107, Mapp met resident Lorelei Monsanto, who voiced several concerns including the continuous lack of phone service in Coral Bay.

“So we’re in left field, all the way,” Monsanto said.

The governor assured her improvements were coming.

“I know Sprint gave us a complete plan yesterday about how they are going to get cell service back to the territory,” Mapp said.

VITEMA director Mona Barnes echoed her boss’s optimism when asked about how flagging phone service affected access to the 911 emergency call system.

“They are creating more hot spots every day,” Barnes said. And she declared 911 fully functional in areas where a signal can be found.

Those outside of the calling area who find themselves faced with an emergency will have to travel to the nearest first-responder station and report in person, she said.

Mapp said he was surprised to find no off-island utility crews working beside the Water and Power Authority. He wanted to see 40 visiting linemen on St. John this week, and more after when more repairmen arrive in the territory.

On the last leg of the tour, Mapp and company rolled downhill towards popular tourist beaches – Maho Bay, Cinnamon Bay Campground, Trunk Bay, Hawksnest Beach. There, they saw the destruction of a seaside pavilion at Maho, extensive damage at Caneel Bay Resort and the devastation at Oppenheimer Beach.

The North Shore destinations represent a V.I. tourism product the governor spoke about earlier this week at a press conference, announcing a restoration task force. To get there, beaches at the V.I. National Park will need a hand. The concrete pavilion at Maho Bay was torn away, as was the decking at popular Trunk Bay Beach and lodging at Cinnamon Bay.

The island's oldest tourist destination, Caneel Bay Resort, also suffered heavily. Mapp said he'd already heard it might take two years for that destination to recover.

That's OK, the chief executive said. They're coming back.

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WAPA Working To Restore Centerline Road Streetlights On St. Croix; St. John To See First Wave Of Power Sunday

Virgin Islands Consortium, October 19, 2017

Below, find the Virgin Islands Water and Power Authority's latest power and potable water restoration update.

ELECTRIC SYSTEM

WAPA will continue the restoration of electrical service to several areas across St. Thomas within the next week. Sections of St. John are expected to receive an initial wave of service restoration by next week.

On Wednesday, line crews continued reconstructing circuits along the Lindbergh Bay road from AMCO Auto Sales north to Winnie's Day Care and west toward Gladys Abraham Elementary School. Customers along the main lines will be restored when crews are energizing the primary lines. Additional streetlights are also expected to be energized. Over the next few days the following areas are targeted for service restoration: Blyden Marine Terminal (Tortola Wharf), Veterans Drive towards Cancryn Junior High School and portions of Contant. Sections of the junior high school will be used to support local and federal responders.

On Friday, divers will be performing assessments of WAPA's submarine cables to St. John, Hassel Island and Water Island, as preparations are made to restore electrical service to those areas.

Based on current restoration work schedules, WAPA is projecting to energize its East End Substation on Sunday and will thereafter begin to restore service to portions of Cruz Bay, including the Julius Sprauve School by the middle of next week. Additionally, portions of the Joseph Gomez Elementary School will be restored by early next week, with the Kean High School receiving service restoration by next weekend. The primary circuits on a portion of Feeder 9C from Fort Mylner to Nadir will be energized this weekend, and a portion of Feeder 7C, from Mc Donald's Restaurant in Tutu to the top of Cassi Hill, is also slated for service restoration over the weekend.

On St. Croix, reconstruction work continued in the Sunny Isle and Watergut areas. The work in Watergut, near the seaplane terminal, will facilitate the restoration of additional customers on Feeder 1A, in downtown Christiansted. Crews also worked to reconstruct a circuit from Mill Harbor to Five Corners. Over the next few days, WAPA will be energizing additional streetlights on Centerline Road. Both reconstruction and restoration work continued in Hannah's Rest on Wednesday. Asplundh and WAPA crews will cut back roadside trees along Queen Mary Highway heading to Frederiksted, as the Authority relocates primary circuits closer to the roadsides to avoid dense brush, which contributes to frequent service interruptions.

WAPA personnel has removed electrical meters at locations where damage was apparent to either an electrical meter base and/or weather head. In these instances, the customer is responsible for all repairs. WAPA will not reinstall meters until repairs are made and certified by a licensed electrician. Home and business owners are advised to make repairs to their damaged weather heads and or meter bases as soon as possible. Once crews have reached your neighborhood, those customers who have not had their weather head or meter base repaired, will not have service immediately restored.

POTABLE WATER SYSTEM

There are four days of emergency water storage on St. John, nine days on St. Thomas and three days on St. Croix. In general, the potable water system is more than 90% restored in both districts following the two hurricanes.

On St. Thomas, water service has been interrupted to Contant Knolls housing community, Contant and surrounding areas. Crews are working to restore faulty pumps at the Contant station.

On St. John, repairs are pending at the Cruz Bay pump station. Until these repairs are completed, the town of Cruz Bay is being provided potable water service from St. Thomas.

On St. Croix, water pressure continues to increase in Frederiksted and other west-end communities.

WAPA reminds clean-up contractors and homeowners to exercise caution when piling debris on and around potable water meters. There are a growing number of instances where water meters are being damaged by clean-up equipment grading debris and causing damage to the roadside water meters. The continued damage by heavy equipment poses difficulty in maintaining or restoring potable water service to customers.

OTHER INFORMATION

Emergency Call Centers operate 9 a.m. – 5 p.m., seven days a week.

St. Thomas – St. John district, 340-774-1424; St. Croix district, 340-773-0150

WAPA telephone contact: St. Thomas – St. John district, 340-774-3552; St. Croix district, 340-773-2250

Customer Service Offices operate Monday – Friday, 10 a.m. – 4 p.m. at Sunny Isle on St. Croix and at Port of Sale Mall on St. Thomas

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Curfew Shortened on All Islands to 8 p.m. to 5 a.m.

By Marina Leonard

St. Croix Source, October 18, 2017

Gov. Kenneth Mapp announced Wednesday that the curfew that has been effect across the territory since two hurricanes hit in September has been shortened and made uniform. The curfew on all the Virgin Islands will now be from 8 p.m. to 5 a.m.

Mapp made the comment at a news conference Wednesday updating the territory on the progress of hurricane recovery.

He also reassured St. John residents that they have not been forgotten. A crew of linemen will arrive on St. John by 5:30 a.m. Thursday, and the governor said his goal is to have Cruz Bay energized by next week.

Mapp spent Wednesday morning on St. John Wednesday and said there is “more work to do on St. John, but I want to assure residents of St. John/Coral Bay that you’re not forgotten and we’ll pick that pace up.”

An additional 250 linemen arrive int he territory by Oct. 27, he said, and then a third wave of linemen will arrive in November.

While an abundance of linemen will speed the pace of work, Mapp warned, “If your roof is breached or you have tarpaulin on your roof, you cannot be connected to water and power.”

This is due to the dangers that connecting a house with no roof or a breached roof. In addition, if a weatherhead on the roof is broken, the linemen will not connect it in the first wave of connections. Both the roofs and the weatherheads will have to be repaired before power can be restored to those buildings.

Lt. Gov. Osbert Potter said his office will resume full service operations beginning Friday morning. Asked directly about property tax clearance letters which have not been issued on St. Croix since Hurricane Maria, Potter said they should start being issued on Friday morning with the rest of the services offered by his office. The only the processing of passports will be limited until further notice, as they are processed by the federal government. Anyone with an emergency passport issue can call 877-487-2778, he said.

Individuals have had a lot of insurance questions about their property and coverage, Potter said.

“We have found that we have a lot of people in the territory that are underinsured,” he said.

Potter said he will try to inform the public on insurance and different options in order to curtail the under-insurance problem in the future.

Bureau of Motor Vehicles Director Lawrence Olive reported that all the Bureau of Motor Vehicles on the territory are open for registration, shipping and vehicle transfers. However, no facilities are able to process driver's licenses at this time, and this process may take a couple of weeks to repair.

Commissioner of Labor Catherine A. Hendry announced that the Department of Labor was moving back to its Sion Farm location on St. Croix beginning Thursday. Hendry's department has resumed full operations in both districts. Hendry asked that all claimants receiving workers' compensation benefits come to the Department of Labor in order to sign up for direct deposits. She also reminded residents that the last day to apply for Disaster Unemployment Benefits for self-employed individuals is Oct. 30 for victims of Hurricane Irma and Nov. 7 for victims of Hurricane Maria.

Bill Vogel, federal coordinating officer of FEMA Region II, reported that FEMA is still in the process of identifying sunken vessels to enable the use of harbors 24/7 and not just during daylight hours. He expressed his condolences on the unexpected death of FEMA outreach worker, Rich Bradley, who died of natural causes over the weekend who died of natural causes.

Vogel also warned the public to beware of fraud when it comes to giving sensitive information to scammers pretending to be FEMA representatives. As \$3.2 million have already been distributed through the FEMA individual and households grant program, more individuals are becoming susceptible to the scam. Vogel reminded residents that FEMA representatives will use text messages to make appointments with residents only and no personal information will be requested over text message, and no links to fill out paperwork with personal information will be sent to residents through those text messages. Anyone who suspects fraud can call 866-720-5721 for more information.

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Some St. Croix Schools to Resume Monday

By Marina Leonard

St. Croix Source, October 18, 2017

Department of Education Commissioner Sharon Ann McCollum (Jamie LeonaDepartment of Education Commissioner Sharon Ann McCollum announced that three public schools will open on St. Croix on beginning Monday, and those three will hold double sessions.

According to McCollum, who spoke at Wednesday's Government House news conference updating progress in hurricane recovery, the three schools and their schedule are:

– St. Croix Central High School: Central students will attend class from from 7:30 a.m. 11:30 a.m. Students from Elena Christian Junior High School and John Woodson Junior High School will attend class at Central High School from 12:30 to 4:30 p.m.

– St. Croix Educational Complex High School and C-Tech: Complex students will attend from 7:30 to 11:30 a.m. Arthur Richards Junior High School students will attend at Complex High School from 12:30 to 4:30 p.m.

– Juanita Gardine Elementary School: Gardine students will attend from 7:30 a.m. to 11:30 a.m. Students from Pearl B. Larsen Elementary School will attend classes at Gardine Elementary School from 12:30 to 4:30 p.m.

Alternative education, the Youth Rehabilitation Center and adult education also will resume Monday.

Breakfast will be served to all students who attend the morning sessions. Lunch will be scheduled from 11:30 a.m. to noon for morning session students and from noon to 12:30 p.m. for afternoon session students.

The bus company that services St. Croix’s public schools only has six operable buses. McCollum said the Department of Education will use VITran buses but that they need the public’s help for the current lack of transportation.

All students who have uniforms have to wear uniforms to school.

“A grace period will be given to those students who do not have uniforms,” McCollum said, but uniforms are not optional for those who have them.

Most of the St. Croix public schools buildings not mentioned above have been condemned due to asbestos and/or water damage, but some are still being assessed.

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Protect Yourself And Your Family: Important Information For USVI Hurricane Survivors

Virgin Islands Consortium, October 18, 2017

ST. CROIX — The Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA) on Wednesday issued safety guidelines aimed at protecting the lives of hurricane survivors who may become exposed to certain hazards caused by Hurricanes Irma and Maria. The guidelines are on safe drinking water, food, and even how to clean one’s home, among other tips. See them below.

The Virgin Islands Water and Power Authority’s (WAPA) boil water advisory remains in effect for potable water across the territory. Don’t use water straight from the tap to drink, brush your teeth, wash and prepare food, make ice, or prepare baby formula.

The USVI Department of Health (DOH) and the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) offer the following steps to stay safe during this difficult time:

Use bottled water for drinking, cooking, and brushing teeth

If you do not have bottled water, boil or disinfect your water:

How to boil: Heat water to a rolling boil for at least a minute.

How to disinfect: Add 8 drops of household bleach to 1 gallon of clear water or 16 drops to cloudy water. Wait 30 minutes before drinking.

Boil or disinfect cistern water a gallon or less at a time.

Keep your hands clean to prevent the spread of bacteria/diseases

Wash your hands with soap and clean water often (always before meals and after using the bathroom). If you do not have soap and clean water, use an alcohol-based hand sanitizer.

Eat safe food

Throw away food that may have come in contact with flood or stormwater, perishable foods, and those with an unusual odor, color, or texture.

When in doubt, throw it out.

Be safe while cleaning up

Never touch a power line.

Carbon monoxide is an odorless, colorless gas that can sudden illness and death. To prevent carbon monoxide poisoning, keep generators at least 20 feet from buildings and use a carbon monoxide detector.

If using a chainsaw, follow the manufacturer's safety instructions and make sure others stand back.

When cleaning mold, wear goggles, gloves, boots, and a NIOSH-approved N95 respirator (available at hardware stores).

Protect yourself from mosquitoes

Use EPA-approved repellent that contains oil of lemon eucalyptus, Picaridin, IR3535, or DEET.

Cover or dump out standing water where mosquitoes could lay eggs.

Keep doors closed and repair window screens.

If exposed to mosquitoes while sleeping, wear repellent and/or use a mosquito net.

Wear long-sleeved shirts and long pants.

The Virgin Islands Department of Planning and Natural Resources (DPNR) advises the public to be cautious when using the coastal waters throughout the territory until further notice. There may be an elevated health risk to anyone swimming in storm water-impacted areas as a result of increased concentrations of bacteria.

People should also be aware that stormwater runoff due to hurricanes and tropical storms may also contain contaminants or pollutants harmful to human health due to storm debris. Areas of stormwater runoff, such as puddles and drainage basins, should be avoided.

FEMA personnel remain on the ground across the territory and continue to coordinate efforts with the governor's office and the Virgin Islands Territorial Emergency Management Agency (VITEMA). Here are some additional safety tips you can follow to ensure life safety:

Heavy rains are still possible. Listen to local officials for updates and instructions during any flooding event or other emergency.

Emergency crews continue to remove debris, clear downed power lines, and restore communications capabilities on the islands. You can help them by staying off the roads and out of the way as much as possible. It is important to obey curfews.

Territory-wide curfew

Government officials would like to remind everyone that a curfew remains in effect for all of the U.S. Virgin Islands:

On St. Croix the curfew is daily from 7 p.m. to 8 a.m.

On St. Thomas and St. John the curfew is daily from 7 p.m. to 5 a.m.

Driving safely

Driving at night is extremely dangerous with traffic lights out. In addition, downed powerlines and debris can remain on the roads since the storms.

Drive slowly, carefully, and have patience. It is a stressful time for everyone as Virgin Island communities gets back to routine.

Be mindful of pedestrians. Curfews may increase the number of pedestrians on the streets. Take extra care to watch out for pedestrians.

Turn around, don't drown. Driving through a flooded area can be extremely hazardous and almost half of all flash flood deaths happen in vehicles. When in your car, look out for flooding in low-lying areas, at bridges and at highway dips. As little as six inches of water may cause you to lose control of your vehicle.

Additional resources

More information from the USVI Department of Health:

www.facebook.com/virginislandsdoh and doh.vi.gov.

The CDC website includes information regarding mold health hazards as well as prevention, clean up and remediation guidance:

English: www.cdc.gov/mold/cleanup-guide.html

Spanish: www.cdc.gov/mold/es/cleanup-guide.html

More information on drinking safe water is available at:

English: www.cdc.gov/healthywater/emergency/pdf/16_262392-a_drink-safe-water_flyer_eng_508.pdf

Spanish: www.cdc.gov/healthywater/emergency/pdf/16_262392-b_drink-safe-water_spflyer_508.pdf

More information on food and water safety is available at:

English: www.cdc.gov/disasters/foodwater/facts.html

Spanish: www.cdc.gov/es/disasters/hurricanes/foodwater.html

Haitian-Creole:

www.cdc.gov/disasters/foodwater/pdfs/KeepFoodWaterSafe_Haitian_Creole.pdf

More information on safely using generators is available at:

English: www.cdc.gov/co/pdfs/Generators.pdf

Spanish: www.cdc.gov/co/pdfs/CO_Generator_Safety_Spanish.pdf

Haitian-Creole: www.cdc.gov/co/ht/pdfs/guidelines.pdf

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NEW YORK CITY

Brooklyn And Staten Island Will Receive \$9.3M For Sandy-Related Repairs

By Tanay Warekar

Curbed, October 18, 2017

In order to supplement ongoing Hurricane Sandy-related repair efforts, Governor Andrew Cuomo has announced Project UPLIFT. This \$9.3 million home elevation program will offer assistance to low and middle-income New Yorkers living in Gerritsen Beach or Sheepshead Bay in Brooklyn, and Staten Island's East and South Shores.

The program is looking to address the unmet needs of homeowners in areas that are particularly vulnerable to flooding, and those who don't qualify for other flood relief and repair funding programs. At present, the Governor's office is rolling this out as a pilot program and has selected 28 homes in the above-mentioned areas to participate in the program.

Moving forward, those eligible for the program will have to be low or middle-income New Yorkers whose main residence was impacted by Hurricane Sandy, and sits within the 100-year floodplain in the above-mentioned areas. Eligibility is assessed based on the requirements set by the Governor's Office of Storm Recovery, SBP, and U.S. Department of Housing & Urban Development.

Homes selected for the pilot program were assessed for the aid they had already received and range in size from single-family and semi-attached houses to bungalows.

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City Council Passes Bill for Hurricane Sandy Committee, Seeks Report on Outcomes, Recommendations for the Future

By Paul Stremple

Bklyner, October 18, 2017

Five years on from Hurricane Sandy, a new task force will prepare New York City for future natural disasters.

Yesterday, on Tuesday, October 16, the City Council voted unanimously on Councilmember Mark Treyger's (47th District) recently proposed bill, Intro 1720-A, creating the Hurricane Sandy recovery task force.

Brooklyn Councilmembers Carlos Menchaca (38th), Alan Maisel (46th) and Vincent Gentile (43rd) were co-sponsors of the bill.

The bill calls for the creation of a task force which would report on the city's efforts to recover from Hurricane Sandy. Additionally, the task force will make recommendations to the city about how to prepare for potential future natural disasters.

The committee will consist of 15 members, including a representative from each of the city's five boroughs, as well as reps from relevant city agencies.

According to the official press release, the committee would analyze the city's recovery efforts post-Sandy, from outreach and language access programs to case management, workforce development and the role of non-profit organizations, eventually presenting a report on their findings.

Looking to the future, the committee would also make a series of recommendations "for building resiliency and improving preparedness against future natural disasters," which would include case management, design standards, damage assessments and any proposed regulatory changes.

"Our recovery has not been without its setbacks," said Treyger, "But those challenges have afforded us the opportunity to gain valuable insight on what went right and what we can do better."

Last month, Council Member Treyger called an oversight hearing for the Committee on Resiliency and Recovery, looking into ongoing work and disenrollment in the Build It Back campaign for Hurricane Sandy recovery, taking the director of the Mayor's Office of Housing Recovery to task for poor outcomes.

Intro 1720-A is currently awaiting Mayor De Blasio's signature.

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OTHER NEW YORK NEWS

Stony Brook University Improves Emergency Operations with Hiperwall following Wrath of Hurricane Sandy

Commercial Integrator, October 18, 2017

When Hurricane Sandy ripped through Long Island during fall semester 2012, it was “an unprecedented event” for Stony Brook University, says Lawrence M. Zaccarese, assistant chief of police and director of the Office of Emergency Management. In preparation for the next potential event, Stony Brook University added an emergency operations center featuring a video wall with Hiperwall software.

More than anything else, the Hiperwall video wall software helped tie together various objectives that the university had for its emergency operations center, says Lee Mandel, CEO of Massapequa, N.Y.-based Intralogic Solutions, the integration firm that designed and installed the system.

“We wanted to tie in all systems into one common operating picture and not be limited based off manufacturer or vendor,” Mandel says, highlighting the hardware-agnostic nature of Hiperwall’s software. “Hiperwall was a solution that provided unlimited capabilities without the need for expensive hardware. We were able to easily bring everything together into one organized platform.”

Some of those factors that had to come together include:

Some of those factors that had to come together include:

- Being able to easily pull together sources from any and all available sources to display quickly on a video wall to allow for quick-decision-making during evolving events

- Use of existing technology, which was made possible by Hiperwall being hardware-agnostic and saved the university money

Mandel calls the Hiperwall implementation at Stony Brook “a perfect example of being able to see everything in one place.” That, he says, “Not only saves time but also increases efficiency.”

Intralogic Solutions worked with Zaccarese and Stony Brook University lead programmer and analyst Steven Wong on the school’s specific emergency management needs. In the end, “Stony Brook used a combination of no bezel displays and thin bezel displays to create an organized and systematic video wall which helps keep all of the assets organized for the end user to control,” Mandel says.

However, the capability to pull content from anywhere and “display it on the Hiperwall quickly and prominently” to facilitate “quick and effective decisions” was paramount, adds Wong.

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OTHER NEW JERSEY NEWS

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.

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Drones Are the Focus During Three-Day Conference in Cape May

[SNJ Today](#), October 18, 2017

CAPE MAY, N.J. - Drones are the way of the future and this week local and state officials and business leaders explored all the ways they can be used.

Wednesday, October 18th, was the last day of the third annual conference on unmanned aerial systems at the Cape May Convention Hall.

The three-day conference focused on drones and drone technology and how they can be utilized in commercial and government environments.

"Their capability is not well understood. What I think needs to be done is, again people who are going to deploy them, the decision makers, need to have a better understanding and a better comfort level for the drone technology," said Michael Moriarty, director of mitigation of Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA) Region II.

The conference included speakers from different organizations like FEMA, The National Weather Service, and the New Jersey State Police.

There were also technical exhibits, demonstrations, and roundtable discussions.

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Coastal Commission Idea Gains Traction

By Tom Johnson

NJ Spotlight, October 19, 2017

Could climate change lead the state to embrace an idea it shunned more than three decades ago: creation of a coastal commission?

The prospect of establishing a strong regional entity to plan and adapt to the chronic flooding and rising sea levels expected to leave much of the Jersey coast vulnerable was floated this week at a wide-ranging conference on the Shore of the Future at the War Memorial in Trenton.

The event, the first of a series of conferences planned by New Jersey Future, found planners, conservationists, and policymakers generally agreeing that the challenges posed by a changing climate far outstrip the ability of local communities to cope with and be resilient to extreme storms to come.

Former Gov. Thomas Kean initially proposed a coastal commission back in his second term in the 1980s, but it died in the Legislature. Attempts to revive it have gotten nowhere - even after Hurricane Sandy devastated wide swaths of the coast.

Kean revived the idea in an op-ed co-authored with Peter Kasabach, executive director of New Jersey Future, in the Star-Ledger last Sunday.

With a new governor taking office in January and a sense of urgency added by a spate of destructive hurricanes this summer in Texas, Florida, and Puerto Rico, the idea that only a regional commission can prepare for and take the steps to mitigate the impact of future storms and global warming seems to be gaining currency.

"It's time for something," said Tim Dillingham, executive director of the American Littoral Society. "I don't think there's any question a regional approach is needed. That means fundamentally renegotiating our relationship with water."

"What's really quite clear is the issues are far too big, far outstrip the ability of one or even a group of municipalities to handle. The state needs to step up," said David Kutner, planning manager for New Jersey Future. "It is a role New Jersey has been absent from - I daresay - for the past eight years."

A coastal commission could marshal the science about climate change to establish standards that would make Shore communities more resilient and prepared to deal with the impacts of global warming, proponents said.

It also could act as an advocate in making sure investments are targeted to the right places, they said.

Others noted that many Shore communities already are feeling the impact of climate change, with chronic flooding during high tides.

Sea-level rise will erase important assets along the coast, predicted Joseph Maraziti Jr., former chairman of the State Planning Commission.

Local governments face too many fiscal constraints to tackle these issues alone, Maraziti said. "We can't sacrifice our future on the altar of home rule," he warned.

A study released earlier this year by the Regional Plan Association found that many areas of the tri-state region, mostly in bay areas and near tidal estuaries, will be permanently inundated by sea-level rise.

In a report released this week, the RPA proposed a surcharge on insurance premiums to help fight climate change, according to Robert Freudenberg, vice president of energy and environmental programs for the association. It also recommended a tri-state coastal commission.

"There is a lot we can do locally, but we need to act regionally," he said.

The recurring question during the discussions was whether a regional approach to the problem can win approval. "I don't think this goes anywhere without leadership," Dillingham said.

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Students Restore Dunes And Earn The Eco-Schools Bronze Award

Atlantic Highlands Herald, October 18, 2017

SANDY HOOK, NJ - While the country is reeling from Hurricanes Harvey, Irma and Maria, efforts are still underway to restore the extensive damage done by Hurricane Sandy in 2012. Marine Academy of Science and Technology (MAST) is on the job. Students developed and implemented a plan to increase dune vegetation lost in hurricane Sandy. Their efforts earned the school a Bronze Award from Eco-Schools USA a National Wildlife Federation program orchestrated by New Jersey Audubon here in New Jersey.

Dunes serve as a natural line of defense in protecting coastal communities during hurricanes and other storms. Destructive waves and storm surges from Hurricane Sandy badly damaged the dunes of Sandy Hook weakening this line of defense for future storms. MAST students identified one damaged area of particular ecological importance in an area within the park called the "critical zone". This is the area where Sandy Hook is the thinnest and most susceptible to overwash and flooding from storm events. Working under the supervision of National Park Service's Jeanne McArthur-Heuser and George Frame and MAST teachers, Liza Baskin and Clare Ng, students planted over 1,000 dune grass plants over a span of 3,000 feet along the beaches of Sandy Hook. Vegetation is an important part of the dune eco-system. The vegetation and dune grow together making it a more effective barrier overtime. The students efforts will help this process along.

"This issue hits close to home for us" says teacher Clare Ng. "Our school is located on Sandy Hook. The school suffered so much damage after the storm that we were displaced for the 2012-2013 school year. Many of the students working on the project lost homes in Hurricane Sandy or

knew someone who did. The kids are enthusiastic about participating in restoring dune habitats so vital to our community.”

MAST participates in National Wildlife Federation’s Eco-Schools USA, a program run by New Jersey Audubon in NJ that engages schools in efforts to improve student environmental literacy and skills. As schools progress through the program, they become eligible for awards. This dune restoration project earned MAST the Eco-Schools USA Bronze Award for their efforts in creating environmental solutions through student driven projects. New Jersey has over 240 schools participating in the program. 41 schools have earned the Bronze award, 15 have earned Silver Awards and 15 have earned the top honor, the Green Flag Award.

“Marine Academy of Science and Technology is doing something really valuable here,” says Eco-Schools coordinator with New Jersey Audubon, Allison Mulch. “In addition to doing the important work of building coastal resiliency through dune restoration, they are empowering students to have a positive impact on their own environment and teaching them the value of community service.”

As the Eco-Schools coordinator for New Jersey Ms. Mulch works directly with schools to guide them through the program and provides free training workshops throughout the state. Though Eco-Schools USA is nationwide, her position is unique to New Jersey provided by a partnership with PSEG Foundation, National Wildlife Federation and New Jersey Audubon.

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CLIMATE CHANGE

New RPA Report Is ‘A Wake Up Call’ On Rising Sea Levels And Growing Flood Risk

By Michelle Cohen

6SqFt, October 18, 2017

Hurricane season is impossible to ignore, and as the October 29th anniversary date of Superstorm Sandy approaches, the Regional Plan Association (RPA) has released a report titled “Coastal Adaptation: A Framework for Governance and Funding to Address Climate Change” that warns of the imminent threat of rising sea levels and outlines a strategy to protect the many vulnerable stretches of New York, New Jersey and Connecticut. According to the report, 59 percent of the region’s energy capacity, four major airports, 21 percent of public housing units, and 12 percent of hospital beds will be in areas at risk of flooding over the next 30 years. RPA research found that even in light of these projections, the region’s climate change planning tends to be reactive and local rather than pro-active and regional—and it’s not nearly enough.

The study upon which the report was based, “Under Water: How Sea Level Rise Threatens the Tri-State Region,” explains the severe threats to the region’s varied communities by as little as one foot of sea level rise—which could happen as soon as the 2030s. Sea levels are projected to rise by two feet—putting 10,000 homes permanently under water—with up to six feet of possible sea level rise in the next century. But according to the study, federal, state and local recovery policy has addressed primarily the effects of storm surge, falling short of dealing with the long-term threat of permanent flooding.

In the same 30-year period, the number of people living in areas at high risk of flooding in extreme storm conditions is expected to double from 1 million to 2 million. With over 3,700 miles of densely-populated tidal coastline, the region's states and local communities face the challenge of finding the resources and making the changes necessary to adapt, such as restoring wetlands, building sea walls, raising buildings, retrofitting infrastructure and buying out vulnerable homeowners. While superstorm Sandy provided an infusion of funding, there are still \$28 billion worth of identified needs that have not been funded.

In addition to outlining the expected environmental challenges, the report suggests a blueprint for a regional governance structure and a funding mechanism to manage those challenges in a comprehensive manner. Recommendations start with the formation of a Regional Coastal Commission (RCC) similar to ones already in existence in the Chesapeake Bay and San Francisco Bay areas. The RCC would prioritize projects that would be funded by new state adaptation trust funds that would in turn be funded from surcharges on property and region-wide casualty premiums. The commission would create and update a regional coastal adaptation plan to coordinate policies across municipal and state boundaries and set a long- and short-term regional plan.

The Coastal Commission for the tri-state region would be responsible for:

- Producing and updating a regional coastal adaptation plan that aligns policies across municipal and state boundaries and sets a vision for short-term resilience and long-term adaptation.

- Developing and managing science-informed standards to guide and prioritize adaptation projects and development in the region's at-risk geographies.

- Coordinating and encouraging collaborative adaptation projects across municipal and state boundaries.

- Evaluating and awarding funding from new adaptation trust funds that align with standards established by the commission.

Tom Wright, Regional Plan Association president said, "In the wake of disasters like Hurricane Sandy, creating more resilient communities and planning for climate change has become synonymous with protecting our communities from severe storms. While many policies in place today will help us weather those storms, most won't eliminate the threat of sea level rise or help our communities adapt to permanent flooding in the long run. We hope this report is a wake-up call about the severe threat sea level rise poses to our region's neighborhoods, our economic centers and our infrastructure."

The report, read it in full here (PDF), is part of the RPA's Fourth Regional Plan for the New York, New Jersey and Connecticut metropolitan area that will be released in full on November 30th, 2017.

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INSURANCE and LEGAL

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.

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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.

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OTHER NEWS

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

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SPANISH

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.

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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 suministro 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 suministros 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 suministrándole 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 suministro 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 suministro 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 suministro)”, 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 suministro 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.

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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.

Habrá transparencia

A preguntas de El Nuevo Día en torno a cómo su administración evitará la existencia de conflictos de interés o el despilfarro de fondos en proyectos innecesarios, Rosselló Nevares dijo que también toma cartas en el asunto.

“Vamos a crear una estructura para darle coherencia y transparencia al uso de todos los fondos. No queremos caer en una situación como la de (el huracán) Katrina que, por la falta de claridad y por la falta de ejecución, se perdieron billones de dólares”, indicó.

La estructura, explicó, tendrá dos niveles de transparencia: uno para el gobierno federal para asegurar el repago de reembolsos, y, la segunda, para los ciudadanos.

“Es importante establecer que todos estos proyectos responden a un fin del bien público y que no se han decidido a espaldas del pueblo o por distintos actores”, dijo.

“Ese dinero va a ser para construir la plataforma del futuro. Voy a asegurar que exista diligencia y transparencia”, subrayó.

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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.

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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.

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OPINION

Hurricanes And Insurance: Evaluating Superstorm Sandy Five Years Later

By Sam Boyer

Insurance Business America, October 18, 2017

As we approach the five-year anniversary of Superstorm Sandy striking the United States' northeast, it seems a good time to re-evaluate what we know about recent hurricanes, analyze what we learned in New York in late-October 2012, and look at what hurricanes bring today.

Andrew Higgins, technical manager for the Americas at Allianz Risk Consulting, spoke with Insurance Business and looked back on one of the most damaging storms in US history – and compared it to the recent hurricanes to strike the southern United States.

Celebrate excellence in insurance. Join us at the Insurance Business Awards in Chicago.

“Most of the losses related to Sandy were from storm surge,” he said. “Even though Sandy was officially a weak storm – it wasn't even a hurricane – some of the odd things that happened was that it hit at high tide, it hit during the full moon, and it also did something really unusual: it approached land from the east. All that added up to this huge storm surge.

“Harvey was an entirely different animal. Most of the losses associated with Harvey were related to inland flooding – just huge amounts of rainfall that fell. That's a different mechanism than Sandy. The other thing about Houston is Houston has no zoning laws, so there's really not a coordinated effort in the city to manage drainage. There's nowhere for the water to go anymore.

“Now, Irma to me was a storm in which you saw losses from all three mechanisms: you had had a little bit of storm surge, you had some inland flood, and you had wind damage.

“So, three very different storms, but I think the outcomes in terms of total losses are going to be similar between the three.”

Learn more about flood insurance at the Future of Flood event being held in Miami, Florida on November 16. [Click here](#) for more details and to register.

Sandy was “a relatively weak storm but resulted in huge losses,” Higgins said, largely because it surprised a lot of people. “It was a bit of a surprise to the industry ... we haven’t had that many storms hit New York,” he added.

“And we have seen huge development along the coastline in that northeast corridor. The natural barriers in a coastline naturally reduce the storm surge. But a lot of those natural areas have been developed ... so the ability of that coastline to absorb storm surge has really been reduced.”

So what does the future hold for hurricane catastrophe coverage?

“The whole ‘new normal’ ... if you look at the total insured losses, it has increased exponentially in the last 20, 30, 40 years from these storms,” Higgins said.

And there are reasons to suspect there may be even more – and worse – hurricanes in the future.

“There is certainly some scientific evidence that as our climate warms, the atmosphere has the ability to hold a whole lot more moisture,” he said. “That’s scientifically proven. And the earth is certainly warming. Theoretically, there is the ability for the environment to hold more moisture and that could result in harder downpours, more rain, and stronger storms.

“But to me that’s not the issue. The issue is development in the coastal areas. That’s what causing all these losses. We’ve got more people and more buildings in harm’s way. And every time there’s a storm, we’re going to see more losses.”

In addition, Higgins said, the interconnectedness of today’s economy means even more losses will be incurred in future, with business interruption caused by affected businesses in one location impacting businesses in another.

“To me that’s really driving the incredible increase in damages from these storms,” he said.

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Survey Details Sandy's Continued Misery | Di Ionno

By Mark Di Ionno

The Star-Ledger, October 18, 2017

You can believe a detailed academic survey of about 500 households, or you can believe your own eyes.

Either way, a nonprofit organization's report card released today on the Hurricane Sandy recovery as the five year anniversary nears says the "storm after the storm" is still very real to many people.

"The storm after the storm" or the "disaster after the disaster" is how many Sandy victims describe their road to recovery. And while the word "road" implies straight and smooth, it is more accurate to say the "obstacle course to recovery."

Think of one of those Tough Mudder races - that's what rehabbing after Sandy has been like for many victims. Bogged down in the deep muck of government paperwork. Climbing the high walls of insurance company obstinance and, in some cases, outright fraud. Walking the balance beams of finding a reliable contractor.

In the hard hit areas of the Barneget and Raritan bays, it is very clear the recovery is far from over. Houses remain boarded or vacant and lots are empty. "For Sale" signs dot the landscape. Construction continues and for every few homes that look rebuilt and inhabited, there is another on the block that continues to languish.

As of Sept. 30, the state Department of Community Affairs, which has handled the Sandy recovery, reports that 2,000 of the 7,572 homeowners in the Reconstruction, Rehabilitation, Elevation, and Mitigation (RREM) program still await a certificate of occupancy (CO) for their homes. Of 386 people in low- and middle-income rebuilding programs, 208 remain without a CO. No CO means you can't go home.

The number of primary homeowners still out of their homes is elusive. The state keeps track only of the people who entered the RREM program, which awarded grants to elevate homes to levels that meet new FEMA flood insurance requirements.

No one is even counting those whose damaged property was a second residence because they are not eligible for any government grants or loans.

Amanda Devecka-Rinear, an experienced activist who lives several steps from the Barnegat Bay on Cedar Bonnet Island, started the New Jersey Organizing Project (NJOP) in 2014 to advocate for Sandy victims stuck in the morass of the recovery.

"It's impossible to tell how many people are still out," she said. "There were estimates that 50,000 homeowners and renters were forced from their primary homes after the storm. At one point, the state said there were 12,000 people in RREM. Where did they all go?"

Earlier this year, her organization attempted to find out. Volunteers spread out in the most impacted areas with detailed questionnaires about Sandy victims' recovery experiences. Surveys were done in Toms River, Union Beach, Beach Haven West, Ortleigh Beach, Atlantic City, and four other devastated areas. In many cases, volunteers interviewed people directly. Overall, several thousand people had access to the survey.

NJOP received 551 responses, not a huge sampling, but enough to draw some attention to the success of the recovery house-to-house. The 56-page report, issued by the New Jersey Resource Project, is titled "The Long Road Home: Superstorm Sandy Still Taking a Toll Five Years Later." Among the findings are:

22 percent of people surveyed are still not home.

77 percent said they did not get enough insurance money to finish rebuilding and had to borrow from their retirement savings or other funds, Small Business Association loans or credit cards.

More than 70 percent said the anxiety and stress during the recovery led to physical or mental health problems, including depression, post-traumatic stress, and respiratory problems due to mold conditions.

56 percent say they have had trouble keeping up with bills, or even affording food since the hurricane.

While 50 percent of homeowners reported damages of \$150,000 or more, only seven percent received National Flood Insurance compensation in that amount.

20 percent of people in the state RREM program have been told that they owe money to the grant programs and 90 percent of that number said they could not afford to pay back the money.

41 percent lost their jobs or had their livelihood adversely effected.

32 percent fell behind on mortgages/rent payments and taxes on their Sandy-damaged homes.

While the sample is small, the people involved in gathering the information have vast experience with Sandy victims.

Jessica Limbacher, from Volunteer Lawyers for Justice, is one of the authors of the survey and has represented several hundred Sandy victims.

"One of the most important things we have learned - and which this survey confirms - is that people need ongoing assistance, even now five years later," she said.

The point of the survey, Devecka-Rinear said, is not just to quantify misery. It's to help the federal, state and local governments prepare for the next time - and even help navigate the recoveries of hurricanes Harvey, Irma and Maria.

"Our communities learned these lessons the hard way," she said. "We have solutions to help New Jersey families and make sure no one in any state has to go through what we have. Shame on us if we don't listen."

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Subject:	Media Analysis Report DR-4339-PR 10/17/17 (morning)
Date:	2017/10/17 11:46:33
Priority:	Normal
Type:	Note

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 Opinión)

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

advantage to seize this opportunity as it is closer to San Juan (1,508 nautical miles) than the ports of Houston (4,334 nautical miles) and New Orleans (3,892 nautical miles).

Pennsylvania shipbuilders will not lose buyers for their ships if Puerto Rico is exempted from the Jones Act. There will still be enough hauling companies that need vessels to serve the hundreds of other U.S. ports that remain under the purview of the act. Exempting a U.S. territory from the act is not a novel idea. The Virgin Islands, American Samoa, and the Northern Mariana Islands have been exempt for decades.

Permanently exempting Puerto Rico from the Jones Act would be good for the island and good for Pennsylvania. It would eliminate a barrier to addressing two momentous crises on the island while developing stronger commercial ties between Puerto Rico and Pennsylvania.

Will Gonzalez, Esquire is the executive director of [Ceiba](#), a coalition of Latino community-based organizations in Philadelphia. He has over 30 years of experience working on the housing, economic, and civil rights of low- to moderate-income families. He grew up in Puerto Rico and has family on the island.

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Jackson: Government isn't stepping up in Puerto Rico (Chicago Sun-Times)

[Columnists](#) 10/16/2017, 04:54pm

By [Jesse Jackson](#)

[Chicago Sun-Times](#)

Millions of Americans still face perilous conditions in Puerto Rico. Three weeks after Hurricane Maria savaged the island, over 80 percent still have no electrical power. Forty percent are without running water. Millions are in dire need of food. Water purification systems can't work without electricity.

Gas stations have reopened, but the island's economy remains moribund. Only a few hundred miles of the island's 5,000 miles of road are open to traffic. Disease is spreading, with the health care system still in miserable condition. These are Americans in extreme distress. It is time to step up.

Last weekend, I joined religious leaders to deliver more than 150,000 pounds of food, water, medicine and generators supplied by volunteer donations in Chicago. FedEx CEO Fred Smith generously answered my call for help and, with COO David Bronczek and Senior Vice President Shannon Brown, arranged to supply the plane and flight crew, one of more than 70 relief flights FedEx has sponsored.

From across America, nurses, firefighters, church groups, unions, athletes and entertainers have donated time, energy and resources to their fellow citizens in Puerto Rico.

But a crisis this severe requires a massive governmental response, and the reaction of **FEMA, the Federal Emergency Management Agency, has been admittedly slow and inadequate.** Americans on the island face a horrible food crisis. As the Guardian reported, **FEMA** officials admit they are supplying 200,000 meals a day to meet the daily food requirements of 2 million people. That's a shortfall of nearly 2 million meals daily. Americans without electricity, their homes destroyed, struggle to find clean water and minimal food. That is a recipe for disease, with children and the elderly and the sick most at risk.

Donald Trump has treated the crisis mostly as a public relations problem. He slurred the Mayor of San Juan as "weak" when she begged for assistance because people were dying. He suggested that the island's residents want "everything to be done for them." He threatened an early departure of **FEMA** and the military, and boasted about what has been a shameful response: "Nobody could have done what I've done for #PuertoRico with so little appreciation," he tweeted.

But this isn't a public relations problem for the president; it is a human crisis for millions of American citizens. It can't be addressed in tweets and stunts. Real action is needed. In conjunction with **FEMA**, the U.S. military has finally begun to deploy the troops and helicopters needed to clear roads and supply emergency food and water. And, contrary to Trump's jibe, the general in command, Army Lt. Gen. Jeffrey Buchanan, reported that the island's residents have responded valiantly: "Communities are very tight and family is very important," he reported, "Everywhere I go I see neighbors out helping neighbors. That's what it is going to take to help this island get back on its feet."

In my discussions with them, San Juan Mayor Carmen Yulin Cruz and Governor Ricardo A. Rossello were forceful and clear about what was needed now. The immediate need is still for supplies that will sustain life — water, food, medicine and generators. Solar installations to run water-filtering systems are essential while the electrical grid is rebuilt, a process that will take months.

Second, the mayor called for waiving the Jones Act at least for a year. The Jones Act requires that U.S. merchants deliver shipments to Puerto Rico. Countries across the world from South Africa to Mexico have volunteered to ship in emergency supplies. The Trump administration waived the act for 10 days. It should be waived at least until the emergency is over.

Third, the mayor needs accelerated visa procedures for those who are volunteering from across the hemisphere and the world to help rebuild the country. At the same time, arrangements should be made to evacuate the sick to hospitals on the mainland, and to move children so they will not lose a year of school. This was done in New Orleans after Katrina and in Texas after Harvey, and Puerto Rico should be no different.

Beyond immediate relief, the larger question is how Puerto Rico can rebuild. Even before the hurricane, the country was in the midst of a dire debt crisis and suffering severe austerity under the grip of a fiscal control board that creditors had elevated above the elected officials. Obviously, the previous agreements on debt repayment have to be revised now that Puerto Rico's economy has collapsed. The debt should be renegotiated and dramatically reduced, if not forgiven; creditors should bear part of the loss.

In the end, Americans in Puerto Rico need what Americans in Louisiana, Texas and Florida need: a long-term recovery package. Public investment to rebuild the sinews of the economy — roads, bridges, water systems, the electric grid, hospitals and schools — will put people to work and kick-start the economy. As we witnessed with Europe after the devastation of World War II, massive aid for rebuilding will generate jobs and growth.

The Americans living in Puerto Rico have little political clout. They can't vote in presidential elections. They are, however, American citizens, not second-class citizens. They should not suffer second-class treatment. Across the country, Americans have responded generously to the crisis in Puerto Rico. Now it is time for Washington to step up.

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Editorial: Way to kick 'em while they're down (Columbus Dispatch)

Oct 16, 2017 at 6:26 AM

[Columbus Dispatch](#)

President Donald Trump appears to awaken in the wee hours of the morning asking the very question that the patriots, great thinkers and war heroes who have held his office must have wondered: What to tweet, whom to bash today, to supply himself with the attention he craves?

No, President Trump, the men who carried the burden of this office — from Washington to Obama — recognized the awesome responsibility they held to protect the lives of every American. It

is an unstated contract we Americans have with our government that if we are endangered by foreign powers or by a natural disaster, our government will come to our aid.

To refuse to do so isn't merely heartless; it's an abdication of office.

Roughly a month ago, two massive hurricanes slammed into the U.S. territory of Puerto Rico; first came Irma, the most-powerful Atlantic Hurricane on record, which pummeled Puerto Rico as it carved a merciless path of death and destruction through the Caribbean. Two weeks later came Hurricane Maria, compounding the damage and hindering recovery efforts.

Puerto Rico faces a staggering humanitarian crisis. But instead of offering reassurance, consolation and a helping hand, Trump suggests that the crisis is of Puerto Rico's own making. He shrugs his shoulders and says relief workers can't stay long.

Many of the island's 3.4 million American citizens are without electricity or fresh water. It's not hard to imagine that disease will soon take hold, or that mainland states like Florida will be overrun with storm refugees.

After first visiting the island and playfully tossing paper towels like he was shooting basketballs, Trump stunned the nation by suggesting that maybe Puerto Rico's debts might be forgiven: "wiped out."

This was a bad, unaffordable idea. But it got worse. He then turned on the island, becoming, in effect, the third tropical storm to leave residents feeling flattened and helpless.

Thursday, he shamed the territory for its circumstances, tweeting: "Electric and infrastructure was a disaster before the hurricanes." He quoted a conservative TV show host as saying Puerto Rico's "financial crisis looms largely of their own making."

Trump also wrote, "We cannot keep **FEMA**, the Military & the First Responders, who have been amazing (under the most difficult circumstances) in P.R. forever!"

The president's threats to abandon the devastated Puerto Ricans left them gasping.

As with most economic disasters, the blame for Puerto Rico's financial woes aren't simple. Yes, the island's debt pile exceeds \$70 billion; it's America's "Greece in the Caribbean." Decades of mismanagement and government corruption have contributed to this mess, but so have recession and federal laws that have hamstrung Puerto Rico's ability to control its own finances and economy.

If Trump — given his background in business — is talking about putting Puerto Rico on a path to alleviate its fiscal problems, this would be noble. But that's not what is coming across. What Puerto Ricans and other Americans are hearing is, "Buddy, you're on your own."

This is ugly and heartless. It is beneath his office. And it is not who we are as Americans. Congress should quickly supply leadership to help our storm-battered fellow Americans.

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Witcover: Trump's 'Love' For Puerto Rico Will Be Tested As Territory Recovers (Baltimore Sun)

By Jules Witcover

[Baltimore Sun](#), October 16, 2017

When Republican Sen. Bob Corker of Tennessee charged the other day that the White House had become "an adult day care center" — with three former generals there babysitting President Donald Trump — he added: "Someone obviously missed their shift."

On Thursday, the president proved Mr. Corker's point by tweeting a politically toxic threat to diminish federal relief to hurricane-hammered Puerto Rico. It followed his highly publicized visit to the island the previous week during which he pledged undying love and succor. Where were the Trump watchdogs when he needed to be saved from making this boneheaded warning?

In three consecutive tweets, the president charged that the U.S. territory had been "a disaster before (the) hurricanes," with its electrical grid and infrastructure already severely damaged.

He added: “We cannot keep **FEMA**, the Military and the First Responders, who have been amazing (under the most difficult circumstances) in Puerto Rico forever!” He quoted a television reporter saying the island had “survived the hurricanes” and “now a financial crisis looms largely of their own making.”

Only days earlier in San Juan, the capital, Mr. Trump was tossing paper towels to the natives as if he were shooting basketballs and pledging his love and support with an incredibly callous and mocking display.

Earlier, he had castigated the city’s Mayor Carmen Yulin Cruz for “poor leadership,” but now he commended her as having “come back a long way” in coping with Hurricane Maria.

Still earlier, he had proclaimed: “We will not rest, however, until the people of Puerto Rico are safe. We want them to be safe and sound and secure and we will be there every day until that happens.”

Vice President Mike Pence followed with his own visit, pledging that the Trump administration would be there “every step of the way. ... We will be with you every single day until Puerto Rico is restored bigger and better than ever before,” he said.

However, most of the island’s 3.4 million residents, American citizens by virtue of Puerto Rico’s territorial status, remain without electric power, water and other essentials of life. Mr. Trump has even sought to make lemonade out of a lemon by congratulating Puerto Rico for having sustained a lower death toll than New Orleans suffered from Hurricane Katrina in 2005.

Mr. Trump has informed the Puerto Ricans that it will be up to Congress to determine how much the federal government will authorize as its share of the huge recovery effort required. The observation that the island was in terrible financial shape before Maria hit brought him back to his earlier theme castigating the natives for the shape they’re in.

The president’s profession of deep sympathy and concern over the Puerto Ricans’ fate was already in doubt, given his long delay in visiting their stricken island, in contrast to his haste to visit Texas, Louisiana and Florida on the heels of their hurricanes.

After his tardy visit to Puerto Rico, Mr. Trump quickly pivoted to Las Vegas last week to demonstrate his grief over the mass shooting murder of civilian targets there. It did not go unnoticed or unmentioned that Mr. Trump has had real estate interests in America’s gambling capital, as well as friends among the owners and operators of luxury hotels.

It remains to be seen how energetically the president will press the Republican-controlled Congress to meet the huge financial challenge of putting Puerto Rico back on its feet.

His sharp criticisms of its local public officials as poor custodians, while professing his affection for the island and its inhabitants in their hour of need, tests his compassion and sincerity. He often reassures his trusting crowds with the words “Believe me.” Will the Puerto Ricans do so, as they remain in the dire aftermath throes of Maria?

Jules Witcover is a syndicated columnist and former long-time writer for The Baltimore Sun. His latest book is “The American Vice Presidency: From Irrelevance to Power” (Smithsonian Books). His email is juleswitcover@comcast.net.

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FEMA

Media Monitoring Report

October 10, 2017

FEMA Region 2

This report is a compilation of news media stories pertinent to Region 2 and the Sandy recovery efforts in New York and New Jersey for FEMA employees and a small number of government officials working on FEMA's issues. To be added or removed from this distribution, please e-mail gina.callaghan@fema.dhs.gov

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HURRICANE MARIA PUERTO RICO

FEMA Officials Say They're 'Slowly Starting To Make Progress' In Puerto Rico

By Deborah Barfield Berry

[USA Today](#), October 9, 2017

WASHINGTON — Federal emergency officials said Monday the disaster in Puerto Rico has emerged as one of the “most logistically complex and challenging events” the U.S. has faced, but said they are continuing to make progress on key recovery goals such as shipping in hundreds of generators to try to restore power on the devastated island.

“We’re slowly starting to make progress every day,” Brock Long, the head of the Federal Emergency Management Agency, told reporters Monday at the agency’s headquarters in Washington. “It’s not going to move as fast as people want because you’re dealing with a very fragile power system, very fragile public works system, very fragile roadway network system.”

Long defended the agency’s response in Puerto Rico saying it has faced “unique challenges” getting supplies and resources to the island, which was hard hit by Hurricane Maria Sept. 20. FEMA and the administration have come under intense fire for what critics have called their slow response.

“They are still struggling to ramp up,” said Mississippi Rep. Bennie Thompson, the top Democrat on the House Homeland Security Committee. “We’ve gone this far and we still have areas challenged with getting ... water and food.”

Thompson was part of a bipartisan congressional delegation that spent Saturday in Puerto Rico assessing the damage. The trip included a helicopter tour, a briefing with federal and local officials and a lunch with Gov. Ricardo Rossello.

Long, who visited the island last Tuesday, said officials faced a host of challenges getting supplies to the island, particularly when the ports and airports were closed. He said in some cases, ships were circling south of Puerto Rico laden with supplies but unable to land.

Federal agencies had to build a make-shift air traffic control system to get the airport open and get supplies in, he said.

“Maria was such a catastrophic hit that all ports of entry – water ports and airports – were damaged,” said Long, former head of the Alabama Emergency Management Agency.

More than 16,000 federal and Department of Transportation workers are in Puerto Rico and another 3,000 in the Virgin Islands to help, Long said. FEMA announced Monday that it is looking to hire more hurricane recovery workers, focusing on temporary employees in disaster areas and on-call emergency response staff.

“The problem with Puerto Rico is diminished capacity,” said Long, adding that many local and state workers were also victims of the storm. “We had to play a greater first-responder role than we typically would on the continental United States, which as I said, we’re not really designed to do that in many cases.”

Long said the agency worked with local officials to figure out ways to get the airports and ports open.

“It takes time to do that,” he said. “We can’t just flip a switch and make the systems work.”

Lt. Gen. Todd Semonite, chief of engineers and commander general of the United States Army Corps of Engineers, said power is one of the most critical issues in Puerto Rico.

Federal officials said they are working to restore power, focusing on getting generators in place particularly at hospitals. “It’s going to take a long time to get electricity to everybody in Puerto Rico,” Semonite said.

Semonite said there are 200 generators on the island ready to be installed and another 400 coming. In addition, he said, a leased power plant is on a barge and on its way to the island.

It will probably take about a month and a half before it's up and running, he said.

Still, some groups and charities complained Monday they can't get much-needed supplies to the island.

President Trump has feuded with the mayor of San Juan, Carmen Yulin Cruz who has also complained about the administration's response. Trump blasted some of the criticism, saying it was fueled by "politically motivated ingrates."

Long said he took some heat after saying on a TV program Sunday that he "filtered out" the mayor.

"We do have to filter out a lot of the noise that's out there and do our job, keep our heads down," he said Monday. "I think emergency management has to stay apolitical obviously. My goal is save lives and sustain lives. ... Disasters do not discriminate between politicians."

In the last six weeks FEMA has responded to four hurricanes, including three of which were major hurricanes, officials said.

"It's been an amazing hurricane season so far," Long said.

Beginning with Hurricane Harvey in August, nearly 3.5 million people have registered for individual assistance under FEMA, Long said. He said so far about 350,000 Puerto Ricans have registered for aid.

"That number is going to grow tremendously as we continue to locate and get people entered into the system," he said.

Thompson said the congressional delegation asked Gov. Rossello to provide an assessment of damage as soon as possible. The House is expected to consider another round of disaster aid funding this week.

"I left there feeling like Puerto Rico needs a hell of a lot more help than one can imagine," he said.

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Embarking On A Puerto Rican FEMA Aid Mission (VIDEO)

[CNN](#), October 7, 2017

CNN's Leyla Santiago goes on a black hawk mission to show viewers the new sense of urgency in Puerto Rico.

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FEMA Chief: Political Disputes Hurting Puerto Rico Relief

By Luis Alonso Lugo

[Associated Press](#), October 9, 2017

WASHINGTON (AP) — Political differences are hurting the U.S. government's response to victims of Hurricane Maria in Puerto Rico, the head of the Federal Emergency Management Agency said Monday. He did not identify which individual officials he blamed, but the mayor in San Juan has drawn the ire of President Donald Trump for her criticism about how quickly aid is reaching people on the island.

"The unity is not where I want it to be," FEMA Administrator Brock Long said. "When you cannot get elected officials at the local level come to a joint FEMA office because they disagree with the politics of the governor, it makes things difficult and the information fragmented."

Earlier Monday, Long said in television interviews that he had “filtered out” San Juan Mayor Carmen Cruz, Trump’s most vocal critic about the hurricane response. Cruz’s spokesman could not immediately be reached for comment; his phone rang unanswered and his voicemail was full.

Cruz complained Monday morning via Twitter that “San Juan legislators arrived to the Emergency Operations Center to discuss debris and flooding. The mayor was not invited.”

On Sunday she had tweeted: “Power collapses in San Juan hospital with 2 patients being transferred out. Have requested support from @FEMA_Brock NOTHING!”

Cruz backs the independence of Puerto Rico from the United States but is a member of the Popular Democratic Party, which supports maintaining the territorial status quo.

Gov. Ricardo Rossello supports the island becoming another U.S. state.

Long on Monday expressed frustration with the criticism his agency has faced. He attributed the criticism to the inability to disseminate messages to the population via social media or cell phones because the telecommunications were disabled.

“That is a lesson learned,” Long said.

Long said 16,000 federal and military assets are on the ground in Puerto Rico and about 350,000 Puerto Ricans have registered so far in the FEMA system to receive financial assistance. As of Sunday, FEMA said, nearly 12 percent of customers have electricity on the island and about 57 percent of customers of the Puerto Rico Aqueduct and Sewer Authority have drinking water.

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Mayor Of Puerto Rico’s Capital Who Was Previously Singled Out By Trump Comes Under New Criticism From FEMA Head

By Laura King

[Los Angeles Times](#), October 8, 2017

The Trump administration is brushing off fresh criticism from the mayor of San Juan over the federal government’s recovery effort in hurricane-battered Puerto Rico.

William “Brock” Long, the head of the Federal Emergency Management Agency, on Sunday dismissed the latest pleas for urgent assistance from the mayor, Carmen Yulin Cruz, as “political noise.”

“We filtered out the mayor a long time ago,” Long said on ABC’s “This Week” when asked about a pair of early morning tweets from Cruz, in which she said she had unsuccessfully sought help from FEMA after the power failed at a major hospital.

Referring to FEMA, the mayor added sarcastically, “Oh sorry they are collecting data.”

Last week President Trump in a tweet suggested Cruz is a “politically motivated ingrate.” She had made a number of pointed public criticisms of the pace and scope of the federal relief effort after Hurricane Maria devastated Puerto Rico on Sept. 20, wrecking the electricity grid and leaving many of its 3.4 million people desperate for food, water and gasoline.

Trump visited the U.S. territory on Tuesday and hailed the “amazing job” being done by federal officials in rushing in supplies and working to restore electricity and power. The president raised eyebrows when he alluded again to the cost of the recovery effort – an observation he has not made about the ongoing expense of helping Texas and Louisiana after Hurricanes Harvey and Irma – and told officials that they should be proud that the death toll had been low compared to that in the “real catastrophe” of Hurricane Katrina, which struck New Orleans in 2005.

The president repeated his self-congratulatory assessments about his administration's work in Puerto Rico again on Saturday night, in a television interview with the conservative former governor of Arkansas, Mike Huckabee, on the Christian cable network TBN.

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FEMA Removes — Then Restores — Statistics About Drinking Water Access And Electricity In Puerto Rico From Website

By Jenna Johnson

[Washington Post](#), October 6, 2017

Update: As of Friday afternoon, the Federal Emergency Management Agency is once again reporting two key statistics – the percentage of Puerto Ricans who have access to drinking water and the percentage of the island that has power – on its webpage tracking the federal response to Hurricane Maria.

As of Wednesday, half of Puerto Ricans had access to drinking water and 5 percent of the island had electricity, according to statistics published by the Federal Emergency Management Agency on its Web page documenting the federal response to Hurricane Maria.

By Thursday morning, both of those key metrics were no longer on the Web page.

FEMA spokesman William Booher noted that both measures are still being reported on a website maintained by the office of Puerto Rican Gov. Ricardo Rosselló, www.status.pr. According to that website, which is in Spanish, 9.2 percent of the island now has power and 54.2 percent of residents have access to drinking water. Booher said that these measures are also shared in news conferences and media calls that happen twice a day, but he didn't elaborate on why they are no longer on the main FEMA page.

"Our mission is to support the governor and his response priorities through the unified command structure to help Puerto Ricans recover and return to routines. Information on the stats you are specifically looking for are readily available" on the website maintained by the governor's office, Booher said.

The statistics that are on the FEMA page, as of Thursday afternoon, include these: There are now 14,000 federal workers on the ground in Puerto Rico and the U.S. Virgin Islands, up from 12,300 earlier in the week. All airports, federally maintained ports and post offices are open. More than 30 miles of roadway have been cleared, up from about 20 miles earlier in the week. About 65 percent of grocery stores have reopened, along with nearly all hospitals and dialysis centers. And 64 percent of wastewater treatment plants are working on generator power.

Those statistics illustrate President Trump's assertions that the island is quickly making tremendous strides toward full recovery and that the media have exaggerated the conditions on the ground. He has noted that despite the force of the storms that hit Puerto Rico, the death toll is not as high as it was after Hurricane Katrina in 2005, when about 1,800 people were killed. Officials have said that it could be months before power and water are fully restored to the island, especially in rural, isolated areas.

Trump, who visited Puerto Rico on Tuesday, has repeatedly noted that the infrastructure of the financially struggling island was already weak before the hurricane hit. In a series of tweets Sept. 25, Trump wrote that Puerto Rico was "already suffering from broken infrastructure & massive debt" and had an "old electrical grid, which was in terrible shape." During his visit, Trump told reporters that it's difficult to fix the power grid because it "was devastated before the hurricanes even hit," and

that federal workers have been bringing dozens of generators to the island to power hospitals, government buildings, shelters and other key locations.

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Puerto Rico Wants \$4.6 Billion From Congress To Meet ‘Immediate Emergency Needs’

By Jessica Kwong

[Newsweek](#), October 9, 2017

Puerto Rico Governor Ricardo Rossello has requested that Congress allocate \$4.6 billion “to meet the immediate emergency needs” of the hurricane-ravaged island and to help soften the blow to its economy.

In letters to congressional leaders and President Donald Trump dated Saturday and shared on Twitter Monday, Rossello asked that Congress “strongly consider” offering funding beyond the Federal Emergency Management Agency Disaster Relief Fund.

Other requests include \$3.2 billion in community development block grants from the Department of Housing and Urban Development, \$500 million in community disaster loan program funding from the Department of Homeland Security and \$500 million in social services block grants from the Department of Health and Human Services.

Rossello also requested smaller amounts of money from the Department of Transportation, the Small Business Administration, the Department of Agriculture and the Department of Education.

“We are grateful for the federal emergency assistance that has been provided so far,” Rossello wrote. “However, absent extraordinary measures to address the halt in economic activity in Puerto Rico, the humanitarian crisis will deepen, and the unmet basic needs of the American citizens of Puerto Rico will become even greater.”

In his letter, Rossello said the “unprecedented island-wide devastation” from Hurricane Maria has led to an independent damage estimate of about \$95 billion—equal to about 150 percent of Puerto Rico’s gross national product.

“As a result, in addition to the immediate humanitarian crisis, Puerto Rico is on the brink of a massive liquidity crisis that will intensify in the immediate future,” Rossello wrote.

The Trump administration last week sent a \$29 billion disaster relief fund request to Congress to deal with the aftermath of hurricanes Harvey, Irma and Maria, but did not detail how much was intended for Puerto Rico. The House could take up the issue this week.

On Monday, meanwhile, Rossello ordered an investigation into water distribution on the island after complaints from people in some areas that authorities were not delivering supplies. Three weeks after Hurricane Maria made landfall, drinking water has been restored to almost 60 percent of the island, yet only to about 20 percent in some parts of the north, according to the governor.

“If there is a place, a locality that is not delivering food to the people of Puerto Rico that need it, there’s going to be some hell to pay,” Rossello told CNN.

Meanwhile, the federal government on Sunday night allowed its 10-day waiver of the Jones Act, under which only American vessels may make cargo shipments between U.S. ports, to expire, barring foreign boats from providing further aid.

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Most Of Puerto Rico Remains Dark Nearly Three Weeks After Storm

By Mark Chediak

[Bloomberg News](#), October 9, 2017

It's been almost three weeks since Hurricane Maria slammed into Puerto Rico and most of the island is still without electricity.

The U.S. Department of Energy said Monday that 85 percent of customers lack power. Some portions of feeder lines have been restored and about 30 percent of the island's substations are back online, the agency said.

Crews are trickling in to help the Puerto Rico Electric Power Authority restore service, which could be out for months.

The slow pace of the recovery has prodded Puerto Rico Governor Ricardo Rossello to ask Tesla Inc.'s Elon Musk for help rebuilding the grid with solar and batteries. The U.S. solar industry is also airlifting gear to the island as part of a humanitarian effort and to show how its technology can help keep the lights on after a natural disaster.

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Minus Electrical Grid, Puerto Rico Becomes Generator Island

By Richard Fausset, Frances Robles and Deborah Acosta

[New York Times](#), October 7, 2017

SAN JUAN, P.R. — Like many other frivolous things on the island these days, the shiny motorcycles at the Planet Honda showroom have been pushed to the side.

In their place are dozens of folding chairs, and on Thursday morning, they were all filled with Puerto Ricans waiting to buy the most essential machines on the post-hurricane landscape: portable generators, to light their powerless homes.

María Aguilera, 57, a teacher, was waiting in the line that had formed outside the showroom Thursday morning. When the sun sets these days, she said, she relies on candles for light. And like everyone else in Puerto Rico — including Gov. Ricardo A. Rosselló — Ms. Aguilera said she had no idea when the power grid might be restored.

“From the things I’ve seen with the infrastructure,” she said, “it could be months.”

Hurricane Maria's near total destruction of the commonwealth's electric power grid has transformed Puerto Rico into Generator Island. Running on gas or diesel, and ranging from lawn mower to moving-truck size, the generators are the only option for the roughly 90 percent of the island that has no access to the decimated grid. Generators now power big-box stores, high-rise apartment buildings, auto shops, fast-food restaurants, wastewater treatment plants and little country homes. And their low, incessant groan is the new drone note in the discordant symphony of post-storm Puerto Rican life.

The generators are a temporary fix that is raising health and safety concerns and highlighting the stark divisions of class in a place with a 45 percent poverty rate. They are also the only option for most Puerto Ricans for now, as the island struggles with restoring its electrical system — by far the most important and complex challenge the storm has presented.

In a news conference on Friday, Mr. Rosselló could not say when the system, which was infamously fragile before the storm, would be fully restored.

“There is no estimated date right now,” he said. “We have established, right at the beginning of this week, we want to have 10 percent of the energy generation in Puerto Rico. Now we’re up to 10.6 percent. And our expectation is, within the next month, to have 25 percent.”

Many big-box stores and hardware stores are selling out of generators for home use. Julito Ramírez, the Planet Honda general manager, said that his company was having a hard time keeping up with demand, selling 250 to 300 units per day. After ordering all of the generators he could find in the United States, he has turned to a cache he found in Canada.

“We are in that cycle of finding and bringing, and finding and bringing,” Mr. Ramírez said. The generator everyone wants, he said, is a \$6,000 model that can run a home air-conditioning system. The biggest model he had in stock this week was a \$2,300 machine that can run a refrigerator, some lights, a washing machine — but not an air conditioner.

For one customer, Victor Negrón, it would have to do. He said his old generator had given out two days earlier. “I’ve had to go to hotels to charge my phones,” said Mr. Negrón, 50, a health care executive. “We’ve lost all of the food in our refrigerator.”

The storm destroyed 85 percent of the island’s energy transmission and distribution system, and the fix could cost \$5 billion, said Ricardo Ramos, chief executive of the beleaguered Puerto Rico Electric Power Authority, known as Prepa. The public utility is saddled with \$9 billion in debt and filed for bankruptcy in July. The Puerto Rican government also filed a form of bankruptcy in May.

The Trump administration has asked Congress to approve a \$29 billion aid package for Puerto Rico, as well as for hurricane-damaged Florida and Texas. But in the days after September 20, when Hurricane Maria strafed Puerto Rico, Prepa’s money troubles made it “almost impossible” to pay the large contracts required to bring in other states’ power companies to help restore the grid, said José E. Sánchez, a director with the United States Army Corps of Engineers and the head of the task force to restore power in Puerto Rico.

“It is not only personnel, but all the trucks and materials,” Mr. Sánchez said in an email. “That could cost millions of dollars.”

But Meena Dayak, a spokeswoman for the American Public Power Association, the trade group that coordinates the state-to-state mutual aid networks for public power utilities, said that Prepa never reached out to them for help.

“The way our mutual aid works is we can only go in if help has been requested,” she said over the phone on Friday.

Mr. Ramos, Prepa’s chief executive, said he did request help but when none came, he hired a Montana-based company, Whitefish Energy Holdings, to restore many of the power lines. Mr. Ramos said 200 subcontractors were already on the ground.

Andy Techmanski, chief executive of Whitefish, said that a shortage of housing for his crews meant that only 75 were on the island, and that clogged ports were making it a challenge to bring in heavy equipment.

He also said it would take six months or longer for all of Puerto Rico to have its power restored.

The rebuilding will be particularly difficult because many lines stretch across the island’s mountainous interior. There is also the question of whether Puerto Rico should modernize its rickety and outmoded system while it rebuilds. On Friday, the governor said that a modernization effort would “run parallel” with the effort to simply restore power. He said he has begun speaking with Elon Musk, the Tesla chief executive, about ways to increase green energy options for Puerto Rico, which received just 2 percent of its power from renewable sources before the storm. (Mr. Musk said on Twitter Thursday that rebuilding the island’s grid with independent solar and battery systems “could be done.”)

But Mr. Sánchez said that the assignment from the Federal Emergency Management Authority is to repair the system only. “We are there to repair-replace, but not to augment,” he said.

As he waited to buy his generator, Mr. Negrón sympathized with the governor. The island needed a better power system, he said. But people did not want to wait. His mother, he said, “wants her electric now.”

In the meantime, the generators rumble on, though not without problems. A few blocks from the Honda store, the Hospital San Francisco has had two generators fail since the storm, resulting in the evacuation of patients, according to El Nuevo Dia, a local newspaper. In a visit to the hospital Thursday, the lights were on, and a worker said a backup generator was powering them. But hospital officials declined a request for comment.

Across town at the Costco, Juan Torres, an assistant manager, showed off the massive, truck-size generator that the business, like many here, had installed before the storm. Mr. Torres said it was burning 1,000 gallons of diesel per day.

But Mr. Torres said that home generators normally offered at the store were sold out.

Across the island, the Army Corps of Engineers has set up 34 huge generators so far, running everything from police departments to water pumping facilities to a Prepa office, according to Lisa Hunter, a spokeswoman for the Corps. Corps officials said on Friday that 177 other generators arrived late in the week, with some of them headed to the United States Virgin Islands.

Camilla Feibelman, a founder of the Puerto Rico chapter of the Sierra Club who currently runs the Rio Grande chapter, said that Facebook was full of complaints about the generator noise on the island these days.

More seriously, she said, generators can lead to carbon monoxide poisoning when misused — a common concern among officials in post-storm environments. Last month, three people in Orange County, Fla., died from carbon monoxide poisoning after running a generator inside their homes.

Adriana González, a Sierra Club organizer in Puerto Rico, said the high cost of a generator “creates a disparity” between rich and poor. In her neighborhood, she said, “you have one house illuminated, and then total darkness for like a block.”

Mr. Ramírez, the Honda store manager, said that some generators were stolen from the showroom in the days just after the storm. So the store now makes the sale in the showroom, then has customers pick up their generators from a warehouse a day later.

If nothing else, it is a good time to be a generator repairman like José Miguel Márquez, 35. Mr. Márquez said he was so busy these days that the biggest problem is finding time to deposit his checks at the bank.

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Big Tech Has Big Plans To Help Reconnect Puerto Rico

By Matt O'Brien

[Associated Press](#), October 7, 2017

Facebook and Google once aimed to connect the world. Now they would be happy just to reconnect part of it.

In the wake of Hurricane Maria, Facebook CEO Mark Zuckerberg pledged to send a “connectivity team” to help restore communications in ravaged Puerto Rico. Google parent company Alphabet offered to send its Wi-Fi balloons. They were among several tech companies proposing disaster response ideas, most aimed at getting phone and internet service up and running.

Some of these plans, of course, are more aspirational than others.

BATTERY POWER

Tesla CEO Elon Musk often takes to Twitter to mull over ideas, but on Friday his musings about sending his company's solar-powered batteries to help restore Puerto Rico's power attracted the attention of the island's governor.

"Let's talk," said Gov. Ricardo Rossello in a Friday tweet .

Musk agreed. Hours later, he announced he was delaying the unveiling of Tesla's new semi-truck and diverting resources, in part to "increase battery production for Puerto Rico and other affected areas."

The need for help in restoring power and communication after Hurricane Maria is great: The Puerto Rican energy authority reported Saturday that about 88 percent of the island is still without power. The Federal Communications Commission said Saturday that 82 percent of cell sites remain out in Puerto Rico; 58 percent are out of service in the U.S. Virgin Islands.

The FCC's daily status report also shows significant wireline, TV and radio outages remain in both U.S. territories. The agency formed a task force this week and approved an advance of \$77 million to support carriers working to restore telecommunications services.

VAGUE PROMISES

But many offers of help from big companies remain somewhat vague. Google parent company Alphabet has proposed launching balloons over the island to bring Wi-Fi service to hard-to-reach places, as it has in other parts of the world.

The FCC announced Saturday that it's approved an experimental license for Project Loon to operate in Puerto Rico. But that doesn't mean it will be able to get them in the air anytime soon.

"We're grateful for the support of the FCC and the Puerto Rican authorities as we work hard to see if it's possible to use Loon balloons to bring emergency connectivity to the island during this time of need," said Libby Leahy, a spokesman for Alphabet's X division.

But there are limitations, she said Saturday.

"To deliver signal to people's devices, Loon needs to be integrated with a telco partner's network — the balloons can't do it alone," she said, adding that the company is "making solid progress on this next step."

COLLABORATIVE EFFORTS

Cisco Systems has sent a tactical team and says it is working with local government, emergency responders and service providers to facilitate restoration and recovery efforts. The company, along with Microsoft and others, backs the NetHope consortium, which specializes in setting up post-disaster communication networks and has field teams now operating in Puerto Rico and several other Caribbean islands.

"Communication is critical during a disaster," Zuckerberg said after the hurricane hit, announcing that employees from his company's connectivity team — the same group working to build high-altitude drones that can beam internet service down to Earth — were heading to Puerto Rico. But with its aircraft still in the testing phase, the company said Friday that the engineers it's sent to Puerto Rico are focused on providing support to NetHope's teams.

SMALLER ORGANIZATIONS

Much of the ground work is being spearheaded by nonprofit organizations and small firms with expertise in rural or emergency communications.

Lexington, Massachusetts-based Vanu Inc., which sets up wireless communications networks in rural parts of the United States, Africa and India, is sending dozens of its small, solar-powered cellular base stations to volunteer crews on the ground in Puerto Rico and the Virgin Islands. Aid workers are pairing Vanu's devices with other technology, such as inflatable satellite antennas.

After setting up a network on the island of Vieques, off the main island of Puerto Rico, one team watched from a roof as local residents started getting text alerts from family members who had been trying to get in touch.

“They noticed everyone in the plaza pulling their phones out,” said CEO Vanu Bose. “You don’t have to announce you’ve lit up coverage. People know right away.”

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Nearly 3 Weeks After Hurricane Maria, Distributing Aid Across Puerto Rico Is A Mess

By Oren Dorell

[USA Today](#), October 9, 2017

SAN JUAN, Puerto Rico — The Auxilio Mutuo Hospital here can’t figure out how to get specialized medical supplies from the nearby airport. A Puerto Rican in Tampa found the quickest way to deliver help to her hometown was to do it in person. And shipping containers filled with emergency goods are piling up at the Port of San Juan.

Nearly three weeks after Hurricane Maria devastated this U.S. territory in the Caribbean, individuals and charities on the U.S. mainland trying to send supplies to the island are facing a series of bottlenecks that are keeping help from reaching those most in need.

The barriers range from a lack of communication to blocked roads to a shortage of vehicles and drivers to make deliveries.

As a result, one Port of San Juan terminal is storing 3,400 containers — more than double the usual number, said Jose “Pache” Ayala, vice president and general manager for Puerto Rico at Crowley Maritime Corp.

Because of tangled power lines across roads, washed out bridges and highways and knocked out cellphone towers and radio antennas across the island, materials are leaving the Crowley terminal gate at 70% the normal rate before the storm, Ayala said.

The backlog affects goods and equipment from the Federal Emergency Management Agency, such as food and bottled water, bucket trucks, front-end loaders and 275,000 gallons of diesel and 75,000 gallons of gasoline.

“That relief cargo has priority,” Ayala said. It also affects commercial cargo such as building materials and medications that are also in great demand, he said.

“It’s easier to help internationally than it is in Puerto Rico,” said Neil Frame with Operation USA in Los Angeles. The non-profit, which ships donated medical supplies into disaster areas around the world, has not yet found a way to deliver goods onto the U.S. territory.

His group is currently shipping supplies to Mexico after the earthquake and also helping in Texas after Hurricane Harvey, but there it was easy — workers just drove down and found people who could help distribute.

Because of lingering poor communications since Maria struck here Sept. 20, his group has only been able to connect with eight of about 60 hospitals on the island. “You know that the ones that really need it are the ones we haven’t been able to talk to,” he said.

Still, he has neonatal equipment that one hospital is waiting for and is planning to ship pharmaceuticals that have a shelf life, so they will not last if they wait in port.

Communications are still spotty and a major impediment for shippers and truckers.

“There are some packages sent by family to someone in Puerto Rico that because communications are so bad the person here doesn’t know (it’s coming),” Ayala said.

Trucker Ricardo Carbonell, 42, said damaged roads, downed trees and low-hanging power lines form another obstacle to get goods to those in need. And his company won’t deliver if dispatchers can’t get ahold of the recipient in advance.

“If there’s no communications, they call and call, nobody answers the phone, and we don’t bring them anything,” he said.

Another trucker, José Vasquez, 46, of Toa Baja, described how he took a container last week from San Juan to Río Piedra, unloaded it and brought the empty container back to Crowley. Usually he’d reload immediately, but since Maria knocked out the radio antennas between San Juan and his home base, he had to drive an hour to Toa Baja to get an order for his next load.

Normally, “I’d be gone in 10 minutes,” he said. “Now I have to go there, one hour, and come back, another hour, to get another load out.”

At Auxilio Mutuo Hospital, the only facility currently performing heart surgery on the island, administrators are having difficulty getting the specialized supplies needed for transplant patients.

“The issue is how do we get it from the airport to here,” said Carlos Méndez, associate administrator at Auxilio Mutuo. “We cannot communicate with anyone at the airport.”

Michael Fernandez, executive director at CARAS de las Americas, said some shipments languish for more than a week until the usual import tax is lifted for the emergency aid. And even now, “shipments are flowing, and a lot of non-profits are up and running, but that doesn’t mean aid coming from the government is actually getting there,” Fernandez said.

Liza Minnelli Pacheco, 43, a native of Guayanilla who now lives in Tampa, said Puerto Ricans want to send goods to relatives but don’t know what to send or how to arrange for the items to be picked up or delivered.

She and her friends in Florida from Guayanilla scrimped to raise money to deliver the aid in person. She traveled to her hometown on the hard-hit southern coast of Puerto Rico with a cooler full of insulin, some of which she gave to a city worker for a resident who had run out of her medicine.

“If a family in the U.S. wants to send things, it’s difficult,” Minnelli Pacheco said.

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DHS Won’t Renew Waiver That Let Puerto Rico Import For Cheap

[Daily Beast](#), October 9, 2017

The Department of Homeland Security will not renew its waiver to temporarily suspend the Jones Act, the department announced Monday. After Hurricane Maria wreaked destruction on Puerto Rico, the DHS temporarily waived the shipping law that bars the island from receiving goods carried on ships built in or operated by other nations, effectively doubling the price of imports in Puerto Rico. The waiver allowed Puerto Rico to import food, water, and supplies more quickly and for less money while the island recovered from the hurricane. Without the waiver, imports are expected to slow, and double in price again.

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FEMA Still Planning Additional Influx Of Federal Personnel In Puerto Rico

By Eric Katz

[Government Executive](#), October 6, 2017

The Trump administration on Thursday promised a large increase in the number of federal personnel on the ground in Puerto Rico, noting it still has a significant amount of short and long-term work ahead of it to help the hurricane-ravaged island.

Federal agencies have already deployed 14,000 personnel to the island and the U.S. Virgin Islands to deal with the aftermath of Hurricane Maria, according to the Federal Emergency Management Agency, but it plans to expand those numbers going forward. Most of those already deployed came from the Defense Department, which has sent 9,000 individuals to assist in the recovery. FEMA itself has sent 700 employees, while the remainder have come from agencies across government.

“We are going to branch out,” FEMA Deputy Coordinating Officer Tito Hernandez told reporters on Thursday. Assistance personnel “are going to grow in number from DoD and all agencies.”

FEMA Administrator Brock Long, who previously called the Maria response effort the “most logistically challenging event” in U.S. history, said this week his agency would be in both Puerto Rico and the U.S. Virgin Islands “for years.”

The agency, dealing with the destruction wrought by hurricanes Maria, Irma and Harvey, is currently spending \$200 million per day on activities funded by its Disaster Relief Fund. President Trump on Wednesday asked Congress for an emergency supplement of nearly \$13 billion to support those efforts. Congress last month approved \$15 billion in emergency funding after Harvey, which was split between FEMA’s disaster fund and Housing and Urban Development Community Block Development Grants. The disaster fund saw an additional \$6.7 billion deposit on Oct.1 due to a scheduled increase for the new fiscal year.

Federal responders in Puerto Rico are currently focusing on providing food and commodities, reopening hospitals and providing generator support. Boosting communications is also a priority, Hernandez said, but presents a much longer-term problem because antennas in the island’s mountain ranges were destroyed. A Navy hospital ship, the USNS Comfort, has arrived at Puerto Rico and is now receiving patients.

In addition to Defense and FEMA, the departments of Health and Human Services, Agriculture, Energy; other Homeland Security components such as Customs and Border Protection; the Environmental Protection Agency; and others continue to provide assistance in Puerto Rico.

While it is already dealing with three disaster response efforts, FEMA is already preparing for the next one. Nate, which officials say could reach hurricane strength by the time it reaches U.S. land this weekend, is set to hit parts of Louisiana, Alabama and Florida.

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OTHER PUERTO RICO NEWS

Puerto Rico Pharmaceutical Manufacturing Slowed By Hurricane Maria

By Laura Kelly

[Washington Times](#), October 9, 2017

Hurricane damage to Puerto Rico’s pharmaceutical industry could hamper the U.S. mainland’s access to critical medications, including treatments for cancer, diabetes and heart disease, the commissioner of the Food and Drug Administration says.

Dr. Scott Gottlieb has said the devastation in Puerto Rico could have broad challenges and implications on the medical product manufacturing base on the island. He called it a “critical health issue for Americans” that could have “significant public health consequences.”

On Friday, Dr. Gottlieb issued a statement saying the FDA is keeping a close watch on the most critical medical products and has stepped in to secure fuel to maintain production lines and logistical support.

Wendy Perry, vice president of the Pharmaceutical Industry Association of Puerto Rico, said Friday that about half of the island's manufacturing plants were operating, although some only partially.

"Within the next week, we expect the rest of the manufacturing plants to start operating again," Ms. Perry said by phone from Puerto Rico.

She said her organization is in direct communication with government heads about the priority and importance of bringing the plants back online.

"It's important to understand we're managing a situation that, even though we do have the plans, it is a catastrophic hurricane — something we have never seen before. Although we now are in control and we can execute all the plans for the short term, we have to continue to work together with the government in order to address the issues of electricity and telecommunications," she said.

Puerto Rico's pharmaceutical manufacturing business is vital to the economy, Ms. Perry said, because it represents 30 percent of the island's total gross domestic product and provides salaries for employees at almost three times the typical rate for Puerto Ricans.

"That is why we have all the attention and resources from our local government, and I do have to stress the fact that they have been very open, we have communication channels open directly with each one of the heads of the local authorities with whom we have to deal with in order to ensure business continuing," she said.

Puerto Rico's drug manufacturing industry employs about 90,000 people and accounts for 72 percent of the island's exports, representing about \$14.5 billion in revenue, according to the U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics.

Hurricane Maria decimated Puerto Rico when it made landfall on Sept. 20 with sustained winds up to 155 mph, knocking out the power grid of the entire island.

Almost three weeks later, the island is running mostly on generator power, with limited cellphone service and debris blocking transportation routes.

About 50 pharmaceutical companies have manufacturing plants on the island. Although some companies reached for comment said they sustained only minimal or moderate damage, the challenge of operating on generator power is not meant to last more than a few weeks.

Employees are struggling to access their work locations and, along with other Puerto Ricans, are dealing with food, water and fuel shortages.

On the impact on the pharmaceutical supply chain, Dr. Gottlieb has said the FDA is worried about preserving medications, in part by shuttling them off the island, as well as providing relief to Puerto Ricans affected by the storm.

The FDA said it is worried about 40 high-priority drugs but has not named the exact medications that would be in short supply if power is not restored to plants and transportation routes are not cleared.

The FDA said it is working with at least five companies to prevent critical shortages of medical products in Puerto Rico.

Of the companies reached for comment — including Johnson & Johnson, Pfizer, Amgen and Eli Lilly — none reported major damage to its site. The companies said they were using generator power to keep the plants running. They also reported monitoring product inventory levels and supply routes while keeping manufacturing levels up at other international sites.

Among the products produced on the island are life-saving medications used to treat cancer, diabetes, cardiovascular diseases and HIV.

“Overall, our facilities fared very well given the magnitude of the storm, and we’ve begun to restart some operations under generator power,” Johnson & Johnson spokesman Ernie Knewitz said in an email. The company has about 3,600 employees and operates seven facilities on the island.

“We have a strong local team working through incredible logistical challenges, and we’re seeing progress each day. We are also closely monitoring our product inventory levels and will work to ensure all critical needs are met,” Mr. Knewitz said.

Pfizer said in a statement that it is working to repair damage and restore electricity to its facilities, relying on generator power and unsure how long it will be until power is restored.

“Overall, we have a healthy supply of finished goods available for patients and do not currently see a risk to patient supply,” the company said. “We are monitoring the supply situation closely and utilizing alternative manufacturing locations where possible. We remain in regular contact with the FDA and regulators from other countries.”

A spokesman for Eli Lilly, known for making diabetes medication as well as cancer and cardiovascular drugs, said its facilities were built to withstand hurricane conditions and that preparations before the storms included halting production, locking down facilities and instructing employees to stay home.

“Our inventory strategy for products is designed to protect against this type of event, and we see no product supply risk to global markets at this time. The affiliate sustained minimal damage as well,” the company said in a statement.

Nicolette Louissaint is executive director of Healthcare Ready, which helps coordinate with public and private entities to ensure a supply chain of medical equipment to disaster areas. She said Hurricane Maria’s devastating effects on the island and logistical challenges have slowed relief efforts.

“We still are learning about the overall impacts, especially the health impacts of Maria,” Ms. Louissaint said. “One of the things that we have to continue to think about is how we track and care for the patients that are still at risk. There have been reports that are coming out, and we’re starting to learn more about what the true medical needs are, but keeping our eye on that is going to be really important over the next few weeks, especially.”

Healthcare Ready has been working for six weeks straight to respond to the needs of people caught in the paths of Hurricanes Harvey, Irma and Maria.

Ms. Louissaint said Puerto Rico is still about 94 percent without power with only 12 percent cell reception. While hospitals, and some people, are powering with generators, damage to roads has slowed access to diesel and gasoline.

“We’re starting to see that gasoline is becoming more available, and that really is important because it allows people to start to go to work,” she said.

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HURRICANE MARIA USVI

EDC Company To Announce Major Donation To USVI During Governor’s Press Briefing

By Ernice Gilbert

Virgin Islands Consortium, October 10, 2017

The Government of the Virgin Islands, on behalf of its people, will receive a donation from an EDC firm said to be in the millions, The Consortium has learned. The announcement will be made today during Governor Kenneth Mapp's press briefing, which will be held at 11:00 a.m. in St. Thomas.

The donation will coincide with the Mapp administration's announcement of an organization that will determine how funds collected on behalf of the USVI, through USVI Recovery, will be spent. The organization will include private and public sector individuals, and operate independent from the government's influence, Mr. Mapp has said.

On September 25, Mr. Mapp said the territory had received \$1.4 million through the website, a number that has most likely grown since the announcement. Initially, the entity was called "Virgin Islands Hurricane Recovery Task Force", but the governor told The Consortium at a recent press briefing that the name had changed.

The press briefing will be held at the West Indian Company (WICO) conference room in St. Thomas. There, Mr. Mapp will also give latest updates relative to the territory's recovery efforts following the two deadly storms.

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WAPA Currently Focused On Reconstructing 'Backbone' Of Territory's Electrical System, New Updates Announced

Virgin Islands Consortium, October 10, 2017

Here's WAPA's latest power and potable water restoration update.

ELECTRIC SYSTEM

Restoration and reconstruction work continued in both districts on Monday. The focus remains on reconstructing the backbone of the electrical system. The primary electrical circuits that are not currently energized must be reconstructed prior to service restoration to commercial or residential customers.

On St. Croix, following last week's installation of new utility poles from the Richmond power plant to Five Corners, crews continued stringing new primary lines along the path of Feeder 6A. On Monday, two additional buildings at the JFK housing community were energized and almost a dozen street lights were energized from the power plant to the LBJ housing community.

On St. John, crews continued to rebuild various electrical circuits in Cruz Bay as well as in the Gallows Point and Grande Bay areas.

On St. Thomas, crews worked on Feeder 8A developing primary circuits from Banco Popular west to Bellows International while energizing some customers along Harwood Highway. Crews also planted poles along the path of Feeder 7A. A portion of Feeder 7B, in the Sugar Estate area, was energized as well as WAPA's Tutu electrical substation. Crews continued to reconstruct a transmission circuit to interconnect the Tutu and East End substations. Approximately 25% of this work is completed.

WAPA personnel has removed electrical meters at locations where damage was apparent to either an electrical meter base and/or weather head. In these instances, the customer is

responsible for all repairs. WAPA will not reinstall meters until repairs are made by a licensed electrician. Home and business owners are advised to make repairs to their damaged weather heads and or meter bases as soon as possible. Once crews have reached your neighborhood, customers who have not had their weather head or meter base repaired, will not have service immediately restored.

POTABLE WATER SYSTEM

While water service remains available throughout Cruz Bay, St. John, there are two days of emergency water storage on the island.

There are six days of emergency water storage on St. Thomas. The Water Division continues to work with electrical crews to re-energize additional pump stations. The restoration of the pump stations will facilitate the resumption of water service to areas including Contant Knolls and Savan. The Lindbergh Bay pump station was returned to service over the last few days.

On St. Croix, there are four days of emergency water storage. WAPA is pumping at full capacity at Contentment, Mount Welcome and Concordia pump stations. This has facilitated water service to mid-island and Frederiksted town.

GENERAL INFORMATION

All electrical problems must be reported to the WAPA Emergency Call Centers to be properly documented and tracked. These problems include, but are not limited to, electrical service interruptions as well as damaged and downed facilities such as poles, transformers, and power lines. The WAPA Call Centers are now operating 9 a.m. – 5 p.m., seven days per week. St. Thomas – St. John: 340-774-1424 and St. Croix: 340-773-0150.

Customer service offices in both districts are functional. On St. Croix, customers can conduct business at the Authority's offices in Sunny Isle. In the St. Thomas-St. John district, a temporary customer service location has been established at WAPA's offices in Port of Sale Mall. In both districts, customer service representatives are available from 10 a.m. – 4 p.m., Monday-Friday. Self-service payment kiosks are also available at both locations during these hours.

WAPA's office telephones are operational in both districts. St. Croix: 340-773-2250 and St. Thomas – St. John: 340-774-3552.

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New Viya Network Supporting Wireless Connections on Island

By James Gardner

St. Thomas Source, October 9, 2017

Viya's fast-tracked launch of a new wireless network has helped bring Internet and data services to customers across the territory in the wake of Hurricanes Irma and Maria, company officials said Monday.

Speaking at a news conference at Viya's headquarters on St. Thomas, company President and Chief Executive Officer Alvaro Pilar said a new 4G LTE network was planned to be rolled out at the end of September/beginning of October. In the face of the twin storms, Viya was able to "fast forward" the launch so that customers can get online.

It's not perfect, Pilar said, but it's been the quickest way to get way to get people internet – including government agencies ranging from the V.I. Water and Power Authority to the airports. Viya was the first carrier to establish hotspots on island – federal officials coming in have even been able to take advantage of the service, Pilar said – and has been working with the territory's two cell phone carriers, Sprint and AT&T, to get their networks back up and running.

Any Sprint customer able to get a Choice Wireless signal is able to tap into that network and use their phones, Pilar said. Meanwhile, Viya has helped to power AT&T generators, clear sites and lend technical support where needed.

Google's parent company, Alphabet, has received permission from the Federal Communications Commission to launch its Project Loon weather balloons over Puerto Rico and the U.S. Virgin Islands to help restore cell phone connectivity to residents. Pilar said Viya has already touched base with company officials to see if it can be tapped as one of the local carriers whose frequencies can be used as an anchor for the balloons, which will be used as a "base" station to mass deliver voice and data service. (See Related Links below.)

In the meantime, Pilar said Viya owns "a lot" of bandwidth and frequency and plans to take advantage of it. The new Mi-Fi boxes that have brought residents flocking to the company's offices are being handed out free to Viya customers with high-speed service while non-Viya customers are being signed up for plans. (Questions about billing can be answered at Viya's website.)

The boxes' speeds run from 6 megabits to 25, and Pilar said Viya is waiting for FCC approval to lower the frequency on its network from 850 megahertz to 600 to allow for better connectivity inside buildings.

The first set of 5,000 boxes are almost out, and while Pilar said he expects another shipment of 5,000 next week, the next plan is to sell cell phones that can be turned into hot spots for connectivity, he added.

The same plan is in place for St. Croix customers once the network there is lit up, and for St. John. Pilar said residents are also able to take advantage of hot spots while antennas are being put in place to allow residents to tap into the same network in places like Cruz Bay.

Since most of the hardware has been given to customers instead of sold, Pilar commended the FCC for giving the company seven months worth of Universal Service funds – federal funds given monthly to support communications in rural areas – to help boost finances.

Cable service, meanwhile, is dependent on the restoration of electricity throughout the territory, but Pilar said service is up – and is being used in some areas of St. Croix with power – and that Viya is working "hand in hand" with WAPA to get the lines up.

Never famous for its voice over-service, Viya might be the best on island right now, Pilar said, but added that residents should still feel comfortable keeping their landlines if they want to.

Asked Monday if Viya plans to go underground with its infrastructure, Pilar said he hopes to do so for the company's "core network." But while the government is considering it, customers still have to get service in the meantime.

"Were the key to normalcy," he added. "These days, normal is able to go on the internet, watch a movie, go on the internet, read the news or send an email. It's the same as having a cold drink or a shower, people need to feel normal and that's what we're working to achieve."

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St. Croix Residents Express Satisfaction In Mapp Administration's Handling Of Disaster

By Ashley Scotland

Virgin Islands Consortium, October 9, 2017

ST. CROIX — Optimism, patience, progress and community were some of the buzzwords floating around the point of distribution centers on St. Croix last Tuesday. Fifteen days after the USVI felt the first effects of Category 5 Hurricane Maria, The Consortium visited three of St. Croix's 5 distribution centers to get some feedback from the community about the government's response to the aftermath of the storm, and their personal experiences so far on the path to recovery.

Three weeks in, and the lines at the distribution centers are much shorter than they were immediately following the hurricane. Many factors may play a role in that, as the curfew hours continue to ease, giving people more time to maneuver, and stores have reopened. The territory has also seen an exodus of residents who needed to leave for various reasons.

With that being said, residents also praised the improvements at the distribution centers which has contributed to a much faster process of receiving goods. While most people interviewed for this story complained about the chaotic and unorganized setup during the early days of the distribution of goods and supplies, most acknowledged a shift and change as the days continued, and were very complimentary of the assistance provided by National Guardsmen from abroad. This reporter also witnessed the hard work of the local guardsmen providing exemplary service to those that they were serving.

Residents interviewed were mostly satisfied with the progress of the recovery thus far. A young man from the Williams Delight community, which was one of the hardest hit areas on the island, stated, "Things are moving slow, but we are making progress." He spoke of neighbors assisting neighbors in the clearing of roads and yards in his community, which seems to be a common theme in the days following the hurricane. Residents also seemed to agree with the curfew imposed by the administration. One resident felt the curfew should be adjusted so as to give more daylight time for residents to conduct business, telling a story of almost getting into a catastrophic accident during the evening hours as another car swerved into her lane to avoid some wires hanging from a pole.

Aside from those concerns, most residents said the administration was making progress with the resources available, with the presence of road crews throughout the island playing a role in that perception.

Yet, while most residents interviewed for this story felt that progress being made by the administration has been adequate, there were a minority of dissenters, with some incorrectly contending that most roads were cleared by residents and not necessarily government contractors. Others said that the chaotic days following Hurricane Maria and the seeming lack of a plan or any structure set in place for the immediate aftermath of the storm, contributed to some of the looting that occurred. They also pointed to the slow pace of FEMA's Blue Roof program, which Governor Mapp himself has reportedly pointed out to President Donald Trump in a recent face-to-face meeting.

A lot of residents were anxious to see what changes Hurricane Maria will bring. An educator expressed her opinion that, "Things will stay the same, because the people are the same."

What we do know is that thousands of Virgin Islanders left on mercy cruises and flights. It remains to be seen the impact their departure will have on the Virgin Islands economy moving forward, as the territory already suffers from a brain drain epidemic. When living conditions improve, will the Virgin Islands be able to attract back its young talent? Will things remain the same or will Hurricane Maria bring about some change that people desperately want in the way things are done? These questions won't immediately provide answers, but as the weeks, months and years pass — pending the Caribbean and the USVI remain free from major storms — the answers will reveal themselves with consequences accompanying the reality.

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Pence's Visit Was Good, So Donald Trump Doesn't Need To Visit

By Darren Sands

[BuzzFeed](#), October 9, 2017

US Virgin Islands Delegate Stacey Plaskett doesn't believe it's essential to the US Virgin Islands recovery efforts that Donald Trump visit the island territory devastated by Hurricanes Irma and Maria.

Plaskett a week ago, amid a crisis of a lack of media and attention on the extensive damage of her territory, expressed alarm that the aftermath of Puerto Rico's had warranted a visit from President Trump, but that the US Virgin Islands seemed like an apparent afterthought. She made her concerns known in a national appearance with MSNBC's Joy Ann Reid.

Trump tweeted that he "will hopefully be able to stop at the U.S. Virgin Islands" but never made the trip. In an interview with BuzzFeed News, Plaskett said she was able to impart her concern about the American territory's recovery to someone else close to Trump with whom she had been quite impressed: Vice President Mike Pence.

Plaskett's satisfaction with Pence's visit comes just days after Trump visited San Juan, accenting his arrival by flicking several packages of paper towels into an audience of onlookers as if shooting a basketball at a hoop.

She said a solemn Pence visited a small white church that had had two sections of its roof blown off, leaving water and debris all over the floor.

“It has been heartbreaking to see the impact of hurricanes Irma and Maria on the Virgin Islands,” the vice president said before his wife offered residents comfort from the book of Colossians.

In addition to attending a briefing on the recovery effort, the Pences also visited a shelter and participated in a helicopter tour to survey the damage on all three of the US Virgin Islands.

“I think you can tell when someone is putting on a show, but I believe the conversations [the Pences] had with people, young people, the workers, the volunteers were genuine,” Plaskett told BuzzFeed News in an extended interview about the federal government’s response and the recovery effort. “I think that is something that comes across from them. I think because he’s been a governor he understands the human element of supporting people and understanding the day-to-day lives of people who have elected you. And I think that moves him and motivates him and that was clearly evident.”

Plaskett said her constituents are part of the “American experience” and take their role as Americans seriously. To have a sitting US president visit the US Virgin Islands would be “very gratifying” to residents, she said — and indeed a signal that their calls for relief and assistance from the federal government are being taken seriously.

“But is it necessary for us to move on in terms of our rebuilding?” Plaskett said. “I don’t think so.”

Plaskett said she told Pence and his staff that the federal government has an opportunity help overhaul the island’s infrastructure, while there have been struggles with the federal government’s initial response. “When I have had conversations with officials from FEMA going into and talking to people in neighborhoods, we’re seeing the issues people are having getting supplies, and getting support in a timely fashion,” said Plaskett.

“There were challenges that the federal government had that I don’t think we were ready for.”

Plaskett said federal workers were used to providing temporary roofing to homes that were partially destroyed but weren’t used to providing that type of assistance to people whose roofs had been totally ripped off.

“This is a test for the people of the Virgin Islands as a whole,” said Plaskett. “And it’s also a test for the United States and the African diaspora to get engaged to ensure that we’re not forgotten in that rebuilding.”

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Debris Removal Operations Progressing With A \$10 Million Boost From FEMA [St. Thomas Source](#), October 9, 2017

The Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA) is providing more than \$10 million in expedited funding to support efforts by the U.S. Virgin Islands government and federal partners to clean up and remove the large quantities of debris left by hurricanes Irma and Maria.

“Clearing hurricane-related debris from Virgin Islands roadways and neighborhoods not only helps remove a health and safety hazard, it is a visible sign of recovery for all residents,” said FEMA’s Federal Coordinating Officer William Vogel. “These expedited funds, and more to come, will provide a valuable boost to island communities in their recovery efforts.”

Because of the major disaster declarations for the USVI, FEMA is funding 100 percent of the costs of emergency debris clearance for 180 days from the declaration dates – until March 4, 2018, for Hurricane Irma, and March 15, 2018, for Hurricane Maria.

FEMA is providing supplemental funding to the Virgin Islands Waste Management Authority (VIWMA) for costs to remove eligible household debris that is moved to public rights of way, but residents should follow VIWMA's guidance.

With debris collection underway in residential neighborhoods, VIWMA asks that residents move hurricane-related debris as close to the edge of their property as possible without blocking vehicular traffic flow and to allow for the safe passage of emergency vehicles and repair crews. To have hurricane-related debris picked up it must first be sorted and may not include household garbage.

Waste must be separated into the following four categories:

Whites: appliances such as stoves, refrigerators and microwaves

Electronics: such as radios, computers and TVs

Vegetation: such as trees, branches, grass and plants

Roofing or construction material: galvanized metal, wood, sheetrock, etc.

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NEW YORK CITY

NYCHA Construction Begins Five Years After Sandy

By Nathan Weiser

Red Hook Star Revue, October 9, 2017

"It is a great day for this community," Congresswoman Nydia Velazquez said at the groundbreaking for the construction of Red Hook East and West. "Here we are in a path to recovery. In that sense, we have to make sure the rebuilding we do is one that is built to last."

The New York City Housing Authority (NYCHA), along with elected officials, came to Red Hook last month for a ceremony signifying the start of the much anticipated roof replacements for Red Hook East and West buildings. This will be the first stage of a massive project funded by FEMA to improve conditions at NYCHA, which comes five years after Hurricane Sandy ravaged the neighborhood.

On the morning of September 5, NYCHA Chair Shola Olatoye along with 7th District Congresswoman Nydia Velazquez, Assistant Speaker Felix Ortiz for Assembly District 51 and Red Hook Councilman Carlos Menchaca "broke ground" on the roof of 791 Hicks Street of a \$63 million roof construction project. Red Hook East Tenant Association President Frances Brown and Red Hook West Tenant Association President Lilly Marshall also made their way up to the roof.

The plan is to replace all 28 roofs of the Red Hook Houses by the end of 2019. Replacing the roofs will benefit more than 6,000 residents who will see fewer leaks and a better quality of life than with the roofs they have.

"The people of Red Hook deserve better and I am glad that the administration recognizes that it is about time to move forward in everything that needs to be done in Red Hook," Ortiz said.

Sandy caused a lot of long-lasting damage to the Red Hook East and West complex and this is a first major step in the rebuilding.

“Today we are moving closer to repairing that damage { from Sandy } by building back stronger with storm resilient technology so that NYCHA residents will be safer in future storms,” Olatoye said in front of 791 Hicks Street.

She went on to say that this project that will be beginning very soon will ensure that NYCHA buildings will be safe in extreme weather events.

“Our Sandy work proves that with sufficient federal funding, public housing can provide safe stable homes in weather events,” Olatoye said. “In Red Hook, we are investing \$500 million to repair all roofs, install a new heating and hot water system, as well as structural reinforcement, flood protection and full backup power new playgrounds and improved retail spaces.”

This \$550 million investment in the Red Hook Houses is part of NYCHA’s Sandy Recovery to Resiliency program to build back stronger than ever. This project will transform the developments into resilient sites that can effectively withstand future weather challenges.

Olatoye also added that \$6 million has been invested into the Red Hook Community Center. This is an unprecedented investment in public housing and Councilman Menchaca wants to make sure that the project is done in the right way.

“The community remembers for such a long time about how much investment has come in but let us not forget that this investment will be the largest of its kind ever to public housing in the country,” Menchaca said. “Nowhere else are we getting almost half a billion dollars that is coming here, but we want to make sure that it is done right. .”

This project, which is in the Capital Projects Division of Recovery and Resiliency, will install new security cameras, door security access systems and replace the exterior site lighting fixtures and bulbs.

Replacing the roofs at Red Hook East and West is the first phase of an almost \$550 million investment in the Red Hook Houses, which is part of NYCHA’s Sandy Recovery to Resiliency program. The program will build the Houses back to be stronger than ever and transform the developments into resilient sites that can effectively withstand future weather challenges.

KPF Contracting Inc was hired to do the construction. They will repair and replace vital infrastructure, and will flood proof to protect against the impacts of climate change, like rising sea-levels. They will also install stand-by back-up generators.

“We have an incredible team at KPF that is one of the best and leading designers in the world,” Menchaca added. “We need to continue to hold them accountable throughout the rest of the process, and I am confident that with your support and with you being in the room and making your voices heard that we are not only going to get new roofs but that we are going to get the jobs that we deserve.”

Congresswoman Velazquez voiced some disappointment that according to her the country is better prepared to respond to a nuclear threat than the nation is to respond to a category five storm. She thinks that we need to learn from Sandy and what has now been happening in Houston.

“I am so happy that my bill passed out of the committee thanks to the leaders in Red Hook that helped me draft this legislation based on our own experiences,” Velazquez added. “Shola, I want to thank you for your incredible leadership, and the residents and the public engagement that has taken place here. I am so thrilled that we were able to secure the federal funding. It took us a while as you know.”

“When natural disaster strikes the federal government must show up and provide the leadership to make families whole,” the Congresswoman said. “We are ready to start the construction of the 28 roofs in these buildings and the senior center. That will be a great addition.”

The Red Hook roofs project will provide new roofs, and will repair and/or replace the parapets and railings at all the 28 high-rise residential buildings within the Red Hook East and West development. These 28 buildings are home to more than 8,000 residents.

“It is like anything else, if you have a strong roof and a strong foundation, then you can take care of the rest inside,” Ortiz said. “We need to prevent the water from continuing to leak into the apartments. I have been to many apartments that have a lot of mold, a lot of paint is falling apart, and I think that is because of the water leaking from the top of the roof.”

According to NYCHA, the new roofing is a top-of-the-line liquid-applied roofing system with a 30-year warranty. The system will provide a better building insulation, reduce the amount of heat retained by the roof and eliminate water intrusion.

“We are very happy that we were able to secure funding for the roofs together with the federal government,” Ortiz said. “I think this is a step in the right direction.”

The second stage of the timeline of improving Red Hook East and West includes basement restoration and flood protection. This stage will begin in early 2018 and be finished at the end of 2019.

The third and fourth stages will both begin in 2018 and be finished by the end of 2021. The third stage will include boiler/generator plant building located on Clinton Street and W 9th St to provide heat and power for the whole East and West development. The third stage will also consist of new MEP annexes above the FEMA flood level.

The fourth stage will include an overall site restoration.

Some of the development improvements during the encompassing project will include replacing the playground including nine lily pad play areas and three larger destination play areas, restoring the retail spaces at building 29 and upgrading the above apartments, constructing

elevated courtyards to provide flood protected building entries and replacing the underground electrical wiring system.

According to NYCHA, they will also be removing hazardous materials and cleaning crawl spaces, replacing and/or repairing the doors, fixing the door frames and hardware damaged by water and replacing electrical conduits and plumbing pipes damaged by water in the basement areas.

Additional building improvements will consist of replacing building entrances and improving the back water valves on sewer/storm plumbing lines.

Another mission of the project will be to make the area more resilient. They will dry flood proof areas that are below the FEMA flood level. They will build new boilers and generators and install them above the FEMA flood level.

From an energy perspective, they will be installing backup power generators and will be taking additional site wide energy and sustainability measures. This step is awaiting Housing and Urban Development (HUD) approval.

This massive NYCHA construction project is all scheduled to be completed by the end of 2021.

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Making Rooms: Tour Brooklyn's Slick Disaster House

By Lauren Gill

Brooklyn Daily, October 10, 2017

Get a peek at sweet relief.

Next weekend you can take a tour of a home you will hopefully never have to live in! A prototype house designed for disaster victims will open its doors to visitors on Oct. 14–15 as part of Open House New York, an annual two-day event that grants public access to normally closed spaces across the city. The slick model apartments are much nicer than the typical emergency tents and trailers, and the project's architect wants people to know that it is possible to house catastrophe victims in humane conditions.

“We have to show people everyone deserves to have a quality environment critical to their health and well-being,” said Jim Garrison, a professor at Pratt Institute. “The reason it’s nice is because people have to make it their home.”

The city commissioned the Urban Post-Disaster Housing Prototype shortly after Hurricane Sandy, and it was assembled in a lot Downtown in just 13 and a half hours, creating two three-bedroom apartments and a one-bedroom unit bolted together to make a three-story building.

Garrison designed the housing for dense urban areas, and it emulates the streetscapes of Brooklyn.

“They’re meant to make complete streets like brownstones and townhouses would,” he said.

After a disaster, the housing could be quickly assembled in narrow spaces, such as the Ikea parking lot in Red Hook or next to public housing complexes.

The prototype has been sitting in the lot since it debuted in 2014, and is usually only open by appointment. Garrison would like to see his design deployed to areas hit by recent hurricanes, although there has not been enough support to make it happen.

“It takes a lot of political will and money, we haven’t been able to move on it,” he said.

In addition to the prototype home, Open House New York will also let visitors explore other usually closed Brooklyn sites, including the Sims Sunset Park Material Recovery Facility and the Kingsland Wildflowers Green Roof in Greenpoint. New to the program this year are tours of Bushwick’s Evergreens Cemetery and the Five Boroughs Brewing Company in Sunset Park.

Open House New York (Cadman Plaza East and Red Cross Place Downtown, www.ohny.org). Oct 14–15, every 20 minutes from 10 am–4:40 pm. Free, but RSVP required.

Reach reporter Lauren Gill at lgill@cnglocal.com or by calling (718) 260–2511. Follow her on

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OTHER NEW YORK NEWS

L Train Shutdown: L-Pocalypse Or Can’t Bloody L Wait?

By Nikki M. Mascali

Metro, October 10, 2017

Just when you think you’re out, the L train pulls you back in — and leaves you on a platform or on the subway for an undetermined amount of time.

Just yesterday, there were delays in both directions on the beleaguered line due to an unspecified investigation between Jefferson Street and Morgan Avenue. And that came less than a month after two separate issues — a door malfunction followed by a signal issue — crippled the line and stranded straphangers for hours.

The long-lambasted L train shutdown won’t happen for another 18 months, but many New Yorkers likely wish it were sooner to end their misery. But that’s next to impossible, said Metro columnist and transportation historian and advocate Larry Penner.

“There’s so much prior planning necessary before the shutdown, you’ve got to get it right,” he said.

The 15-month shutdown, scheduled to begin in April 2019, will rehabilitate the Canarsie Tunnel, which goes under the East River and was severely damaged by Hurricane Sandy in October 2012.

Since the work includes demolition and reconstruction of the tunnel, tracks and track bed, the L train will only run between Bedford Avenue and Canarsie-Rockaway Parkway, meaning there will not be service to or from Manhattan during that time.

“In fairness, we’re a 24/7 city, and with the subway structure fragile as it is, it does make sense to only take care of one corridor at a time,” Penner said.

The MTA did not respond to requests for comment and updates on the L train shutdown, but a similar shutdown in 2013 of the Montague Street Tunnel, which the N and R trains use between Manhattan and Brooklyn, opened a month ahead of schedule after 13 months, so there is hope for the L train.

“That was a good model and success story,” Penner said. “It’s better to go in and get it all done at once than piecemeal. When you have to stop and start work every 15 minutes, you’re not being efficient. Plus, the concept of going in and shutting it down makes sense because you save a lot of money.”

L train options are out there

Though Department of Transportation Commissioner Polly Trottenberg recently shot down hopes that 14th Street would go car-free or bus-only during the L train shutdown, she did say parts of the thoroughfare may have bus-only access at certain times, Streetsblog reported.

Straphangers can still use the J, M and Z trains to get into Manhattan as well as the NYC Ferry, which Magdalena Mazurek-Nuovo of Williamsburg divorced the L for.

“It was just unbearable,” she said of the train. “It’s very unpredictable and horrible. I don’t even mind being in a crowded train — it was just sometimes there were no trains for a long time.”

Astrid Harders, another longtime L rider, said she’s curious to see what will really happen with the shutdown. “It might not be that bad — weekends in Williamsburg might be less crowded, less tourists and hungover college kids.”

A Chariot awaits

Another option for stranded straphangers may be Chariot, a car service that launched its third route in New York City today. Going from Williamsburg to Midtown, it is the company’s third route in the city since its August rollout — and its first that was crowdsourced by customers.

Chariot works like a rideshare, in which its app will let you know how close one of the commuter vans is and allows you to reserve a seat. Then you just go to one of the designated stops and hop on for \$4 a ride or \$119 for a monthly pass.

“We don’t disclose exact numbers, but we’ve been growing week-over-week,” Marketing Manager Brittany Lewis said, adding that “multiple” new routes are expected by yearend.

While Chariot is not actively planning to pick up the slack during the L train shutdown, “we are open to whatever residents want,” Lewis said. “So if that time comes and that’s something people are looking for, we’ll definitely want to help them.”

New Yorkers can “found” a Chariot route by going to Chariot.com/routes.

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Jewish Facilities In Queens Get Federal Funds To Improve Security

By Gina Martinez

Times Ledger, October 10, 2017

U.S. Rep. Grace Meng (D-Flushing) has announced Jewish facilities in Queens will be getting \$450,000 in federal funds to improve security.

The funding is coming after a citywide increase in threats and attacks against Jewish schools, synagogues and organizations.

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The funds are being allocated through the Federal Emergency Management Agency’s Nonprofit Security Grant Program, which provides non-profit organizations with funding for security enhancements, Meng said.

For non-profits to qualify for NSGP funds they must face a high risk of a terrorist attack. The six facilities receiving the \$75,000 in funding include the Jewish Institute of Queens, in Elmhurst; Bais Yaakov Academy of Queens, in Kew Gardens; Beth Gavriel Bukharian Congregation, in Forest Hills; Central Queens YM & YWHA, in Forest Hills; Queens Yeshiva Ketana, in Fresh Meadows; and the Temple Gates of Prayer, in Flushing.

“With anti-Semitic incidents on the rise, it is critical that Jewish institutions have appropriate resources to protect their properties, and this funding will go a long way towards helping these Queens facilities guard against threats and attacks,” Meng said. “The safety and security of students, organization members and congregation members must be the top priority of any school, organization or synagogue. I am pleased that our borough is receiving its fair share of these critical and very competitive federal grants.”

According to the congresswoman, funding from the grants can go towards physical barriers, gates, safety gear, surveillance equipment and other security measures. Meng, who serves on the House Appropriations Committee, helped secure an increase in funding for the NSGP initiative, doubling the amount from \$25 million in 2017 to \$50 million for 2018.

In April, the NYPD announced there was a 55 percent spike in hate crimes in the city compared to that time last year. NYPD officials attributed the jump to a 94 percent rise in anti-Semitic hate crimes in particular. The 107th Precinct increased security during Passover in synagogues in Fresh Meadows. Since the beginning of 2017, at least 91 Jewish organizations across the country, including schools and Jewish community centers, have been the target of 116 bomb threats, 15 of which were made against Jewish locations in New York state.

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OTHER NEW JERSEY NEWS

Surviving Sandy Author Speaks Oct. 20 at NJ Maritime Museum Program

The SandPaper, October 9, 2017

The New Jersey Maritime Museum's first post-season presentation will be given on Friday, Oct. 20, at 7 p.m. at Buckalew's Restaurant and Tavern in Beach Haven. Admission is free, but donations to the museum are accepted.

Guest speaker Scott Mazzella will discuss his book, *Surviving Sandy – Long Beach Island and the Greatest Storm of the Jersey Shore*, as well as how the superstorm still affects the area five years later.

Mazzella's talk will include his concept for writing the book, gathering stories from storm survivors, and displaying and describing their experiences through a collection of more than 250 photographs. He said he would show how Sandy tracked from its origin in the Atlantic, initially becoming a hurricane but then morphing into a superstorm as it moved north but then veered west with a bull's eye pointed at the Jersey Shore.

"There was a high-pressure system to our north and a deepening trough to the west, which pulled Sandy perpendicular to us," said Mazzella, a history teacher at the Jonas Salk Middle School in Old Bridge. "While it caused a lot of damage to LBI, it was quite worse farther up the shore and areas of Staten Island and Queens in New York. That's what made it an historic storm."

He said one of the legacies of Sandy is how it revolutionized storm warnings through Facebook and other social media outlets.

"People are better prepared today in the event of a major storm," said Mazzella. "I think Sandy woke a lot of people up who didn't think the Jersey Shore would ever be impacted by a hurricane."

He said he would also look at this year's hurricane season, which brought very destructive storms through hurricanes Harvey, Irma and Jose.

"They were making landfall one after another," he said. "This has been a most unusual hurricane season."

For reservations or additional information, call the museum at 609-492-0202.

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HURRICANE SEASON

Nate Remnants Drench Northeast; Most Power Back On In South

[Associated Press](#), October 9, 2017

BILOXI, Miss. (AP) — Remnants of Hurricane Nate buffeted the U.S. Northeast with wind and rain Monday while power crews restored most electrical service on the Gulf Coast and an overdue cruise ship delayed by the storm finally headed into port.

With the center of the tropical depression located near the eastern shore of Lake Erie, forecasters said parts of Pennsylvania and New York could receive 2 inches (5 centimeters) of rain or more. Police in Amherst, New York, shared photos of water covering some roads.

Meanwhile, in the Southeast, utilities said crews had restored electrical service to all but a few thousand of the more than 100,000 homes and businesses that lost power because of Nate in Mississippi, Alabama, Louisiana and Florida.

Stuck in the Gulf of Mexico for two days because of Nate, the Carnival Fantasy began moving toward its berth after the Coast Guard reopened the port of Mobile, Alabama. The ship originally was supposed to dock on Saturday after a five-day trip; it was due in at 4 p.m. Monday.

Some passengers complained about the unscheduled delay on social media, but Carnival spokeswoman Christine De La Huerta said the ship had plenty of provisions and would return when able.

The ship has a total guest capacity of 2,056 people and carries a crew of 920.

Dramatic scene as storm surge floods Biloxi casino car park

At Dauphin Island, Alabama, Mayor Jeff Collier said workers were using heavy equipment to remove as much as 6 feet (1.8 meters) of sand that washed across a more than 3-mile (4.8-kilometer) stretch of the island's main road and more than 20 side streets.

"It moved the beachfront on to the roadway," said Collier. Also on the Alabama coast, workers were fixing a more than 1,500-foot-long (457-meter-long) fishing pier that was damaged by Nate.

Mississippi's worst damage was in coastal Jackson County, where Emergency Manager Earl Etheridge said officials have received reports of about 200 damaged buildings. Some had flooding from storm surge, he said, but most had roof damage from high winds.

County and state officials also are investigating barrels and large containers that washed ashore and may be holding hazardous chemicals, he said.

Ruth Adams, a Massachusetts native riding out her first hurricane in her beach house in Jackson County near Ocean Springs, said Nate stripped off her metal roof.

"The one thing I have learned is, I don't intend to stay even for a Category 1," said Adams, whose house on a narrow strip of land was cut off by rising waters.

No storm-related deaths or injuries were immediately reported in the United States, but Nate left at least 22 people dead in Central America.

The Hurricane Center said a depression in the open Atlantic had strengthened into Tropical Storm Ophelia on Monday, but the system didn't pose any threat to land.

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Brock Long On FEMA's Response To Hurricane Nate (VIDEO)

[Fox News](#), October 8, 2017

Oct. 08, 2017 – 3:21 – FEMA administration provides insight on 'Fox & Friends' about latest relief efforts.

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FEMA Chief Says Hurricanes This Year Have Already “Strained” Resources

[Associated Press](#), October 8, 2017

NEW ORLEANS —

The head of the Federal Emergency Management Agency said the hurricanes that have struck the U.S. and its territories this year — four so far — have “strained” resources.

FEMA Administrator Brock Long told ABC’s “This Week” that some 85 percent of the agency’s forces were deployed and still working on issues created by hurricanes Harvey, Irma, Maria and now Nate.

He said that “in regards to resources, of course we’re strained” because “nearly 85 percent of my entire agency is deployed right now. We’re still working massive issues in Harvey, Irma, as well as the issues in Puerto Rico and the Virgin Islands, and now this one.”

Nate struck the U.S. as a Category 1 storm on Saturday but has since weakened substantially. The National Hurricane Center in Miami downgraded the storm to “tropical depression” strength and discontinued all hurricane and storm surge warnings and watches for the Gulf Coast.

Winds gusts of tropical storm force were expected over the Florida Panhandle and portions of Alabama and Georgia on Sunday, the hurricane center said. Water levels remained elevated along portions of the northern Gulf Coast, but were expected to gradually subside by midday Sunday.

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INSURANCE and LEGAL

FEMA Flood Map Changes Subject Of Next Environmental Lecture At Ocean City Library

By Anthony Bellano

[Patch.com](#), October 9, 2017

OCEAN CITY, NJ — Ocean City residents can learn about the new FEMA flood insurance rate maps and what impact the changes have on their property during a free lecture at the Ocean City Free Public Library on Tuesday, Oct. 24, 6:30 p.m.

Ocean City Chief Financial Officer and Emergency Management Coordinator Frank Donato will lead the discussion, and will also talk about what steps residents should take to make sure they are prepared for storm events.

The lecture, which is part of the Environmental Lecture Series sponsored by the Ocean City Environmental Commission in partnership with the library, will be held in the Chris Maloney Lecture Hall. For more information, call 609-399-2434, ext. 5222.

Ocean City Council recently approved a proposed ordinance to adopt the updates to the maps, which were from 1984. Since they were initially issued, FEMA has released updated advisory maps that apply to new construction and substantially renovated homes in Ocean City. Officials say the change won’t have a substantial impact on insurance premiums.

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In Aftermath Of Hurricanes, FEMA's Slow Flood Mapping Leaves Homeowners Vulnerable

By Alison Spann

[The Hill](#), October 9, 2017

The government's disaster preparedness agency has failed to map flood risks in U.S. communities in a timely manner, leaving many vulnerable homeowners with a false security that they don't need flood insurance, the Homeland Security Department's internal watchdog warns.

The Federal Emergency Management Agency has delayed decisions on flood zone determinations — in some cases by two years or more — and currently has more than 240 mapping projects on hold, the department's inspector general warned in a report dated Sept. 27.

As a result, only 42 percent of FEMA's flood risk database is currently up to date, meaning more than half of the country's flood map miles need to be revised, the review found. The agency's stated goal is to have 80 percent of its flood maps current.

"Without accurate floodplain identification and mapping processes, management, and oversight, FEMA cannot provide members of the public with a reliable rendering of their true flood vulnerability or ensure that [National Flood Insurance Program] rates reflect the real risk of flooding," the report said.

The findings suggest that many people across the country may not understand the risks that their homes face from flooding, a fact underlined by the series of hurricanes that have hit the United States this season.

Hurricane Harvey's devastation in Texas in late August provides a cogent example.

The University of California, Davis Center for Watershed Sciences said its analysis of flood data after Harvey found that the majority of the flooded areas in Houston's Harris County were outside FEMA's declared risk areas.

"Over 50% of estimated inundation occurred outside of any mapped flood zone," it reported last month.

Mapping data released by FEMA shows that at least a third of structures initially reported damaged by flooding as of Sept. 2 were outside declared flood zones. Some members of Texas's congressional delegation estimate as many as 85 percent of victims in the state were without flood insurance when the epic storm hit.

"The recent flooding in Texas after Hurricane Harvey serves as a devastating example of the importance of accurate and reliable flood maps," Inspector General John Roth said. "We are optimistic that our recommended changes will improve FEMA's management of the flood mapping program and introduce internal controls to ensure the quality of the maps produced by FEMA's partners."

FEMA flood maps are used by the government and insurance companies to evaluate flood risk and calculate insurance premiums or insurance eligibility.

The agency says it knows it must do better but that Harvey's damage in Texas must be evaluated with the reality that the storm's magnitude was historic.

"The recent storms, which in many cases exceeded FEMA's data-backed assessments of the areas that have a 1-in-100 risk of flooding in any given year, were strong evidence of the fact that anywhere it can rain, it can flood," the agency said in a statement.

That's little solace, however, to homeowners without the insurance now to cover their losses or the lawmakers that represent them in Congress.

"I think I saw 85 percent of the folks did not have flood insurance. A lot of them, as you said, were told they were not in a flood area," Rep. Roger Williams (R-Texas) told The Hill. "A 100-year

floodplain is what everybody deals with. This appears to be a 500-year, so these are going to be issues that are going to have to be sorted out.”

Asked what may need to be done, Williams answered: “Eventually we’re going to have to remap and redo these kinds of things so this doesn’t happen again.”

But before that new effort begins, FEMA has to still catch up and update a mapping system that it admits suffered from inadequacies.

The agency says it is strongly committed to giving the public good risk data and that it has “made significant progress developing and implementing several flood-related policy and program changes.”

It agreed with recommendations listed by the inspector general, which include adopting policies that would ensure mapping projects move forward on a timely basis.

Until those problems are fixed, flood-vulnerable homeowners may be left in the dark, a reality that has members of Congress scrambling for long-term solutions.

“There are a lot of legal issues that are going to come up,” said Rep. Henry Cuellar (D-Texas). “So we have been working with the state and the locals but it has been, as you know, it’s not something that is going to be done overnight. It’s going to take a while.”

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SPANISH

FEMA Ha Desembolsado \$27.4 Millones A Los Damnificados

[El Nuevo Día \(PRI\)](#), October 6, 2017

El director para Puerto Rico y el Caribe de la Agencia federal para el Manejo de Emergencias (Fema, por sus siglas en inglés), Alejandro de La Campa, dijo hoy que su agencia le da “un adelanto inicial” -que puede ser de \$500- a las personas afectadas por el huracán María que solicitan ayuda y son elegibles.

“Eso es parte del proceso nuestro de asistencia donde las personas solicitan y a base de lo catastrófico que ha sido este evento, estamos proveyendo ayuda. Pero tienen que ser personas que hayan sufrido daños en sus hogares”, precisó el funcionario federal.

“Tenemos distintas cantidades que se van a estar dando a las familias dependiendo de los daños. Incluso, de las primeras ayudas que nosotros damos es para que puedan alquilar un lugar”, abundó.

Otra de las ayudas que proveen es la repartición de toldos livianos. De esos, Fema ha entregado más de 10,000. Estos toldos no son los que instala el Cuerpo de Ingenieros del Ejército de los Estados Unidos en residencias que hayan perdido sus techos. Ese proceso de instalación, comenzó ayer, según se informó.

Los \$500 que provee Fema solo es para familias elegibles que soliciten ayuda y que hayan tenido daños a consecuencia del huracán, reiteró De La Campa. Esa ayuda inicial es provista por Fema antes de que un inspector acuda a la residencia a revisar los daños.

Al momento, Fema ha recibido 203,111 solicitudes y ha desembolsado \$27.4 millones como parte del programa de asistencia pública (a los municipios).

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Precisa FEMA La Forma De Inscribirse Para Solicitar Asistencia Por Desastre

[El Vocero de Puerto Rico](#), October 7, 2017

La Agencia Federal para el Manejo de Emergencias (FEMA) sugirió hoy los procedimientos que deben seguir los ciudadanos que han sufrido daños o pérdidas materiales causados directamente por el huracán María.

La entidad federal sugirió que se puede solicitar asistencia por desastre, incluso si tiene un seguro, pues es posible que haya ayuda disponible para los daños no asegurados o con seguro insuficiente y si las reclamaciones no se liquidan rápidamente.

Hasta la fecha, indicó FEMA, se han inscrito más de 280,000 sobrevivientes del desastre para solicitar asistencia.

La asistencia federal para dueños de viviendas e inquilinos puede incluir subvenciones para alquiler, vivienda temporal, reparaciones a la vivienda en residencias primarias, así como otras necesidades relacionadas con el desastre.

La ayuda que FEMA proporciona es para las necesidades básicas de los sobrevivientes y es el primer paso para la recuperación relacionada con el huracán María, que golpeó a Puerto Rico el pasado 20 de septiembre.

La Agencia Federal para el Desarrollo de la Pequeña Empresa (SBA, siglas en inglés) también ofrece préstamos con intereses bajos por las pérdidas para bienes personales, propiedades inmuebles y negocios.

Para comenzar el proceso de la solicitud se sugiere tener a su disposición:

- * Su dirección con código postal
- * Instrucciones de cómo llegar a su propiedad
- * Condición de su casa dañada
- * Información sobre seguros, si la tiene disponible
- * Número del Seguro Social
- * Número de teléfono al que se le pueda contactar
- * Dirección donde puede recibir correo
- * Depósito Directo:

Los fondos de asistencia en desastres se pueden enviar directamente a su cuenta bancaria, por lo que es importante que se proporcione el tipo de cuenta bancaria, número de cuenta y número de ruta bancaria

Manténgase en contacto con FEMA:

- * Después de inscribirse, se le dará un número de inscripción de FEMA
- * Asegúrese de escribir su número y guardarlo
- * Necesitará el número siempre que se ponga en contacto con FEMA

Una vez completado el proceso de inscripción, recibirá una llamada de FEMA para dar seguimiento. Un inspector programará una cita para visitar su hogar. Los inspectores contratados por FEMA no requerirán información de la cuenta bancaria.

La misión de FEMA es apoyar a los ciudadanos y a las agencias de primera respuesta para garantizar que trabajen juntos para desarrollar, mantener y mejorar la capacidad de prepararse.

La asistencia de recuperación por desastre está disponible sin distinción de raza, color, religión, nacionalidad, sexo, edad, discapacidad, conocimiento de inglés o situación económica.

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Tras Retirar Los Datos De Su Web, FEMA Vuelve A Dar Estadísticas Sobre El Acceso A Agua Potable Y Electricidad En Puerto Rico

By Alejandra Vargas Morera

[Univision](#), October 6, 2017

Estos dos datos fundamentales desaparecieron de la página que documenta la respuesta de la agencia federal del manejo de emergencias en la isla. Sin explicación y tras el reporte que en principio publicó The Washington Post, este viernes volvieron a colocar esa información.

La falta de agua potable y electricidad en Puerto Rico tras el paso devastador del huracán María han puesto a la isla en una situación de crisis humanitaria. A las críticas de las autoridades locales sobre la lentitud en la ayuda, marcada la polémica entre la alcaldesa de San Juan y el presidente Donald Trump, podría sumarse otra más: la falta de transparencia.

El diario The Washington Post fue el primero en reportar que los datos de acceso a agua potable y electricidad fueron eliminados de la página web de la Agencia de Gestión para Emergencias (FEMA) que reúne los avances de la respuesta federal a la emergencia. Hasta el miércoles la mitad de los 3.6 millones de habitantes de Puerto Rico no tenía agua potable y tan sólo un 5% había recuperado la electricidad, más de dos semanas después del paso del huracán que dañó por completo la red eléctrica. Para el jueves, los datos ya no estaban allí. Luego del reporte, sin embargo, este viernes por la tarde el portal de la agencia volvió a tener los datos sobre agua y electricidad.

Un portavoz de FEMA, William Booher, indicó al periódico que esa información está recogida en otra página web oficial de la oficina del gobernador de Puerto Rico, Ricardo Rosselló, pero no explicó por qué habían dejado de incluirse en el reporte general de la ayuda federal.

“Nuestra misión es apoyar al gobernador y sus prioridades de respuesta a través de la estructura de mando unificada para ayudar a los puertorriqueños a recuperarse y volver a la rutina”, indicó al diario Booher, que defendió que en cualquier caso los datos están disponibles y abiertos al público en la otra web.

Los datos que sí se mantienen allí son los de los trabajos que están llevando a cabo el gobierno.

Según FEMA, actualmente hay 14,000 empleados federales en Puerto Rico y las Islas Vírgenes, todos los aeropuertos y oficinas de correo federales están abiertos, han limpiado más de 30 millas de carretera. Además, el 65% de las tiendas de comestibles han reabierto y casi todos los hospitales y centros de diálisis, agregan.

El presidente Trump, que visitó la isla el martes, ha asegurado que el trabajo federal ha sido “increíble” y “exitoso”, mientras la alcaldesa de San Juan, Carmen Yulín Cruz, se ha convertido en el símbolo del enfado de Puerto Rico.

Ambos se enzarzaron en una disputa dialéctica después de que Cruz suplicara ayuda ante los problemas para distribuir la ayuda sobre el terreno y, después de diez días sin energía eléctrica, denunciara: “Estamos muriendo y nos están matando con su ineficiencia y burocracia”.

“Quieren que les resuelvan todo, cuando debería ser un esfuerzo de la comunidad. Los trabajadores federales presentes en la isla están haciendo un excelente trabajo”, contestó Trump, quien durante su visita dijo que Puerto Rico debería estar orgulloso de que solo murieran 16 personas, a diferencia de la “catástrofe real” de Katrina, que dejó un saldo de 1,800 muertos. Poco después de las palabras del mandatario, el gobernador Roselló anunciaba que el balance de muertos aumentaba a 34.

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Sin Luz Y Sin Agua: Así Es La Vida Cotidiana De Los Puertorriqueños Dos Semanas Después Del Huracán María

By Patricia Clarembaux

[Univision](#), October 6, 2017

PUERTO RICO.- Las rutinas de los puertorriqueños están trastocadas desde que el huracán María devastó todo cuanto pudo en esta isla hace dos semanas. La falta de agua y luz –o de al menos de uno de ellos– les ha reducido las comidas, los ha llevado a bañarse en casas de familiares e incluso mantiene negocios cerrados. Y en algunos casos no tenerlos es el menor de los problemas: hay viviendas que quedaron destruidas.

Poco a poco Puerto Rico intenta volver a su ritmo. Ya muchos han regresado al trabajo, pero igual deben lidiar con lo esencial, buscan incansablemente agua, comida –la que haya– y diésel, para mantener las plantas encendidas y al menos librarse de los 90 grados de temperatura al prender el aire acondicionado.

Las kilométricas filas de las gasolineras han bajado, es cierto. Pero en las calles se mantienen las líneas de personas esperando a la entrada de manantiales naturales a la orilla de cualquier carretera para llenar una, dos, o cuantas botellas de agua puedan para hidratarse y bañarse.

Según la Autoridad Eléctrica de Luz, apenas 9% de la isla tiene electricidad en su casa. Y a 54,6% le llegó el agua, reportó Acueducto. Para el miércoles, las estadísticas de la agencia federal para el manejo de desastres (FEMA) mostraban que solo el 5% de los residentes tenía luz y la mitad de la población había recuperado el acceso a agua potable. Los datos habían sido retirados el jueves de la página web, pero este viernes luego de que medios informaran que las estadísticas ya no estaban, el portal de la agencia volvió a incluir la información.

Hicimos un recorrido por tres municipios del centro-norte de Puerto Rico y estas son las historias de sus habitantes:

Recuperando lo que quedó tras la inundación

Toda la planta baja de la casa de dos pisos de Margarita García, en Sabana Seca, municipio Toa Baja, quedó sumergida bajo el agua con el huracán María. La nevera y la cocina todavía llevan pintado el borde marrón de tierra que le dejó la inundación. Ella no sabe qué hará: “Hasta que no llegue la luz no puedo saber si prenden o si también tengo que botarlas”.

En la acera frente a su casa está todo lo que descartaron. Hay un sofá, dos sillones, colchones, un gavetero, un equipo de sonido, mucha madera arrumada y tan destruida que no tiene forma de nada. En su casa prácticamente no quedó nada. Y así está toda la cuadra en este barrio humilde, llena de los enseres que desecharon sus vecinos.

Ya lograron limpiar el piso de cerámica de la sala, en la planta baja, porque llegó el agua hace cinco días. Brilla como si no hubiese pasado nada y huele a Mistolín. Allí duermen en colchones inflables, con calor y al acecho de los mosquitos, ella, sus tres nietos, su hija y su yerno.

Pero arriba el desastre que dejó María está intacto. Las hojas secas y las ramas hacen una alfombra en el suelo. El techo de zinc de su cuarto se cayó parcialmente, huele a humedad. “No sé qué decirte, no sé si tendré que botarlo todo. Tengo que terminar primero abajo”, explica resignada. “Básicamente lo hemos perdido todo”.

La familia completa no desperdicia ni un momento del día para limpiar porque sin luz en la noche, cuentan que la zona se convierte en una “boca de lobo”. Sin nevera no tienen dónde guardar la comida que les donan, porque tampoco tienen a dónde comprarla: “Yo no he comido nada hoy (...) pero si no llega ninguna ayuda hay que basarse en lo que a uno le queda”.

Un enfermo en cama que espera paciente

Ramón Martínez, de 80 años, está postrado en una cama desde hace un año. Sufre de esclerosis y solo puede mover su cabeza. Su casa quedó sin agua ni luz tras el golpe del huracán María, pero al menos el miércoles habían podido mantener encendida la planta para prender el aire acondicionado, para recargar la máquina que le permite respirar cómodamente al dormir, la silla para movilizarlo y para poder reclinar más la cama clínica.

Pero este jueves se les acabó el diesel y el distribuidor no había llegado cuando casi eran las siete de la noche. Lo esperan desde el domingo. “Lo más grave es que puedan salirle úlceras”, cuenta su hija Margie Martínez al mostrar que tanto las ventanas como la puerta principal están abiertas de par en par. “Ahora mismo tiene un hongo en el área genital y el no tener agua y aire acondicionado se lo puede empeorar”.

Desde la cama, el padre replica en una voz apenas audible: “No tengo televisor, no tengo nada, uno lo pasa incómodo. Pero hay que adaptarse y aceptar lo que hay”.

La familia tiene agua suficiente para bañarlo –pero a la velocidad de cada envase de mantequilla–, y para darle de tomar. Antes del huracán compraron botellones de agua potable y, además, llenaron varios recipientes plásticos de a galón hasta el tope. Para bajar los baños usan el agua de la piscina, que pasó de ser cristalina a verde tras la devastación que dejó María.

A pesar de todo, aseguran, continuarán bregando.

La salvación: un manantial de la familia

Eliana Rodríguez es una mujer ágil a pesar de sus 82 años. No tiene agua ni luz desde que el huracán Irma pasó por la isla, hace un mes. Aún así resuelve. Cada mañana a las 6:00 am se levanta y camina los 15 minutos que hay desde su casa en Santa Juanita, en el municipio Bayamón, hasta el manantial de la familia y se trae sus dos botellones de agua auestas. Esa es la que se bebe, ninguna otra. También es con la que prepara sus comidas y le hace café al vecino de al lado, en agradecimiento porque le da luz con una planta generadora.

“Ese manantial está allí desde que yo nací”, dice al reconocer su privilegio. Cuenta que otros habitantes de la zona han llegado hasta la reja que resguarda el riachuelo suplicando que les permitan tomar un poco de agua y ellos los dejan.

Para bañarse o para fregar los platos utiliza un agua que su yerno le trae de otro manantial. También aprovecha cuando comienza la lluvia y pone a llenar un tanque plástico que tiene en la parte trasera de su casa.

“Me baño todos los días. Las mujeres tenemos que bañarnos todos los días”, asegura y se ríe. Dice que se mete dentro del tobo para no desperdiciar ni una gota de agua y luego, con lo que resta, lava los baños.

La comida no le preocupa. Esta acostumbrada a su pan por la mañana y a su arroz con leche por la tarde. Y lavar su ropa tampoco le quita el sueño, pues dice que tiene mucha y que la sucia la va acumulando. Pero todo lo demás la tiene en un solo refunfuño. “Esto es una novela de horror”.

Parados en la casa, parados en el trabajo

Los Figueroa están todos en la tintorería de la familia, la Joe’s Cleaners, en el municipio Bayamón. El negocio está parado porque no tienen agua ni luz y sin eso tampoco hay clientes. Entre los padres y los hijos, los únicos que tienen agua son los primeros. Así que esa casa se ha convertido casi en un centro de operaciones. De allí sale el agua con la que intentan llenar los tanques de 500 galones de la tintorería para reabrir el lugar al menos por un día; con la que se bañan casi todos; con la que cocinan.

“Esto es agobiante”, dice Ángel Figueroa, de 51 años, al mostrar en la penumbra las pilas de ropa para lavar y planchar que se quedaron arrumadas desde antes de que María golpeará la isla caribeña y que, ahora, acomodan para tenerlas listas en caso de que llegue alguno de los servicios. “Sufrimos nosotros, pero también los empleados que todos los días nos preguntan si hay trabajo, si llegó la luz. Nuestra mayor pérdida es el negocio”.

Para comer los más afectados son los padres, Aída y José, de 72 y 76 años. No tienen luz en su residencia, así que desde inicios de septiembre han tenido que desayunar rebanadas de pan solas – porque no hay nevera para refrigerar los embutidos–; almorzar cualquier cosa en la calle,

hamburguesas, por ejemplo; cenar lo que se pueda y beber agua a temperatura ambiente. “Estamos pasando trabajo”, dice él. “No está fácil”, agrega y rompe en llanto.

José dice que para lavar su ropa volvieron a tiempos remotos: a mano. Pero solo con cosas pequeñas, ni los pantalones ni las camisas. “Estamos sobreviviendo”, agrega ella, aunque reconoce que hay gente que puede estar peor que ellos.

Una casa reducida a un cuarto

Carmen Ríos, de 64 años, quedó confinada prácticamente a su cuarto y a un minúsculo patio lateral. El huracán María voló casi todo el techo de la casa de madera en Maguayo, municipio Dorado. Se llevó el del baño, el de la cocina –incluso con los gabinetes–, el del cuarto de su nieto, el del pasillo central. Lo único que quedó sujeto a las vigas de madera del techo, fueron dos lámparas. A pesar del destrozo ella asegura que se queda en su casa. Cuando cae la noche cierra la puerta plástica corrediza de su cuarto y se encomienda a dios. Vive sola.

“Agarro una lamparita de batería que tengo y un faro como de gas. Con eso me alumbro en el cuarto y para bañarme. Me baño tardecito porque sí tengo agua”, cuenta. “Luego me acuesto, pero como a las 3:00 am estoy sentada aquí afuera, desvelada”.

La comida la está comprando al día. Y así mismo la prepara en una pequeña cocina que improvisó en un pasillo lateral de la casa. Convirtió la lavadora y un freezer en topes y sobre una mesa montó una pequeña estufa a gas. Este jueves comieron un bistec encebollado y arroz con habichuelas.

Carmen Ríos asegura que pasa el día llorando al ver el desastre en que quedó convertida su casa, que además acababa de remodelar. No sabe si podrá reconstruirla. Dice que todo depende de la ayuda que pueda recibir de la Agencia de Gestión de Desastres (FEMA). De lo que sí está segura es que allí se quedará, aunque sus hijos intenten convencerla de que se mude con ellos. “¿Tú crees que con 64 años me voy a estar yendo? No. Mejor me quedo aquí y que sea lo que dios quiera”.

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Estados Unidos Militariza Esfuerzo De Asistencia En Puerto Rico Tras Problemas De Distribución

By Tim Johnson

[McClatchy](#), October 9, 2017

Mientras soldados norteamericanos entregaban el domingo cajas de alimentos y agua en esta localidad costera, un funcionario federal dijo que está satisfecho con lo que se ha logrado hasta ahora.

“Parecen estar contentos en este momento. Creo que va muy bien”, dijo Patrick Hernández, administrador adjunto de operaciones de la Agencia Federal para el Manejo de Emergencias (FEMA).

A poca distancia, mirando hacia la operación de distribución a través de una cerca, Serafín Román ofreció una versión radicalmente diferente de la situación: “Es algo terrible. La gente está desesperada. No tienen agua. Algunos están pasando hambre”.

Las dos opiniones radicalmente opuestas no hacen sino señalar el abismo que hay entre el punto de vista oficial sobre los esfuerzos de recuperación tras el devastador paso del huracán María y lo que piensa el hombre de a pie. En algunas partes de Puerto Rico, al entrar en la tercera semana de los esfuerzos de recuperación, algunos puertorriqueños dicen sentirse olvidados y vulnerables. A menudo, los vecinos y los funcionarios locales cuentan versiones drásticamente diferentes sobre la frecuencia de distribución de los alimentos.

Como respuesta ante la grave crisis, los militares estadounidenses explicaron el domingo la forma en la que cambiará la distribución de alimentos, agua y gasolina en muchas de las 78 municipalidades de la isla: van a militarizar las labores de asistencia de una manera significativa después que algunos alcaldes no pudieron con el esfuerzo.

Antes de este fin de semana, se entregaban suministros en 10 áreas regionales de la isla, y entonces los alcaldes eran responsables de organizar la recogida y la distribución.

Pero el general José J. Reyes, jefe adjunto de la Guardia Nacional de Puerto Rico, dijo en una entrevista que se puso en marcha una nueva estrategia para situar entre 10 y 20 soldados en cada municipalidad, dándoles vehículos y apoyo logístico, con la tarea de entregar los suministros en cada barrio.

“Necesitamos entrar directamente a cada barrio para asegurar que todos reciben suministros”, dijo Reyes. “Tendrán vehículos, comunicaciones por radio y apoyo logístico... Van a vivir ahí. Van a operar 24/7”.

En las 10 ciudades más grandes de Puerto Rico, cada una con una población mayor de 150,000 habitantes, los ayuntamientos seguirán administrando la distribución, dijo Reyes, pero no en localidades más pequeñas.

El jefe de los servicios de asistencia, el teniente general del Ejército Jeffrey S. Buchanan, reconoció que la distribución de ayuda a nivel municipal no siempre se ha hecho de manera efectiva.

“Hemos trabajado duro para identificar cuellos de botella”, dijo Buchanan en un aeropuerto de San Juan antes de subir a un helicóptero con rumbo a Aguadilla, unas 80 millas al oeste de la capital.

“No debemos pretender que va a ser un proceso perfecto”, dijo, señalando que los alcaldes tienen retos a la hora de distribuir la ayuda, como carreteras dañadas, falta de vehículos, malas comunicaciones y áreas grandes con poca población.

El descontento era evidente el domingo en un centro de distribución de agua y alimentos en Aguadilla. Sin embargo, esa frustración no se ve en todas partes. Algunas municipalidades están organizando las labores de asistencia y recuperación mejor que otras. Entre las zonas más azotadas por la catastrófica tormenta del 20 de septiembre, algunas están tan alejadas que es necesario entregar la ayuda en helicóptero porque las carreteras están intransitables.

“Hay personas que viven en áreas montañosas en la región central y allí es más difícil llegar, pero estamos tratando de llegar a todos”, dijo Hernández. Los equipos de militares “están haciendo una labor fenomenal limpiando y despejando las vías de acceso”.

Hernández le restó importancia a la ira expresada por algunos vecinos, afirmando que los sobrevivientes de un desastre de esta magnitud quieren que la vida regrese a la normalidad.

“Todos los sobrevivientes de una catástrofe semejante se sienten así”, dijo.

Sheila Lenox, de 29 años, dijo que la caja de comida que recibió el domingo es la primera comida importante que ha visto desde el huracán.

“Esta es la primera vez que nos dan una caja llena de comida”, dijo Lenox, quien está desempleada. “Hemos estado comiendo lo que nos daban los vecinos”.

Cuando se le preguntó cómo habían sobrevivido, Jetson Samot, pareja de Lenox, respondió: “Con salchichas y galletas”. “No podemos comprar nada. Los supermercados han subido los precios de todo. Es muy difícil encontrar algo de comer. Tenemos un lugar donde vivir, pero nada para alimentarnos”, dijo Lenox.

Otra vecina, Carmen Santiago, retirada de 67 años, dijo que deseaba que hubiera más disciplina y lógica en la distribución para evitar que algunos vecinos reciban mucho y otros nada.

Cuando se le dijo que algunos vecinos se quejaron de que eran los primeros alimentos y agua que recibían, el alcalde Carlos Méndez puso en duda esa afirmación.

“Ya habían recibido alimentos antes. He venido aquí tres o cuatro veces y puedo atestiguarlo”, dijo Méndez.

Méndez dijo que las labores de asistencia “empezaron con lentitud pero ahora van bien”.

“Todo el mundo tiene sed, todo el mundo tiene hambre porque no reciben comida todos los días. Pero por lo menos reciben cada cuatro o cinco días”.

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Aseguran Que Lluvias En Puerto Rico Dificultan Entrega De Ayuda Tras “María”

[El Universal \(MEX\)](#), October 9, 2017

Las fuertes lluvias que se registran en Puerto Rico dificultan la entrega de suministros a los damnificados por el huracán María, que devastó las infraestructuras de electricidad y telecomunicaciones de la isla caribeña.

La Agencia Federal para el Manejo de Emergencias (Fema) informó hoy a través de un comunicado de que debido a las lluvias torrenciales y la saturación del terreno puede que las aeronaves que llevan la ayuda a la población no puedan aterrizar, por lo que se advierte de que la carga podría lanzarse desde el aire.

El comunicado subraya que, una vez que el tiempo mejore, las aeronaves volverán a depositar los suministros, principalmente agua y comida, en tierra, tal y como se ha hecho durante los últimos días.

El Servicio Nacional de Meteorología en San Juan emitió una advertencia de inundaciones para más de 20 municipios ante las fuertes lluvias y tormentas que se esperan durante las próximas horas, en especial para áreas del interior, el este y la capital, San Juan.

La agencia federal ha emitido además una vigilancia de inundaciones repentinas para todo Puerto Rico hasta la tarde del miércoles por la presencia en la región de una onda tropical que se unirá a una vaguada ya estacionada al norte de la isla caribeña.

La previsión de fuertes lluvias durante los dos próximos días sigue a las inundaciones registradas el domingo, que afectaron con especial virulencia al área metropolitana de San Juan.

Durante el domingo en algunas partes de la capital se registraron hasta cuatro pulgadas de lluvia, lo que provocó la inundación de calles, en especial en el distrito sanjuanero de Santurce.

Corrimientos de tierras y cortes de carreteras se registraron en los municipios de San Juan, Carolina y Vega Baja, en la costa norte.

El riesgo para hoy es grande, ya que las lluvias se registrarán sobre los suelos ya saturados y en áreas donde permanecen gran cantidad de escombros acumulados tras el pase del huracán María por la isla hace casi tres semanas.

El gobernador de Puerto Rico, Ricardo Rosselló, denunció hoy que la alta acumulación de escombros en las calles de la capital facilitó las inundaciones en San Juan, que obligaron a la intervención de los Bomberos y otras agencias federales que ayudan en la labor de reconstrucción tras el paso del huracán María.

Rosselló sostuvo que a diferencia de lo que pasa en San Juan, en otros municipios de la isla sí se han retirado los escombros que obstruyen el paso del agua por los desagües.

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Lo Que Discutirá Jenniffer González Con El Vicepresidente Mike Pence

[El Nuevo Día \(PRI\)](#), October 6, 2017

El Second Air Force con el vicepresidente de Estados Unidos, Mike Pence, aterrizó esta tarde en Puerto Rico para constatar de primera mano la crítica situación de isla tras el catastrófico paso del huracán María por la isla.

Pence llegó al país acompañado de la comisionada residente en Washington, Jennifer González, y su arribo se da a tres días de la visita del presidente de Estados Unidos, Donald Trump, junto a parte de su gabinete. Se da también luego de la visita que hicieron a Florida, donde constataron la ola migratoria de boricuas que se está dando a pasos agigantados hacia el estado y en la que en tan solo dos semanas ya se han contabilizado seis mil puertorriqueños que se han ido y 400 niños matriculados en las escuelas, 300 en Orlando y 100 en Kissimmee.

La comisionada residente dijo que se han establecido centros de ayuda de Fema y la Cruz Roja en varios de los aeropuertos de Florida y que en su visita ayer a Orlando vio la llegada de residentes de Trujillo Alto, Carolina, Cabo Rojo, Juncos, Arecibo, Ponce y Corozal.

“Es bien fuerte”, dijo González a El Nuevo Día, quien narró que inmediatamente llegaron ayer a Florida, dos familias de puertorriqueños, una de Guayama y otra de Corozal, los recibieron y les narraron cómo habían perdido sus casas y lo que habían levantado.

Hoy el trayecto de Pence comenzó en Islas Vírgenes y ya aterrizó en Puerto Rico, donde como Trump, le darán un resumen de la situación en Puerto Rico luego del paso de María, el pasado 20 de septiembre, y la devastación que dejó a su paso el ciclón en los 78 municipios de la isla.

La comisionada residente tiene en su agenda del día discutir con Pence varios asuntos relevantes, entre ellos la tardanza en la instalación de los toldos azules en las miles de casas que perdieron sus techos a lo largo y ancho del país.

“Mi agenda hoy con el vicepresidente va a incluir el que mucha de la gente nos dicen que todavía sus casas no tienen el toldo azul, que está lloviendo y que aún están a la intemperie. Eso es una prioridad para mí”, recaló González tras añadir que obviamente tocará los temas de los sistemas de energía eléctrica y agua.

Según González, hay dos tipos de toldos. Está el más débil, que lo entrega Fema y que no requiere de mayores protocolos y burocracia. Lo datos que le han dado a la comisionada residente es que se han repartido ya 11,000 a los alcaldes, que son los encargados de repartirlos a la gente, así como en Vivienda Pública. El otro tipo de toldo es el azul, que es más fuerte y es instalado por el Cuerpo de Ingenieros.

“Yo entiendo que a la gente no les está llegando”, admitió González.

¿Por qué?

-Esa será mi agenda hoy con el vicepresidente, pedirle que nos ayude en eso. Mi preocupación es que como la gente no tiene Internet, no hay teléfonos, no hay luz, la aplicación de ese toldo es electrónica. Lo que están haciendo los municipios es que están llevando las solicitudes en papel y con esa solicitud de papel, el Cuerpo de Ingenieros las tramita. Sin embargo, no tengo los números de cuántos toldos han instalado, porque es el Cuerpo de Ingenieros al que le toca eso.

-¿Cree que lo que han entregado no va a la par con la necesidad que hay?

-Entiendo que eso no va a la par con la necesidad que hay en la calle y como no va a la par, yo le voy a pedir al vicepresidente Pence hoy que asigne más personal para la instalación de estos toldos, que se flexibilice la manera en que se tramita la obtención de este toldo, que es vital para que a la gente no se le moje lo poco que le queda en la casa. También la cantidad de funciones que está haciendo el Cuerpo de Ingenieros, porque ellos están montando puentes, arreglando carreteras, limpiando escombros, instalando toldos azules y arreglando el sistema eléctrico. Aunque son tropas

distintas, la realidad es que esa es una de las áreas (repartición de toldos azules) que yo quiero que se agilice, para lo que voy a buscar la indulgencia del vicepresidente.

¿Hay otras áreas que tocará en sus conversaciones hoy con Pence?

-Hay otra áreas también que creo que son importantes. Ellos están instalando los generadores. Que los generadores que faltan en los hospitales, en las égidas y las bombas de agua, que son acueductos, esas deben ser una prioridad y va a ser una de las cosa que voy a pedir: dónde están y qué nos falta. Si la gente tiene agua, por lo menos puede tener su necesidad básica. Pero sin agua es muy difícil mantener, sobrepasar la situación.

¿Es otro trabajo del Cuerpo de Ingenieros?

-Esos generadores los trajo y los tiene que instalar el Cuerpo de Ingenieros, así que son ellos los que nos tienen que dar esa actualización. Yo sé que el jefe del Cuerpo de Ingenieros está en Puerto Rico. Para eso le pediré al vicepresidente su ayuda, sobre cómo podemos hacer que esto sea más rapido.

¿Hablará sobre los paquetes de fondos que se necesitan?

-Sobre los fondos la Casa Blanca pidió de \$12.77 billones y de \$16 billones de fondo de inundaciones, que es importante porque en la isla hubo muchas inundaciones. Nosotros tenemos que someter el estimado de daños para que podamos acceder a esos fondos rápido. Ese paquete de ayudas debe estar bajando ya la semana que viene.

¿Habrán más?

-Ya el vicepresidente dijo que este no va a ser el único paquete de fondos federales, que vienen otros.

El recorrido en la Isla incluye Country Club y la Iglesia de Santa Bernardita, que es un ministerio amplio de ayuda para suplir las necesidades de los que no tienen y que está bien organizado. De hecho, es de las pocas iglesias que abre las 24 horas y la que González visita con frecuencia, especialmente en horas de la noche.

La comisionada residente en Washington tiene la intención de movilizar a la isla la mayor cantidad de congresistas a Puerto Rico para entiendan el nivel de devastación y de necesidad que hay. De hecho, mañana tiene en agenda otro viaje con un grupo de legisladores federales.

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Ponceños No Quieren Quedar En El Olvido

[El Nuevo Día \(PRI\)](#), October 9, 2017

Ponce – “Que se acuerden de nosotros, de la zona rural, que también existimos”.

Con estas palabras, Gerardo Albizu Torres, de 37 años, resumió el sentir de muchos residentes de la zona montañosa de este municipio que, según contaron, no han recibido “ningún tipo de ayuda” a casi tres semanas del paso del huracán María.

Señalaron, incluso, que la alcaldesa María “Mayita” Meléndez es “la gran ausente” en la ruralía ponceña, donde tampoco se observan los toldos azules de la Agencia Federal para el Manejo de Emergencias (FEMA, en inglés). Estos toldos son la única opción que ciudadanos como Albizu Torres tienen para proteger “lo poco que nos queda”.

Albizu Torres perdió la casa que compró en 2001 en el barrio Real Anón. La estructura de madera y zinc se quedó sin techo y todo lo que había en su interior se dañó por la lluvia, que ha seguido cayendo. Ahora, en el espacio de la sala y cocina, el agua empozada es un criadero de mosquitos.

“Sería bueno que vengan las ayudas, pero a los campos no llegan. Está lloviendo todas las tardes y, como todavía no tenemos los toldos de FEMA, todo se sigue mojando”, agregó.

Como el resto de los puertorriqueños, Albizu Torres pasa largas horas en filas para adquirir agua embotellada, alimentos, hielo y gasolina, entre otros bienes de primera necesidad. Mientras la ayuda para restaurar su hogar llega, pernocta en la casa de su padre, de cemento, también en el barrio Real Anón.

“No ha venido nadie para acá, nadie”, dijo, y justo después su hija Geraldine, de 6 años, soltó: “una crisis”.

“No se ha visto por aquí”

“¿Dónde está ‘Mayita’? ‘Mayita’ no se ha visto por aquí para nada”, comentó, por su parte, Michael Guzmán Marrero, de 45 años, mientras se bañaba en el río Inabón, en la colindancia de los barrios Real Anón y Coto Laurel.

Según contó, “en todo Ponce” hay necesidad, pero lo más que urge es agua embotellada. Dijo que recientemente fue hasta Cayey buscando agua y solo pudo comprar un galón, “porque los estaban racionando”.

Historias similares narraron los vecinos del barrio San Patricio, que viajan a Utuado, Jayuya o Adjuntas para buscar suministros. Estos tres pueblos les quedan más cerca que el casco ponceño.

Luis Vélez Bianchi, de 65 años y quien perdió parte del techo de la segunda planta de su casa, declaró que “nadie del gobierno (estatal) ha pasado por aquí y la alcaldesa se ha olvidado del barrio”.

Vélez Bianchi tiene servicio de agua potable, pero no de electricidad. Sobre este último, dijo –entre risas– que espera recobrarlo antes de las navidades del año 2019. En 1998, tras el paso del huracán Georges, estuvo tres meses sin luz, “pero este huracán (María) no tiene comparación”.

“Ustedes (El Nuevo Día) son los primeros que pasan por acá”, indicó, entretanto, Myrna Ríos Mejía, de 48 años, quien vive junto a su madre, de 78 años; hermana, de 50; y cuatro hijos. Los siete pasaron el huracán en los bajos de la residencia, que perdió el techo del baño y los cuartos quedaron “inundados” por la lluvia.

Relató que no ha podido comprar alimentos, ni agua embotellada. Como no tiene electricidad, no ha podido darse las terapias para su condición de asma. A su madre se le están agotando los medicamentos para el dolor.

“No tenemos con quien ir a ningún lado. Los carros que tenemos aquí no sirven. Estamos a fuerza de los guineos del mismo patio. Pero necesitamos ayuda. Los políticos, que siempre pasan buscando votos en época de elecciones, todavía no se han dado la vuelta por aquí”, aseveró Ríos Mejía.

Los esposos Charito Oliveras Collazo y Edwin Laboy Millán, de 31 y 48 años, respectivamente, también se sienten “olvidados” en el sector La Yuca del barrio Machuelo Arriba, donde ellos y otros residentes “abrimos camino” para no quedarse incomunicados.

“Es mentira que la ayuda está llegando. Acá arriba no ha venido nadie. Ni la basura están recogiendo y se están formando muchos vertederos clandestinos”, contó Oliveras Collazo, quien recoge agua en una pluma que los propios vecinos instalaron en una iglesia de la comunidad.

Ninguno de los entrevistados con daños en sus hogares había iniciado formalmente su reclamación ante FEMA.

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Cuerpo De Ingenieros Da Primer Contrato Para Reparar Sistema Eléctrico

[El Nuevo Día \(PRI\)](#), October 9, 2017

El Cuerpo de Ingenieros del Ejército de los Estados Unidos (USACE) concedió hoy, lunes, un contrato ascendente a \$35.1 millones a la empresa Weston Solutions para la restauración del sistema eléctrico de Puerto Rico.

Este es el primero de una serie de contratos que concederá el USACE como parte del proceso para restaurar el servicio energético que colapsó tras el azote del huracán María. El 80% del sistema de transmisión y distribución quedó en el piso y el gran reto de la Autoridad de Energía Eléctrica

(AEE) -en coordinación con el USACE- es satisfacer la gran demanda de luz del norte de la Isla cuando la generación en su mayoría se produce en el sur.

Hoy, el gobernador Ricardo Rosselló informó que 15% de los abonados de la AEE ya cuenta con servicio. Además, recalcó que “paralelo” al restablecimiento de la luz se trabaja con dar paso en un futuro cercano a un nuevo sistema energético.

“Nuestro objetivo no es solamente levantar el mismo sistema que teníamos antes. Levantar el mismo sistema que teníamos antes nos pone en la misma posición de vulnerabilidad. Invertimos un montón de chavos para estar sujetos a que venga otra tormenta y que nos rebase nuevamente. Nuestro objetivo es -paralelo esto- investigar y ver cuál es el mejor sistema que podamos tener en Puerto Rico en términos de generación, que sea moderno y nos permita una real oportunidad para hacer cambios transformativos en el sistema eléctrico en Puerto Rico”, puntualizó Rosselló.

Weston Solutions, una empresa con sede en Pennsylvania, tendrá la misión de proveer generación eléctrica a la planta de generatriz de Palo Seco, en San Juan. Traerá un generador de 50 megavatios que llegará a “Puerto Rico muy pronto”, informó en comunicado de prensa Diana Holland, comandante de la División del Sur del Atlántico del USACE.

La idea es que al proporcionarle generación de emergencia a Palo Seco, más clientes de la AEE recibirán electricidad en lo que se completan las reparaciones a las líneas de transmisión que se conectan a Palo Seco.

“Este es un paso importante en nuestros esfuerzos para restaurar la electricidad a los ciudadanos de Puerto Rico”, dijo Holland.

La reparación del sistema eléctrico incluye cuatro pasos, de acuerdo con el USACE. La primera fase es proveer energía y generación temporera a lugares críticos. La segunda es asegurar una generación adecuada en las centrales eléctricas para luego reinstalar y reparar las líneas de transmisión. Por último, es preciso restaurar y reparar las líneas de distribución.

Tanto los directivos de la USACE como de la Agencia federal para el Manejo de Emergencias (FEMA, en inglés) han dicho que el restablecimiento total del servicio eléctrico demorará meses.

El director de Operaciones de Contingencia y Seguridad Nacional del USACE, José Sánchez, dijo en entrevista con este diario que la misión que le ha dado FEMA es solo reparar “de emergencia” el sistema eléctrico. Pero ha recalcado que es imperativo evolucionar a un sistema más fuerte.

Ha advertido que ve “difícil” que el restablecimiento de la luz en su totalidad se produzca al cabo de seis a siete meses, parámetro que se ha usado recientemente como referente pues fue el tiempo que tomó hacerlo tras el azote del huracán Georges en 1998. Sin embargo, Sánchez dijo que trabajan a toda capacidad y con contratistas para acelerar el proceso.

Sin embargo, la cantidad de brigadas que posee la AEE, unas 230 -cada una de tres a cuatro personas- no menos que las que había en el pasado. Por eso y ante la emergencia se hacen las contrataciones que la USACE estima serán más de 2,000.

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En Espera Por Un Plan De Reconstrucción Para La Isla

[El Nuevo Día \(PRI\)](#), October 9, 2017

WASHINGTON — El Senado estadounidense aguardaría por las recomendaciones de la Junta de Supervisión Fiscal a cargo de las finanzas públicas de Puerto Rico y del gobernador Ricardo Rosselló antes de diseñar un plan que encamine la reconstrucción de la isla.

Tras la devastación causada por el huracán María, ya no parece haber debate sobre la necesidad de algún tipo de rescate financiero del gobierno federal para revivir la economía de Puerto Rico, la cual el ciclón acabó de hundir.

Lo que aún no está claro es qué cosas formarán parte de ese plan, que los demócratas quieren se asemeje al concepto del Plan Marshall con el cual se impulsó la reconstrucción de Europa central después de la Segunda Guerra Mundial, por medio de medidas para modernizar su economía.

“Queremos que se rinda cuentas sobre hacia donde ese dinero va a ir”, advirtió ayer el senador republicano Ron Johnson (Wisconsin), presidente del Comité de Seguridad Interna y Asuntos de Gobierno, en una conferencia telefónica de los cinco senadores que estuvieron el sábado observando los daños causados por el huracán María en Puerto Rico.

Desde antes del huracán, economistas, grupos de estudio y sindicatos habían reclamado que aun después de autorizar la reestructuración de la deuda pública, por medio de un nuevo sistema judicial de bancarrota territorial, Puerto Rico necesitaría medidas que ayuden a la economía.

Ahora, demócratas del Senado dicen que eso es inevitable. “Se necesita un plan financiero inmediato”, dijo el senador demócrata Richard Blumenthal (Connecticut), quien dijo desde el punto de vista del Senado su contenido debe salir de conversaciones entre la Junta, el gobernador Rosselló y el Comité de Finanzas, que maneja los temas referentes al Tesoro, Medicaid, y temas contributivos.

El gobernador Rosselló –quien ha estado en conversaciones con el Tesoro–, dijo ayer que requiere una inyección inicial de \$4,600 millones y ha advertido que a finales de este mes el gobierno de Puerto Rico puede quedarse sin dinero en efectivo.

El senador Blumenthal dijo que entendía que la “tormenta financiera” ocurriría a finales de año.

El gobierno de Rosselló ha discutido en Washington, entre otras cosas, la posibilidad de que el Tesoro garantice un préstamo del gobierno de Puerto Rico o que la Reserva federal compre bonos de la isla.

En la conferencia telefónica, la demócrata Kirsten Gillibrand (Nueva York) dijo que “se necesita un plan tipo Plan Marshall no importa lo que tome”. “Se requiere un Plan Marshall no para reparar temporalmente, sino para la recuperación y resiliencia a largo plazo”, sostuvo Blumenthal.

Los republicanos han sido menos contundentes, pero reconocen que se requiere apoyo federal a un plan dirigido a revivir la economía. “Queremos trabajar con el Senado para presentar algo que atienda las necesidades a corto y largo plazo”, indicó el republicano Cory Gardner, presidente del subcomité de Energía de la Comisión de Energía y Recursos Naturales.

Los senadores coincidieron que todo el proceso de reestructuración comienza por restablecer la red eléctrica, para poder facilitar el funcionamiento de los pilares de la economía de Puerto Rico, como la manufactura y el turismo.

“(La red eléctrica) era débil antes de la tormenta, ahora está muy devastada”, sostuvo Johnson.

Esta semana, el Congreso debe aprobar la asignación de \$12,770 millones para volver a llenar las arcas del fondo para atender desastres de la Agencia federal para el Manejo de Emergencias (FEMA).

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Llega Un Generador A Culebra Para Un Centro De Salud

[El Nuevo Día \(PRI\)](#), October 9, 2017

El generador tenía escrito diversos mensajes con tiza en solidaridad con el pueblo de Culebra.

“Dios los bendiga y los mejores deseos (de la) Guardia Nacional de Puerto Rico”, leía uno de los mensajes.

Un generador de 30 kilovatios, y cuyo peso es de 1,927 libras, aguardaba ayer, domingo, en el interior de un helicóptero de carga Boeing CH-47 Chinook de Pennsylvania, aeronave necesaria para transportar un objeto de dicho tamaño y peso.

Precisamente esa fue una de las razones para que el generador, que debió llegar a la isla municipio antes del paso cercano del huracán María, aún aguardase en la base de Isla Grande. Su destino es el centro de salud HealthproMed 330 ubicado en Culebra.

El coronel de la Guardia Nacional de Puerto Rico, Jorge Galoff, dijo que se enteraron de la urgencia de llevar el generador a Culebra a través de la Agencia Federal para el Manejo de Emergencias (FEMA). Ivonne Rivera, administradora del centro de salud, se vio en la necesidad de abordar a funcionarios de la agencia luego de pedirle ayuda al secretario de Salud, Rafael Rodríguez Mercado, para llevar el generador a Culebra.

“Nunca recibí respuesta”, dijo la mujer que estaba feliz de poder recibir la asistencia de la Guardia Nacional.

“Desde el sábado después de María, todas las mañanas yo llegaba al Centro de Mando del Gobierno a buscar apoyo, para ver cómo podíamos transportar esta planta a Culebra. Y no recibía absolutamente ninguna contestación”, narró Rivera.

Tras varios intentos, no fue posible conseguir a Rodríguez Mercado.

Rivera, entretanto, destacó que el centro de salud no había podido dar servicios desde el azote de Culebra. El lugar, creado hace 14 años y que da servicio diariamente a aproximadamente 15 personas, es subvencionado con fondos federales. Además, ofrece servicios de dentista, pediatría, obstetricia y ginecología, médico de familia, internista, optómetra, trabajador social y nutricionista.

Rivera agradeció no solo al coronel Galoff sino también al coronel Ricardo Garratón, también de la Guardia Nacional, quien fue su primer contacto en la milicia para así llevar el generador a Culebra.

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Comprometida La Capacidad De Abasto Del País

[El Nuevo Día \(PRI\)](#), October 8, 2017

Enormes cantidades de sedimentos se movieron hacia los embalses a consecuencia de las copiosas lluvias del huracán María, reduciendo potencialmente su capacidad de almacenamiento y amenazando, a su vez, con crear un problema de disponibilidad de agua en el país, advirtieron expertos.

La mayoría de los embalses ya están altamente sedimentados, y el panorama se complica aún más con el hecho de que María también causó una gran devastación forestal.

Sin vegetación en las montañas, se pierde la capacidad de amortiguamiento o retención de sedimentos, lo que facilita su entrada a los cuerpos de agua durante eventos de lluvia.

“En Puerto Rico, la capacidad de los embalses para recibir agua es cada vez menos, y ahora va a haber mucha más sedimentación entrado. Cuando a un embalse le queda el 20% de su capacidad, está anulado para todo efecto práctico”, sostuvo el exdirector de la Agencia Federal de Protección Ambiental (EPA, por sus siglas en inglés) en Puerto Rico y el Caribe, Carl Soderberg.

Mencionó, por ejemplo, que los embalses Carraízo, en Trujillo Alto, y Dos Bocas, en Utuado, están sedimentados en 40% y 63%, respectivamente, y “es posible que ahora pierdan otro por ciento adicional”.

Cuestionado al respecto, el presidente ejecutivo de la Autoridad de Acueductos y Alcantarillados (AAA), Elí Díaz Atienza, indicó que, una vez se “normalice” el servicio de agua

potable, la corporación pública iniciará un “análisis de la sedimentación” en los embalses causada por el huracán, que tocó suelo boricua el pasado 20 de septiembre.

“Reconocemos los retos de las represas. Estos sistemas traen muchos sedimentos y nos pueden haber afectado las reservas de agua. Tan pronto resolvamos el asunto de suplir agua a las comunidades, haremos la evaluación”, dijo.

Contó que, desde antes que María azotara la isla, la AAA está “trabajando” con el experto en manejo de reservas de agua y consultor internacional en hidrología, Greg Morris, para “buscar opciones para bajar un poco los sedimentos” en los embalses.

Preliminarmente, Díaz Atienza señaló que algunas de esas opciones incluyen dragados continuos (equipo permanente en los embalses), dragados dirigidos (embalses particulares) y mover los sedimentos hacia el mar a través de la apertura controlada de compuertas.

“Estaremos mirando los efectos de cada opción y calculando cuál es la mejor. Reclamaremos a través de la Agencia Federal para el Manejo de Emergencias (FEMA, por sus siglas en inglés) los costos necesarios para remover los sedimentos que se recibieron con el huracán y posterior a eso por no tener la forestación necesaria”, dijo el funcionario.

Más costoso

Aparte de sedimentos, los ríos y embalses están recibiendo ahora más hojas y ramas, lo que aumentará el costo de tratamiento del agua para que su consumo sea seguro, expuso el doctor en ecología y catedrático asociado de la Universidad de Carolina del Norte en Chapell Hill, Javier Arce Nazario.

Advirtió, incluso, que la descomposición de este material resultará en mayor cantidad de carbono disuelto en el agua que, cuando se mezcla con cloro, crea compuestos carcinógenos.

“Estos compuestos orgánicos y el sinnúmero de otros contaminantes que deben estar llegando a los ríos, resultará en un aumento en costo en el tratamiento del agua por parte de la AAA”, dijo Arce Nazario.

“La AAA va a recibir agua con un nivel de turbiedad bien alto y tendrá que lavar más a menudo sus filtros. Producir agua potable va a ser más duro y, por ende, más costoso”, agregó Soderberg.

Para este año fiscal, la AAA cuenta con un presupuesto de \$594 millones para costear su programa de operación y mantenimiento de sistemas de acueductos y alcantarillados.

Infraestructura vieja

El huracán María sacó a relucir la situación de vulnerabilidad de algunas de represas. Ejemplo de ello es lo que en principio se reportó como una rotura de 24 pulgadas en la represa Guajataca, y luego se dijo que se trataba de erosión en la parte del vertedor de concreto. El gobierno mantuvo bajo riesgo inminente de inundación a comunidades de Quebradillas, Isabela y San Sebastián, y cientos de familias fueron desalojadas.

“Típicamente, las represas se diseñan para una vida útil de 50 a 60 años. En Puerto Rico, muchas represas ya pasaron su vida útil, y lo que requieren ahora es una reevaluación y reacondicionamiento de sus estructuras”, afirmó el presidente del Colegio de Ingenieros y Agrimensores de Puerto Rico, Pablo Vázquez Ruiz, quien recordó que la represa Guajataca se construyó entre 1919 y 1928.

Contó que, a excepción de las represas Cerrillos y Portugués, ambas en Ponce, las demás son “más vulnerables” a eventos como huracanes, porque no están diseñadas con la última tecnología.

“Las represas más modernas tienen mucha instrumentación que permite detectar cualquier indicio de falla. También cuentan con mecanismos de seguridad que no permiten que haya un desbordamiento. Pero en Puerto Rico, por el tiempo de construcción que tienen las represas, ya es necesario que haya una reevaluación y reacondicionamiento de todas estas estructuras. Necesitamos personal experto en el país que pueda realizar esto”, recalcó.

Sobre el aumento en sedimentación, Vázquez Ruiz dijo que es un problema que no supone un riesgo de seguridad para los embalses, pero hace que “vayan perdiendo su utilidad”.

Díaz Atienza, por su parte, descartó que la coyuntura actual se preste para impulsar la construcción de más represas. Aparte de que los “lugares idóneos” para nuevos embalses escasean en la isla, la AAA pretende “atacar la necesidad de más agua” con iniciativas para reducir las pérdidas en producción.

Al momento, la AAA pierde –física y comercialmente– el 60% del agua que produce.

Efecto en corales

Soderberg, entretanto, dijo que el flujo de sedimentos y la devastación forestal también tendrán “efecto directo” sobre los arrecifes de coral.

“Cuando les llegue esa sedimentación (a través de los ríos), los va a liquidar. Los sedimentos son veneno para los corales”, aseveró.

Datos del Centro para la Ecología Tropical Aplicada y Conservación (CATEC) de la Universidad de Puerto Rico, Recinto de Río Piedras, apuntan a que el 80% de los arrecifes de coral, a menos de 100 pies de profundidad, ya muestran señales de mortandad asociada al evento de blanqueamiento de 2005. Ese evento se relaciona, a su vez, al aumento en la temperatura del mar debido al cambio climático.

Arce Nazario añadió que, después de un huracán, los estuarios se tornan menos salados y la turbidez aumenta, lo que afecta a las especies que allí habitan.

No se descarta, por lo tanto, una merma en la actividad pesquera.

Más inundaciones

Mientras, la directora del CATEC, Elvira Cuevas, expuso que, a corto plazo, otro efecto de la devastación forestal causada por María serán más inundaciones.

“Las inundaciones serían mayores al no tener la cobertura vegetal necesaria para reducir la escorrentía”, dijo.

Con ella coincidió el ambientalista y urbanista Ramón Cruz, miembro de la Junta de Directores del Sierra Club en Estados Unidos, quien señaló que la pérdida de áreas de mangle también aumenta el riesgo de inundaciones.

Arce Nazario fue más comedido, al indicar que la incidencia de inundaciones dependerá de la condición del terreno antes y después del huracán.

“El huracán no destruye toda la vegetación y no crea una superficie impermeable. Nosotros, los humanos, talamos un bosque y hacemos estacionamientos por donde el agua no penetra. Dentro de los bosques destruidos por el huracán hay mucha vida que podrá tener funciones importantes como, por ejemplo, retener la lluvia y crear fricción para que el agua no llegue rápidamente al río”, expresó.

El análisis preliminar del impacto de María en las áreas custodiadas por el Departamento de Recursos Naturales y Ambientales (DRNA) arrojó que el 98% de los árboles adultos está “en el piso”, indicó en días recientes la secretaria Tania Vázquez. El 80% de los árboles juveniles sobrevivió el azote del huracán, lo que ayudaría a adelantar la reforestación de las áreas naturales.

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En Precario La Salud Mental Tras El Paso Del Ciclón Por La Isla

[El Nuevo Día \(PRI\)](#), October 10, 2017

JAYUYA. – Nilda Méndez Mercado se cuestiona a diario por qué sigue viva. Llegó hace poco más de un mes a Puerto Rico, desde el estado de Nueva Jersey, para estar “tranquila”. Pero el huracán María le cambió los planes.

El ciclón destruyó su casa en el sector Alturas Pisá del barrio Collores, en este municipio. Ni una pared quedó intacta. La vivienda se había construido con los ahorros “de toda una vida”.

Méndez Mercado quería regresar con su esposo, Francisco Soto Zamora, a quien dejó en las montañas jayuyanas mientras atendía su salud en Estados Unidos. Es paciente de cáncer, diabética y le dio un derrame cerebral que paralizó la mitad de su cuerpo.

“Pero ahora tengo depresión. Estoy mala de los nervios. Pasé el huracán aquí y fue terrible. Se llevó todo lo que me quedaba. Todo era nuevo y se lo llevó”, dijo llorosa la mujer de 70 años.

Desde el pasado 20 de septiembre, cuando María tocó suelo boricua, Méndez Mercado está “refugiada en un cuarto” en la casa de su suegra, de cemento. Sus problemas de movilidad le impiden salir a buscar ayuda. Tampoco ha llegado nadie a ofrecérsela.

“No he recibido ninguna ayuda, ni agua siquiera. Pasan y siguen. No nos han dado nada. No existimos en este lado. Todo se queda en el pueblo. Vienen los helicópteros con comida y agua, pero como yo no puedo ir... Necesito pañales, medicamentos y, cuanto antes, una vivienda, porque yo no puedo vivir así”, esbozó.

Méndez Mercado contó que pasa los días “llorando y llorando”, y que varias noches –en las últimas semanas– “me he acostado a dormir con hambre porque no nos han dado nada”.

Señaló que, debido a las irregularidades en el servicio postal, sus hijos no han podido enviarle ayuda desde los estados de Nueva Jersey, Illinois y Florida. “La correspondencia no llega”, dijo.

Dijo que, “tan pronto tenga unos dólares” y se normalice el tráfico aéreo, regresará a Estados Unidos.

“Nos viró la vida”

Wanda Sepúlveda Torres y Belinda Maldonado Medina, de 53 y 27 años, respectivamente, son vecinas de Méndez Mercado y también se expresaron deprimidas.

Denunciaron, además, que ninguna agencia municipal, estatal o federal ha visitado el sector Alturas Pisá para ofrecer servicios de salud mental.

“Porque los necesitamos. Este huracán nos viró la vida a todo el mundo”, dijo Sepúlveda Torres, quien perdió el techo de su casa y decenas de pertenencias, y ahora duerme en una caseta de campaña en el patio.

Lo menos que reclaman es un toldo de la Agencia Federal para el Manejo de Emergencias (FEMA, en inglés), “para que la lluvia no siga mojando lo poco que nos quedó”.

500 familias

El administrador municipal de Jayuya, Alexis Bennett, indicó que 500 familias perdieron sus casas parcial o totalmente debido al paso de María, incluyendo algunas de cemento.

El huracán, asimismo, cobró la vida de un hombre cuando un alud derrumbó su vivienda, en el sector Caricaboa.

“No tenemos agua embotellada, pero la que está saliendo por el grifo es potable y lo podemos garantizar. También necesitamos combustible, tanto para nuestra flota como para alguna infraestructura del gobierno estatal”, dijo Bennett, tras precisar que el 33% del municipio tiene el servicio de la Autoridad de Acueductos y Alcantarillados (AAA).

A casi tres semanas del paso de María, las brigadas siguen “abriendo camino”. Las carreteras, de hecho, aún exhiben grandes cantidades de lodo y algunos tramos están inundados por las lluvias que continúan. En el sector Hoyos Planes, unas 25 familias solo tienen acceso a pie, porque la carretera PR-531 colapsó.

Bennett reconoció que la falta de combustible ha limitado la repartición de agua y comida en los barrios jayuyanos.

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Efluvios De La Donahue

By Mayra Montero

[El Nuevo Día \(PRI\)](#), October 8, 2017

La noticia de que el gobernador no tiene “un Plan B” para atender el desastre causado por el huracán, siendo su única alternativa los fondos que le otorgue el Congreso y la administración del presidente Trump, no puede sorprender a nadie. Es más, ni siquiera es noticia.

¿Quién tiene un Plan B de cara a este desastre? A ver, ¿de dónde va a sacarse nada para comenzar siquiera a darle forma a esto?

La presencia del Ejército de los Estados Unidos va para largo, y oí decir que empezaban a ocuparse ellos mismos de la entrega de alimentos y otros artículos de primera necesidad, en vista de que habían surgido indicios de que en la ruta entre el centro de acopio y los municipios, se “esfumaban” paquetes de medicinas y otros productos.

También oí que había quejas de los militares, porque en algunos residenciales y otros sectores del interior de la Isla, los llamados “bichotes” obstaculizaban su trabajo.

Bienvenidos al club.

Eso lo sufren aquí, a diario, cientos de instituciones cívicas o religiosas, que deben pasarle la manita al capo y contar con su autorización para poder asomar la cara en las comunidades que viven bajo un cacicazgo de origen criminal, y en las que el trapicheo es cosa seria. Los del ejército, sin embargo, creo que no son propensos a pasarle la manita a nadie. El día que tengan que entrar en un residencial, un barrio remoto o lo que sea, y tengan órdenes concretas de no andarse con contemplaciones, se abrirán paso por donde tengan que abrirlo. Aunque no hayan venido en son de guerra, ese tipo de movilización es un inconveniente para el bajo mundo, algo que, unido a los problemas tácticos que dejó el huracán, arruina en parte lo que es la válvula de escape de mucha gente que depende de la economía informal. Puede haber “roces”, claro que sí.

Es sabido que los huracanes entorpecen el movimiento clandestino de los cargamentos. La mar está picada, los vuelos son escasos y las carreteras quedan intransitables. Si a eso se le añade una fuerza militar que llega a controlar las vías públicas y con la que es difícil establecer “alianzas” para que se hagan de la vista larga o custodien el trasiego, la situación puede tornarse tensa. Debe tenerse en cuenta, sin embargo, que el día en que le inflijan un rasguño a uno de esos militares, arderá Troya. Los que van a entrar a buscar a los culpables no serán agentes locales ni simples investigadores, sino oficiales del ejército, con sus métodos un poco más enérgicos.

El problema sigue siendo la falta de electricidad.

Cada vez que uno lee que han tenido que mandar a buscar especialistas mexicanos en tendido eléctrico, a los que FEMA pagará su sueldo, es imposible no acordarse de los millones que se dilapidaron en Lisa Donahue y su compañía. A la par que la gran estafa que resultó el trazado y construcción de la llamada Vía Verde, está este otro fiasco de la contratación de la reina madre —se movía como una reina madre—, afectada y ladina, que cargó con cientos de millones, ella y sus compinches. Una mujer que nada adelantaba, que pedía prórrogas y más prórrogas a su contrato vergonzoso, y que no hizo otra cosa en Puerto Rico que no fuera lucrarse y marearnos con la “colonizadora” de que ella podía resolverlo todo.

Aquí tenemos las consecuencias. La Donahue en capilla ardiente, sin que le falte ni una bombillita, y nosotros ahogados en la incertidumbre, con cientos de negocios cerrados, miles de empleados en la calle, sin trabajo y sin sueldo.

Ésa es otra. Hay una diferencia entre la gente que está en su casa, cobrando salarios del gobierno, y los que han recibido un portazo en las narices, porque los comercios y las pequeñas empresas ignoran cuándo podrán reanudar operaciones. Los verdaderos sacrificados son esos, los que están ahora mismo esperando que llegue la luz, alimentando la esperanza de que el patrono no cierre para siempre.

Por eso choca tanto que, cobrando su salario entero, algunos se dediquen a “filosofar” sobre el Plan B y el Plan C, y hasta el Plan Z que debería tener el gobernador.

Desengañense, no hay más ninguno: esperar un rescate económico y echar hacia adelante con lo que nos caiga, con espíritu de sacrificio y austeridad. Sí, austeridad, esa palabra que tanto mortifica a los patriotas de balcón.

En cuanto a la visita del vicepresidente Pence, que se puso en plan Miss Simpatía y aseguró que el coquí iba a “cantar más alto”, confieso que prefiero los gruñidos del otro. Los papeloallazos del otro. La descarnada brutalidad del otro. Lo prefiero incluso antes que la vocecita de la Donahue. ¿Recuerdan su voz? Dios sabe que nunca la creí.

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OPINIÓN: “Lo Que Vi En Puerto Rico”

[El Tiempo Latino](#), October 10, 2017

Ponce, PUERTO RICO – Esta semana pude ser testigo de la peor devastación que he presenciado en mi vida. He ido muchas veces a la Isla del Encanto, tengo familia allá. Sin embargo este viaje no fue como ningún otro.

Pasé la mayor parte del tiempo en Ponce, en la parte sur de la isla. Ponce es la segunda ciudad más poblada de Puerto Rico. Allí estuve junto al gobernador Ricardo Roselló, la alcaldesa María Meléndez y una delegación de demócratas de la Florida entregando insumos a quienes más lo necesitaban luego de sobrevivir la destrucción del huracán María. Vimos un colchón de tamaño matrimonial enredado en un poste de cableado telefónico. Las líneas de comunicación están tan afectadas que ni siquiera pudimos utilizar un teléfono satelital para comunicarnos con el mundo exterior.

La isla que conozco ya no existe, ha sido destruida por uno de los huracanes más feroces en la historia de Estados Unidos. Lo que no fue destruido y aún sigue intacto es la identidad estadounidense de Puerto Rico. De hecho, tan sólo a pasos de casas destruidas por la tormenta, aún estaba en pie una bandera estadounidense con sus estrellas y rayas ondeando en el viento.

Los 3.5 millones de personas en Puerto Rico son ciudadanos estadounidenses. Ellos merecen un trato justo e igualitario como cualquier otro ciudadano estadounidense. Desafortunadamente, tenemos un presidente que ha mostrado una perturbadora indiferencia por el bienestar de estos conciudadanos. El presidente Trump esperó más de una semana luego del huracán para levantar las restricciones del Jones Act, a pesar de haberlas levantado para Florida y Texas incluso antes de que el huracán Irma tocara tierra. No hay excusa para el retraso de Trump, que sólo ha causado más sufrimiento al impedir que las naves puedan entregar insumos de manera más rápida. Es más, la agencia FEMA aún no ha autorizado todas las herramientas de asistencia que tienen a su disposición.

Mientras millones esperaban recibir ayuda el fin de semana pasado, Trump decidió iniciar una pelea a través de Twitter con la alcaldesa de San Juan, Carmen Yulín Cruz, quien en ese momento iba puerta por puerta buscando salvar vidas mientras Trump estaba en su campo de golf y le dedicaba sólo una hora a Puerto Rico. Representantes de su administración llamaron la devastación en la isla como una “historia de buenas noticias”.

Incluso cuando el presidente Trump visitó Puerto Rico el martes, dejó en claro que él considera que el esfuerzo de rescate de nuestro gobierno era una inconveniencia en vez de una responsabilidad nacional. “Ustedes descontrolaron nuestro presupuesto” le dijo al pueblo de Puerto Rico, un sentimiento que estuvo curiosamente ausente de sus respuestas a desastres en Texas y Florida.

Responder a un desastre natural es un problema complejo. Sin embargo, el problema aquí no es con las personas en el terreno o con los trabajadores de carrera que dedican sus vidas a situaciones como esta. El problema es con la persona a la cabeza de las decisiones.

Los puertos de Puerto Rico están abiertos. Los aeropuertos están abiertos. Con todo y esto, el general de tres estrellas nombrado por el Pentágono para liderar los esfuerzos de alivio dijo la semana pasada que no está ni cerca de tener la cantidad de tropas o equipos que necesita.

Trump encabeza el poder ejecutivo. ¿Por qué no actúa como tal? ¿Por qué no está canalizando la inmensa cantidad de recursos a su disposición para traer la ayuda que la gente necesita desesperadamente? ¿Y, por qué es que sigue felicitándose a sí mismo por un trabajo que está lejos de terminarse?

La situación en Puerto Rico no es una “historia de buenas noticias”. Es una emergencia y necesitamos manos a la obra. Las muertes han incrementado en un doble desde la visita de Trump. La gente necesita agua, comida, insumos básicos. Ellos necesitan que FEMA tenga una presencia en lugares como Ponce, donde más de un millón de personas están desesperadas por ayuda federal. Ellos necesitan la fuerza completa y todos los recursos del gobierno de los Estados Unidos.

Proveer al pueblo de Puerto Rico con la asistencia que necesitan no debería ser un tema partidista. No se puede fijar un precio para la vida, ya sea en Florida, Texas o Puerto Rico. No sólo resulta inhumano tratar a nuestros hermanos puertorriqueños como ciudadanos de segunda clase, es también algo profundamente anti-estadounidense.

No hay nada como ser testigo de primera mano, caminar por esas comunidades devastadas y hablar con las personas que lo han pedido todo, menos lo que llevan puesto y la esperanza de sus corazones. Ellos no se dan por vencidos, ellos saldrán adelante, pero no pueden hacerlo solos. Necesitamos estar allí para nuestros hermanos boricuas.

Es el momento de que el presidente Trump deje de actuar como que esto es una “misión cumplida”. Nuestra tarea apenas comienza.

Esta pieza fue publicada inicialmente en inglés en el U.S. News & World Report.

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Supervisión Para Que La Ayuda Llegue Rápido A Los Necesitados

[El Nuevo Día \(PRI\)](#), October 9, 2017

Aguadilla – No faltaban brazos para pasar de mano en mano las cajas con agua y las que contenían comida.

De esa forma, los militares -de la Guardia Nacional, de la Reserva del Ejército de los Estados Unidos y los State Guard (voluntarios activados por el gobernador)- hacían llegar a las manos de cientos de puertorriqueños afectados por el huracán María los suministros proporcionados por la Agencia Federal para el Manejo de Emergencias (FEMA, por sus siglas en inglés).

Alrededor de 500 familias de los residenciales Stanford y Agustín Stahl, en Aguadilla, hicieron una larga cola tan pronto vieron los tres camiones militares con su distintivo color crema. En menos de una hora, tiempo en que todos recibieron ayuda, no dudaron en tomarse fotos con los militares y decirles en inglés y español, gracias.

“Esto me ayuda con el nene y eso”, dijo Marilyn Valentín tras recibir una caja con tres galones de agua y otra con comida lista para consumo. Con la ayuda de los militares cargó los suministros en el coche donde llevaba a su niño de cuatro años.

Lo mismo hizo Raicha Guerra, quien llevaba a su hijo 2 años.

“Los que han venido son el Army y la Cruz Roja”, comentó la joven de 22 años cuando este diario le preguntó por la ayuda recibida.

A pasos de ella estaba el alcalde de Aguadilla, Carlos Méndez, quien previamente se había reunido en las instalaciones de la Guardia Nacional en Aguadilla con el teniente general Jeffrey S. Buchanan, encargado de las operaciones militares en Puerto Rico.

Buchanan, al igual que el comandante dual de tropas (Dual Status Commander), el general José Reyes, viajó desde San Juan hasta el pueblo costero de Aguadilla para ver de cerca la nueva logística implementada por el general de tres estrellas. En vez de que los alcaldes de los 78 municipios lleguen a los centros de distribución de alimento y agua, serán los militares los que lleguen a cada municipio.

Esa fue la logística que anunció la semana pasada el propio Buchanan para asegurarse de que la ayuda llegue a la gente afectada por el huracán María, luego de quejas por la tardanza en la entrega o por la poca cantidad que reciben.

Para ello, se crearon cuatro áreas de apoyo logístico (logistic support area) que deben llevar los suministros a 68 pueblos. Estas áreas consisten de casetas repletas de militares ubicadas en la antigua base Roosevelt Roads, en Ceiba; el Fuerte Buchanan, en Guaynabo; en la base Ramey, en Aguadilla; y en el Campamento Santiago, en Salinas. En cada una debe haber entre 2,000 a 3,000 militares.

“Esto nos ayuda a descentralizar”, explicó Buchanan, quien no dudó en descargar camiones y entregar suministros.

Cada una de estas áreas tiene un apoyo de ingeniería, otro de seguridad y uno de personal médico. Así que, en conjunto, cada área no solo se destina para la distribución de agua y alimentos sino que también brinda seguridad, limpia vías de acceso y provee servicios médicos donde sea necesario, dijo Reyes.

Estas cuatro áreas se unen a 10 municipios, para así cubrir los 78 municipios, que recibirán suministros de los militares y que también sus respectivos alcaldes pueden buscar la ayuda.

Se trata de municipios grandes que pueden hacer este tipo de tarea o que sufrieron gran devastación tras la embestida del huracán, dijo Reyes en referencia a Carolina, San Juan, Bayamón, Guaynabo, Arecibo, Ponce, Mayagüez, Humacao, Utuado y Guayama.

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Urge La Necesidad De Contar Con Más Camiones Cisterna En Morovis

[El Nuevo Día \(PRI\)](#), October 8, 2017

MOROVIS – La alcaldesa de Morovis, Carmen Maldonado, indicó que el municipio continúa esfuerzos diarios para llevar agua y alimentos a las comunidades afectadas, al tiempo que reconoció que si no fuera por organizaciones privadas y la Agencia Federal para el Manejo de Emergencias (FEMA), los suministros, especialmente el agua, no llegarían a donde se necesitan.

“El reto mayor, y lo que estoy enfrentando ahora mismo, son los camiones cisterna. Morovis no tiene agua. Tenemos muchísimas personas encamadas y en este municipio solo cuento con un camión cisterna. Le hice la petición a FEMA de que me enviaran cuatro camiones cisterna adicionales porque Acueductos solamente me envió uno de 2,000 galones”, dijo Maldonado.

La alcaldesa adelantó que coordinará un viaje a los Estados Unidos para gestionar dos camiones cisterna adicionales.

“Hay mucha necesidad de agua y alimentos, y para mí eso es primordial, antes que cualquier cosa material”, enfatizó la ejecutiva municipal.

Por su parte, el Comisionado de Seguridad del municipio, Francisco Rosado Correa, explicó que el ayuntamiento está en la etapa de recuperación y remoción de escombros. Del mismo modo, añadió que esperan identificar varias escuelas que puedan servir como centros de distribución.

“Estamos llevándole alimento y agua a la comunidad como prioridad. Una vez logremos estabilizar el problema del alimento y el agua, vamos a establecer unos centros de distribución, posiblemente vamos a utilizar escuelas en los distintos barrios para poder llevar la comida y el agua. Por ahora lo estaremos llevando directamente a las casas”, sostuvo Rosado Correa.

A más de 20 días del paso del temporal por Puerto Rico, las comunidades Vaga, Pasto y San Lorenzo permanecen incomunicadas debido al colapso del puente que daba paso a Morovis. El único acceso, actualmente, es a través del municipio vecino de Orocovis.

“Lo que nos tomaba 15 minutos, ahora nos está tomando casi hora y cuarto. A esos barrios estamos llevando doctores, transportación a pacientes que tienen algún tipo de condición como diálisis o personas que reciben algún tipo de tratamiento”, dijo Rosado.

La petición del ayuntamiento es que el gobierno central coordine la instalación de un puente provisional para restablecer el acceso a dichas comunidades.

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Más De La Mitad Del País Tiene Agua

By Yaritza Rivera Clemente

[El Vocero de Puerto Rico](#), October 7, 2017

El gobernador Ricardo Rosselló informó que 695 mil clientes cuentan con el servicio de agua, lo que equivale al 55.5% de los abonados, mientras que solo un 10.7% de la población está conectado al sistema de energía eléctrica.

Según la Autoridad de Acueductos y Alcantarillados (AAA), el servicio por zonas se encuentra en 64% para el área metro, 69% para el oeste, 69% para el sur y 63% para el este. El norte cuenta con un 28% de servicio.

También se informó que los generadores eléctricos en la represa de Carraízo están en funcionamiento lo que permitió restablecer el servicio en la urbanización Fairview y el barrio Saint Just de Trujillo Alto, para añadir 12 mil nuevos clientes.

“Reconocemos que muchos clientes no están recibiendo los servicios de agua y luz por lo que he ordenado a las dos corporaciones públicas a detener el envío de facturas. A las personas que se les haya enviado facturas por periodos en los que no tuvo el servicio, no tendrán que pagarlo y no se le discontinuará el servicio. Una vez tengamos los servicios de medición operacionales solo se le cobrará la tarifa de consumo a los clientes que hayan recibido servicios”, dijo Rosselló.

Respecto a la situación en la represa Guajataca, Rosselló indicó que aún se encuentra en “estado crítico”, y mencionó que el Cuerpo de Ingenieros y el Departamento de Defensa de Estados Unidos laboran para establecer en el lugar barreras de concreto para mitigar cualquier emergencia. Recalcó que esa iniciativa busca prevenir el impacto que pudieran tener las lluvias que se esperan en la zona noroeste en los próximos días.

Por su parte, el director ejecutivo de la Autoridad de Energía Eléctrica (AEE), Ricardo Ramos, informó que se está trabajando para energizar la represa de La Plata. Señaló que los trabajos se interrumpieron el jueves por causa de los rayos que acompañaron la intensa lluvia que cayó en la tarde. Espera que la represa pueda entrar en funciones este fin de semana.

Aumentan las muertes

De otro lado, el primer ejecutivo confirmó que con dos muertes reportadas en los municipios de Patillas y San Germán aumentó a 36 el número de víctimas fatales relacionado al huracán.

En el caso de Patillas, se informó que se trata de una persona que fue encontrada entre escombros, y en San Germán, otra que presuntamente fue golpeada por un árbol.

Rosselló dijo que espera tener un cuadro más claro sobre las muertes vinculadas al potente ciclón y mencionó que el director del Departamento de Seguridad Pública, Héctor Pesquera, está a cargo de recabar la información a las agencias pertinentes.

Además, se comunicó que la Agencia Federal para el Manejo de Emergencias (Fema, por sus siglas en inglés) entregó ayer 160,259 litros de agua y 262,800 comidas de los Centros de Distribución.

De igual forma, se dijo que se le suplió combustible a once instalaciones médicas. Se esperaba que ayer se entregaran más camiones de combustible a otros municipios y se espera llegar con igual ayuda a Vieques y a Culebra.

De otro lado, la Junta Reglamentadora de Telecomunicaciones notificó que 42% de los clientes cuentan con servicio celular. Debido a un corte de fibra en Ponce, se afectaron 70,000 abonados.

Hay 14 Cell on Wings (COW) de AT&T instalados; cada uno tiene cobertura de servicios de un radio de 3 millas y permite hacer llamadas y enviar mensajes de texto desde los celulares. El COW de Arecibo tiene una cobertura de servicio de 4 millas.

Pagan horas extras a Policía

La Policía de Puerto Rico recibió por medio de FEMA \$950,000 para el pago de horas extras trabajadas durante el huracán Irma y ya se hizo la solicitud de las primeras dos semanas de María.

Además, se restableció el servicio de la red de radio central para Arecibo, Mayagüez y Aguadilla, además del servicio con el que ya cuenta San Juan, Bayamón, Carolina y Caguas. Las demás regiones tienen comunicaciones a nivel regional.

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Bajo Lupa La Distribución De Agua Y Alimentos

By Laura M. Quintero

[El Vocero de Puerto Rico](#), October 9, 2017

El gobernador Ricardo Rosselló informó ayer que ante las continuas querellas de que el agua y la comida no llegan a los sectores en necesidad, ha solicitado a la Fiscalía federal y al Departamento de Justicia realizar una investigación que permita identificar cuáles son los problemas de distribución.

“Hemos decidido tomar una serie de acciones para evitar el mal manejo de la comida... He ordenado a la Guardia Nacional que vaya a los municipios y esté observando y participando en la distribución de los alimentos que están llevando”, comentó en relación a las ayudas de la Agencia Federal para el Manejo de Emergencias (FEMA), la Oficina de la Primera Dama y de otras entidades a los damnificados del huracán María.

La determinación del gobernador surge luego de denuncias de que empleados gubernamentales se estaban apropiando de los suministros, según la vicepresidenta de la Asociación de Productos de Puerto Rico, Marilú Otero. Reclamos similares hizo el pastor Jorge Raschke, quien se topó con que habían robado en los muelles parte de la ayuda traída por Pentecostales Unidos por Puerto Rico.

Rosselló pidió que se investiguen las querellas “para ver si en efecto es una cuestión de mal manejo y si en efecto se ha hecho algo de manera equivocada, consideren todo el procesamiento de la ley”.

Algunos municipios como Cayey se movieron a crear estructuras de base comunitaria para identificar a encamados, niños o personas con necesidades de salud a ser atendidos con prioridad, de modo que la propia comunidad se apodere de la recuperación. El alcalde cayeyano, Rolando Ortiz, informó que se distribuirá el agua y los alimentos de acuerdo con ese censo comunitario y se organizarán también comedores comunitarios.

“Le planteé al gobernador que para nosotros enfrentar una crisis, necesitamos una estructura local con autoridad”, contó el también presidente de la Asociación de Alcaldes a EL VOCERO.

En la calle los auditores

Por otro lado, los agentes de auditoría fiscal del Departamento de Hacienda y auditores de la Oficina del Contralor estarán contabilizando y monitoreando “todo lo que se está entregando” en los municipios. El secretario de Hacienda, Raúl Maldonado, comentó a este diario que entre ambas entidades hay 500 agentes disponibles para esta tarea.

Abordado sobre por qué demoró tanto el gobierno en establecer este sistema, Maldonado mencionó que la distribución estaba en manos de los municipios. “Los alcaldes tenían un sistema interno de finanzas, lo que pasa es que con la destrucción que hubo se les hizo bien difícil y queremos darles un apoyo adicional”, contestó.

El gobernador reconoció, además, que se han recibido querellas de comercios que han estado cobrando el Impuesto sobre Ventas y Uso (IVU) y gasolineras que han desobedecido la orden de congelación del margen de ganancias del Departamento de Asuntos del Consumidor (DACO).

El secretario del DACO, Michael Pierluisi, confirmó a la prensa que recibirá empleados de otras agencias que se capacitarán para salir a la calle a inspeccionar el cumplimiento con las órdenes administrativas de congelación de precios. Las multas oscilarán entre \$5,000 a \$10,000 por cada transacción ilegal.

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A Quince Días De María

[El Vocero de Puerto Rico](#), October 6, 2017

Sin lugar a dudas el huracán María ha dejado una huella dolorosa en Puerto Rico. Su furia nos golpeó de una manera tan violenta que nos deja en ascuas de cara a nuestro futuro.

Definitivamente, ni nosotros, ni nadie, podía estar 100% preparado para un desastre de esta magnitud.

Las acciones del gobierno previas al paso del huracán fueron puntuales para evitar mayor cantidad de muertes.

Las autoridades locales movieron sus limitados recursos bastante rápido luego del paso del fenómeno atmosférico y lograron abrir accesos en una buena parte de la Isla.

Pero la respuesta de la Agencia Federal para el Manejo de Emergencias (FEMA) y de otras instituciones federales desafortunadamente no fue, ni es, tan rápida como se necesitaba.

Entendemos que ser una isla complica mucho el panorama, pero no justifica la dilación en las entregas de suministros, como agua y alimentos, y tampoco en la entrega de los famosos toldos azules para proteger las casas que perdieron sus techos.

No nos malinterpreten; agradecemos la ayuda de FEMA y otras agencias federales, pero debe acelerarse el proceso, sobre todo en la montaña.

Aunque vivimos una era digital, en que las comunicaciones son más rápidas y el Internet se convierte en un aliado para apoyar las soluciones, no nos sirve de nada cuando no hay energía eléctrica, y parte del proceso burocrático para coordinar las ayudas ha descansado en la herramienta digital, probablemente convirtiendo el proceso en uno más lento.

Ya han pasado dos semanas y al día de ayer teníamos muchos signos positivos.

El Aeropuerto Internacional Luis Muñoz Marín está abierto en un 100%, lo que facilitará el movimiento de pasajeros varados aquí, la llegada de más personal de apoyo y el reencuentro de familias.

Las estaciones de gasolina continúan operando con bastante normalidad y, al día de ayer, casi 900 de estos establecimientos estaban abiertos.

Hay 64 hospitales en funciones y ya 25 de ellos están operando con energía suplida por la Autoridad de Energía Eléctrica (AEE).

En cuanto a los bancos, las sucursales abiertas superaban las 175 y los cajeros automáticos o ATM están operando en un 79%.

El agua del sistema de la Autoridad de Acueductos y Alcantarillados (AAA) continúa fluyendo a buen ritmo desde hace días, alcanzando ya el 55% de la Isla.

Las señales celulares también reportan una mejoría significativa, alcanzando ya en la Isla un 45% de los clientes.

Desafortunadamente, la energía eléctrica todavía sigue siendo el talón de Aquiles del proceso de recuperación, pero debemos recordar que el sistema ya se encontraba frágil antes de María. Casi un 10% de los clientes de la AEE está recibiendo electricidad.

Todo esto lo vemos como señales positivas que deben empezar a generar más esperanza en la ruta hacia la nueva normalidad.

El presidente Donald Trump estuvo en visita oficial de cuatro horas en Puerto Rico y pudo comprobar que realmente somos una zona de desastre. Mientras él cumplía con sus compromisos, su equipo se reunió con el gobernador y tuvieron la oportunidad de discutir en profundidad la crisis energética.

La visita programada durante el día de hoy del vicepresidente de Estados Unidos, Mike Pence, puede ser quizás un indicio de que, aparte de los \$29,000 millones solicitados para los afectados por los huracanes Irma, María y Harvey en distintas jurisdicciones, puedan recibirse otras ayudas y más apoyo del gobierno federal.

Y realmente necesitamos que sea revisada la situación de Puerto Rico porque, de acuerdo con los estimados preliminares, entre los daños directos y el impacto en la actividad económica, de una forma u otra las pérdidas ascienden a más de \$95,000 millones.

La mejoría es lenta, pero constante, y por ello debemos mirar el futuro con esperanza.

Lo que sí tiene que cambiar radicalmente es el apoyo a las comunidades más impactadas, sobre todo las de la zona montañosa.

Hacemos un llamado a los directivos de FEMA para que agilicen la entrega de agua, provisiones y toldos a esta parte de la población.

A quince días del impacto de María podríamos estar mejor, sin lugar a dudas, si los recursos se asignan y manejan con mayor prontitud.

También ayudaría mucho a que estemos mejor si todos, como ciudadanos, ejercemos la paciencia y elevamos la vara de la tolerancia en medio de una de las crisis económicas y sociales más difíciles de nuestra historia.

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OPINION

Christie Was Right Not To Allow Building On Flood-Prone Areas. Why The Change? | Opinion

By John A. Miller and Samantha Medlock
Star-Ledger, October 9, 2017

For over a month, many of us have been riveted to the Weather Channel and news outlets, watching the heroic rescue efforts in Texas during Hurricane Harvey, as well as the massive evacuation of Florida and devastating impacts of Hurricane Irma on that state and the Leeward Islands, plus the outright devastation of Puerto Rico and other Caribbean Islands by Hurricane Maria.

It's been a stark reminder that New Jersey has its own vulnerabilities, with hundreds of thousands of residents living in areas that are prone to flooding and at risk from severe storms and sea level rise.

But instead of working to make us safer, the Christie administration is rushing to adopt rule changes that will put more of the state's people and businesses and infrastructure in harm's way.

In 2013, Gov. Chris Christie wisely vetoed legislation that would allow new residential and commercial development to occur in our state's coastal high hazard areas on piers or platforms over oceans or rivers.

Developers were pressuring to build in Atlantic City and along the Hudson River Waterfront, and the governor rightly prevented such high risk development from occurring in these flood-prone areas. Not only would such risky new development endanger the people and property perched over waterways, but it would put first responders in harm's way. And even if developers factor in the cost of private flood insurance under today's prices -- and find buyers who are willing and able to pay them -- those insurance costs will likely increase over time.

Now in its final months, the administration seems to have flip-flopped, and the Department of Environmental Protection has proposed altering the rules to allow developers to build in the places that are most exposed to the threats of the new powerful storms that our future certainly holds.

The proposed rule amendments fail to make mention of climate change or sea level rise, an omission that should be considered a slap in the face to the New Jerseyans already dealing with chronic flooding during high tides. New Jersey's coast is likely to experience up to two feet of sea level rise by 2050. And towns along the shore are already experiencing nuisance (really chronic) flooding - climate change effects are already here.

Risking Human Lives

Perhaps of most concern is that residential and retail buildings built out over the water will put first responders' lives at risk. We have seen in recent days the valor and courage of those in Texas, Florida, and the Caribbean who have worked so hard to secure others' safety, including many who defied evacuation orders. New Jersey's coastal high hazard area is the area of greatest risk and defined by three foot and greater waves during a storm event - conditions that are sure to make rescue efforts difficult and potentially deadly. There is no way to know where the pier or platform ends when it is under several feet of turbulent water. And as many who called for

rescue in the recent storms learned the hard way, emergency services may not be available during the worst of the storm.

This means that the occupants of new homes built on piers could have to ride out future storms on their own, likely without electricity, drinkable water, communications, or emergency assistance. When rescue becomes available after the storm has passed, it will still be risky to first responders and residents and extremely costly to public budgets. Further, we know all too well from Hurricanes Sandy and Harvey that floodwaters are often contaminated and contact can lead to sickness. We need to reduce disaster risks and costs, not needlessly and wastefully increase vulnerability in new construction.

Risking Property

The National Flood Insurance Program (NFIP) operates as a quid pro quo, making federally-backed flood insurance available in communities that agree to manage development against the risk of flooding. From 1978 to August 2017, New Jersey had the third-highest payouts from the federal program, amounting to nearly \$6 billion, including claims from Hurricane Sandy. Development on waterway sites would jeopardize the ability of homeowners and business owners to insure their assets from future storm or flooding damage. Under federal law, the availability of flood insurance under the NFIP is contingent upon land use control measures coupled with consistent enforcement.

If a municipality were to approve this type of development, they would be in danger of being removed from the NFIP. Anyone in the town looking to purchase flood insurance, including businesses, residents, or the municipality itself, could find themselves unable to do access federally-backed flood insurance through the NFIP. As Governor Christie himself noted when he rejected the idea in 2013, allowing such risky development endangers policyholders' access to federally-backed flood insurance as well as the community's standing under the NFIP. New Jerseyans who do not live in floodplains will be affected, too: If a community is kicked out of the NFIP for failing to adequately manage floodplain development, then every family and business throughout the community becomes ineligible for certain forms of federal assistance in a presidentially declared disaster.

Risking Economic Prosperity

As a laboratory for innovation, New Jersey should be working to understand the nature of the risk it faces, and what kinds of steps are needed to assure it will remain a safe, vibrant and inclusive place and better prepared for the natural disaster risks it is likely to face in the future. The state should work to attract investment in sustainable and strong new projects that provide the housing, infrastructure, and workplaces of the future. These must be properly sited and designed to last their full expected life, using modern planning and building codes, taking into account sea-level rise, extreme precipitation, and storm-surge impacts. New Jersey's leaders need to learn what storms like Sandy, Harvey, and Irma have to teach, to position the state to compete for new commercial investment driven by access to an educated, vibrant, and resilient workforce.

The comment period for the proposed changes to the rules ended September 15. Both gubernatorial candidates should call for an extension of the comment period and seek additional input from voters on this risky scheme, especially in light of Hurricanes Harvey, Irma and Maria and future storms that may hit on his or her watch.

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MAIN FEMA NEWS

NATIONAL NEWS

Administrator Long-Hurricane Nate.

[ABC's This Week](#) (10/8, 10:05 a.m. EST, Raddatz, 2.72M) reported, "Let's bring in FEMA Administrator, Brock Long. Mr. Long, thanks for joining us this morning. Tell us what FEMA is doing right now." **Administrator Long:** "Good morning. So right now the focus is on supporting all of the governors from Louisiana to Florida with their life-saving missions. Over the past 48 to 72 hours we've been working with them around the clock to pre-stage commodities and embed our incident management teams with the emergency management directors in their EOCs. The most important thing about this storm is this is one of the fastest moving storms in the Gulf Coast since they've started to record tropical history. And so that's very dangerous for many reasons." **Martha Raddatz,** ABC News: "We know it's the fourth hurricane so far this year. We have about two months left in hurricane season. What are your concerns going forward? Do you have enough people? Do you have enough money?" **Long:** "Money is not the issue. Congress has been on top of that working with us. Back on October 1, we had another \$6.7 billion added to the disaster relief fund and we continue to update them on a regular basis, And we'll ask for supplementals as needed. In regards to resources, of course, we are strained. Bottom line, over nearly 85% of my entire agency is deployed right now. We're still working massive issues in Harvey, Irma, as well as the issues in Puerto Rico and the Virgin Islands and now this one. But the bottom line is that we're positioned to support Nate, you know, very well." **Raddatz:** "And, Mr. Long, let's turn to Puerto Rico. The mayor of San Juan tweeting again this morning, saying, 'Power collapses in San Juan hospital with two patients being transferred out. Have requested support from FEMA. Nothing.' And she also says it's 'increasingly painful to understand the American people want to help and the US government does not want to help. we need water.' What's your reaction to that?" **Long:** "We filtered out the mayor a long time ago. We don't have time for the political noise. The bottom line is that we are making progress every day in conjunction with the governor. And in regards to the power failure, we're restringing a very fragile

system every day. As we make progress, simple thunderstorms pass through and knock the progress out. Rebuilding Puerto Rico is going to be a greater conversation for the Congress in conjunction with the governor on how – you know, what the way forward is in the future of Puerto Rico. But in regards to the power outages and hospitals, we built an entire 911 system and we monitor the hospital system daily, and so if there is a power failure at a hospital, which we've seen two of, you know, over this past week, we're actually getting the ICU patients out of those hospitals onto the USS Comfort. And we continue to stabilize that situation with hospitals. As far as the political noise, we filter that out, keeps our heads down and continue to make progress and push forward restoring essential functions for Puerto Rico." This closed captioning transcript was provided by ABC News.

Administrator Long-Hurricane Nate.

[Fox News' Fox and Friends Sunday](#) (10/8, 9:15 a.m. EST, 1.25M) reported, "Fox News alert: overnight, Hurricane Nate now downgraded. We are not out of the woods just yet. Joining us now is FEMA Administrator Brock Long. Mr. Long, on the behalf of the nation we thank you for dealing with one crisis after another. Let's start first with where we are on this now tropical storm. Where are we?" **Administrator Long:** "The President proactively once again pushed forward disaster declarations for each of the states threatened. The most important message is making sure people don't let their guard down." **Fox News Host:** "The toughest parts of these storms are almost always the aftermath. We already see power outages. A lot of people without power for who knows how many days. How tough is that to help?" **Long:** "That's a great question. The power is typically turned back on by the private power industry. This is going to be an annoying event for people that may be out of power for multiple days, but for the most part you will see the power come back on fairly quickly as the companies have been pre-positioned for multiple days in anticipation of Nate." **Fox News Host:** "You guys have been inundated. How is everybody holding up over there?" **Long:** "People are tired but we have a job to do. We continue to work around-the-clock. And I think a lot of the focus has been in Puerto Rico, but people have to remember we have a tremendous amount of resources devoted to recovery efforts in Texas and Florida. Nearly 85% of my agency is deployed along with our partners in the federal government.

Tens of thousands of people are working everyday to alleviate suffering and help rebuild communities." This closed captioning transcript was provided by Fox News.

NBC: Hurricane Nate. [NBC Nightly News](#) (10/8, story 3, 2:20, Snow, 16.61M) reported, "After making two land falls in Mississippi and Louisiana, Hurricane Nate is down to a tropical depression, but continues to do damage. Several tornadoes were reported in South Carolina. In the gulf region, despite a significant storm surge, officials say the impact could have been much worse. Kerry Sanders has the latest." NBC (**Sanders**) added, "The dirty task of cleaning up in the wake of Hurricane Nate, a welcome chore for the residents along the Gulf Coast." **Unidentified Speaker:** "We are fortunate this morning and have been blessed." **Sanders:** "As night fell Saturday, Hurricane Nate made two landfalls. First at the mouth of the Mississippi and Louisiana. Then at around 12:30 this morning near Biloxi. The 85 to 90 mph winds driving the storm surge; US 90 submerged in up to six feet of water. The storm surge is coming up here. I think what I need to step out of the way. Let the, there we go. You can see the rain. The storm surge coming right up here on the street." **Sanders:** "The storm surge rose quickly from dry to flood in just 45 minutes, putting the ground floors of local businesses under water. Clean up began as soon as the sun came up." **Kristen Dahlgren,** NBC: "I'm Kristen Dahlgren in Spanish Fort, Alabama, where the Mobile Bay is still high. The storm surge here, about six feet. You can see some roads still shut down. That car, not going anywhere anytime soon." **Gadi Schwartz,** NBC: "I'm here in Dauphin Island, where roads are still impassable, even to big trucks like this. These homes are still cut off by about three to four feet of sand." **Sanders:** "Tonight, thousands without power, and many thankful that's been the biggest problem from Nate." **Unidentified Speaker:** "I woke up this morning and I went, thank you, God, you smiled on us." **Sanders:** "After Katrina leveled much of this coast 12 years ago, governments mandated new stronger building codes." **Lee Smithson,** Mississippi Emergency Management Agency Director: "We have rebuilt the coast in the aftermath of Katrina, higher and stronger. And our people are a lot smarter now, wiser and more prepared than we've ever been for a catastrophic event." **Sanders:** "Tonight, emergency officials say despite the lack of extensive damage, they

hope that residents that just went through Hurricane Nate don't become complacent for the next time they're urged to evacuate."

NBC: Hurricane Nate-US Preparations.

[NBC Nightly News](#) (10/7, lead story, 2:35, Diaz-Balart, 6.31M) reported, "Good evening. A fast-moving hurricane bringing a dangerous storm surge is threatening 10 million people who live along the nation's Gulf Coast and Southeast tonight. Nate, seen here from a hurricane hunter, is expected to make landfall just hours from now, and residents from New Orleans to Florida's Panhandle are being told to brace for the worst. The storm has already killed 22 people as it made its way through Central America. Officials worry tonight that a busy hurricane season has left many in the path complacent despite what could be a deadly rush of water into low-lying coastal areas. Our team is all along the coast tonight. We begin with Kerry Sanders." NBC (**Sanders**) added, "Preps for Hurricane Nate underway. But with mostly empty shelters along the Gulf Coast, emergency officials fear widespread voluntary evacuation orders have been ignored." **Mississippi Gov. Phil Bryant:** "Just yesterday, the sun was out, it was a beautiful day. It's hard for them to believe that this storm's moving fast enough that it could be upon them by nine o'clock tonight. In Pascagoula, Mississippi, police going door to door." **Unidentified Speaker:** "Please don't wait until the last minute if it starts to get bad, okay?" **Sanders:** "But at home after home, residents say they're staying put." **Unidentified Speaker:** "It's not mandatory for you to evacuate yet, but I highly recommend it, because that's my job." **Sanders:** "The lack of urgency in Alabama, too." **Kristen Dahlgren,** NBC News: "I'm Kristen Dahlgren in Mobile, Alabama, where the outer bands are now coming through. And as you can see, the Mobile Bay already topping its banks. Officials warning of a life-threatening storm surge here – could be six to nine feet before this night is over." **Sanders:** "In tourist-packed New Orleans, canceled flights means visitors are now learning what locals already know – this city is at risk, because it's below sea level. When the city's pumps fail, as they did in August, widespread flooding follows." **Unidentified Speaker:** "It's really frightening, but you have to do what you have to do to get prepared." **Sanders:** "This year's Atlantic hurricane season is now one of the 10 most active on record, with 14 named storms and nine hurricanes, five of those nine becoming major

hurricanes. And the season's not over until the end of November. Tonight, the Bosio family says they're staying put. Their home near Beach Boulevard in Pascagoula could see a nine-foot storm surge. Much of this area was destroyed during Katrina." **Unidentified Speaker:** "It's a hurricane. Everybody needs to be worried about it." **Sanders:** "The docks here in Biloxi would normally, on any other day, have more than 300 boats, but the owners have pulled them out and moved them to high ground for safety. Meantime, if there's an area that understands a storm surge, it's here in Biloxi. Look at that restaurant over my shoulder. It's built up on stilts more than three stories high. Jose?" **Diaz-Balart:** "Kerry Sanders, thank you very much."

NBC: Hurricane Nate-Tracking. [NBC Nightly News](#) (10/7, story 2, 1:10, Diaz-Balart, 6.31M) reported, "Let's take a closer look at the timing and track of this hurricane as it gets closer to the Gulf Coast. NBC's Dave Price is here with that. Dave?" NBC (**Price**) added, "All right, Jose. This is what we know. This is a Category 1 storm at this point, just barreling towards the coastline. It's location, 140 miles south of Biloxi, Mississippi. Winds sustained at 90 miles per hour, but gusting higher than that. And there is still time for some strengthening. As this begins to roll on through – again, moving at about 23 miles per hour – it is going to push on shore and retain some of its strength, and that's why we have a major concern for areas throughout the Southeast, all the way to Birmingham and Montgomery. We're watching for heavy rain, flooding, hurricane-force winds and, of course, the surge – a major issue, especially right along the coastline. The Louisiana-Mississippi border could see between seven and 11 feet. And all the way to Mobile Bay, we could be looking at nine feet. Eventually, the storm rolls through the Ohio Valley and up through the Northeast and out of here by Tuesday. But it is going to be rough for the next six hours. Landfall expected between 11 p.m. and 1 a.m. as we head through tonight." **Diaz-Balart:** "Dave Price, thank you very much."

NBC: Hurricane Nate-US Preparations. [NBC Nightly News](#) (10/6, lead story, 2:00, Holt, 7.22M) reported, "Good evening, and thanks for being with us. Late today, the mayor of New Orleans ordered mandatory evacuations and a curfew as the Gulf Coast braces for another possible hurricane. It's called Nate, a tropical storm now but threatening to build to hurricane

strength before hitting the Gulf Coast this weekend, posing a major flood danger after leaving nearly two dozen dead across Central America. Hurricane and tropical storm warnings are posted tonight from Louisiana to the Florida Panhandle. Our Kerry Sanders has the latest." NBC (**Sanders**) added, "Nate hit Central America as a weak tropical storm, but the impact powerful. In hard-hit Nicaragua, up to 15 inches of rain, turning roads like this one into rivers. This woman says the storm has left so many children crying. They're hungry and thirsty. In mountainous Costa Rica, major mudslides and widespread power outages. Thousands now homeless. At least 22 dead, among them two kids swept away in fast-rising waters. Hurricane warnings now in place for parts of Louisiana, Mississippi, and Alabama. In New Orleans, a race to sandbag tonight. Residents here not worried so much about the levy system giving way, as happened 12 years ago during Katrina – rather, fears the city's crippled pumping system will fail." **Unidentified Speaker:** "It was recently tested, you know, the system itself, and it just didn't hold." **Sanders:** "In August 2017, critical pumps in the city lost power. Only eight inches of rain turning to a calamity." **New Orleans Mayor Mitch Landrieu:** "I want to be clear: We have sufficient pumps and manpower to handle this threat if the rain totals remain as forecast and the intensity is directed." **Sanders:** "All attention is now on those pumps like the one over my shoulder here, with the expectation that Nate will become a hurricane. As you noted, Lester, at the top here, the mayor of New Orleans has issued mandatory evacuations for certain parts of the city." **Holt:** "All right, Kerry Sanders tonight. Thank you."

NBC: Hurricane Nate-Tracking. [NBC Nightly News](#) (10/6, story 2, 1:10, Holt, 7.22M) reported, "Let's turn to Al Roker with the latest forecast track, which has shifted slightly from last night, and whether it hits as a tropical storm or a Category 1 hurricane, it doesn't make a lot of difference to folks along the Gulf Coast after what they've seen this storm season." NBC (**Roker**) added, "Absolutely right, Lester, and the track has shifted a little bit to the west. Right now, 80 miles east of Cozumel, Mexico. Sixty-mile-per-hour winds. We're talking about movement north-northwest; it's booking it – 21 miles an hour. At this point, it's about 200 miles away from New Orleans. Saturday 1 p.m., 70-mile-per-hour winds. Then it makes landfall about 1 a.m. and then

continues to move rather rapidly, about 140 miles of that cone of uncertainty, and then moves very quickly out to sea. However, here's what we look for. Hurricane warning right now from Louisiana all the way to about the Pensacola/Mobile, Alabama area. Heavy rain, flash flooding, tropical-force winds, and look at the storm surge – Louisiana, four to six feet, including New Orleans. Mississippi, Alabama close – five to eight feet. Four to six for Florida. Again, Lester, we're going to have to just watch this and wait, because a track change of 50 miles per hour can – 50 miles can make a big, big difference." **Holt**: "All right. Al Roker, thank you."

ABC: Hurricane Nate. [ABC World News Tonight](#) (10/8, lead story, 2:50, 14.63M) reported, "And good evening. Thanks for joining us on this Sunday. I'm Tom Llamas. And we begin tonight with Hurricane Nate. After taking lives in Central America, speeding across the gulf, then slamming ashore, not once but twice. First, striking Louisiana, then hitting Biloxi, Mississippi with 85-mile-per-hour winds, part of the city under water. And the winds spawning tornado warnings and water spouts. This one in Orange Beach, Alabama. And tonight, the remnants of Nate drenching the south, and heading towards the northeast. Here's Steve Osunsami." **ABC (Osunsami)** added, "Ten p.m. local time, the winds picked up. After hours of wondering where this storm was, Hurricane Nate arrived on the gulf coast with 30-foot waves and winds near 85 miles an hour. By midnight, New Orleans knew it was safe, and they were lifting their curfew. But in Biloxi, this was an emergency. This is by far the strongest winds we've seen all night. The eye wall is right here, we're about to enter the center of the storm. 12:30 a.m., it's high tide. And now we're seeing the storm surge from the forecasts. The parking decks of the casinos, the Beau Rivage, the Hard Rock Cafe and the Golden Nugget, were all flooded. Cars were bouncing around in five feet of sea water." **Unidentified Speaker**: "The storm surge has completely engulfed the first floor here." **Osunsami**: "There were 300 guests at the Golden Nugget. Today the casino is open." **Unidentified Speaker**: "We got remediation in place. The folks will have the seat rock tended to soon. We'll get these escalators back and running." **Osunsami**: "One a.m. the storm surge crossed US Highway 90, and now Alabama was seeing the storm surge too. Earlier, a large water spout was spotted in Orange Beach. Firefighters had to rescue a family

of four from a home that was taking on water. ABC's Victor Oquendo was in Birmingham this morning." **Victor Oquendo**, ABC News: "You can see rain bouncing up the street, and on the other side, look at those flags blowing around in the wind." **Osunsami**: "The administrator of FEMA tonight says that the string of recent storms hitting the US has been tough on the agency." **Administrator Long**: "Of course, we're strained. You know, bottom line is, is that over, nearly 85 percent of my entire agency is deployed right now. We're still working massive issues in Harvey, Irma, as well as the issues in Puerto Rico and the Virgin Islands, and now this one." **Osunsami**: "Crews are out tonight clearing roads. The cleanup is on." **Llamas**: "And Steve joins us live from Gulfport, Mississippi. We just heard the FEMA director mention how they're stretched thin. And there is still a lot of time left in this hurricane season." **Osunsami**: "That's right. We're at the end of the height of the hurricane season, but we've actually had hurricanes in November, some of them major. It's a good thing this one wasn't any worse."

ABC: Hurricane Nate-Tracking. [ABC World News Tonight](#) (10/8, story 2, 0:35, Llamas, 14.63M) reported, "Rob Marciano is here, and where is Nate headed next?" **ABC (Marciano)** added, "Going north and east, and we have a tornado threat. A couple of reports of tornadoes with damage across South Carolina, and the western part of that state, still under the gun over the next couple of hours as it spins up over Kentucky and the Appalachians. Eventually it ends up in the northeast. And tomorrow, the rain picks up, gusty as well. Kind of a stormy day. A lot of the eastern third of the country getting a piece of Nate the next 36 to 48 hours."

ABC: Hurricane Nate-Tracking. [ABC World News Tonight](#) (10/6, lead story, 1:15, Muir, 14.63M) reported, "Good evening, and it's great to have you with us here on a Friday night. And we are a hurricane-weary nation, and yet tonight another powerful storm is headed straight for the US. At this hour, Nate is speeding up and gaining strength. Right now, heading into the warm waters of the Gulf. States of emergency across the Gulf. The system already deadly before arriving. Twenty-two lives lost. Preparations underway at this hour and there are now some mandatory evacuations underway. Let's get right to chief meteorologist Ginger Zee with us tonight, because

this will not only hit the Gulf, it will then travel, you say, right up through the country." ABC (**Zee**) added, "Up through the Northeast, and so we've got to watch for flash flooding potential all the way through Pennsylvania, say. But let me take you straight to the map, David, because the Yucatan Peninsula is showing that storm just east of them now. This thing is flying at 21 miles per hour to the north-northwest. Hurricane warning in place for New Orleans, Gulfport, Biloxi, Mobile. Tropical storm warnings extend to Pensacola and even inland there. The brunt of this storm will be felt Saturday night through Sunday morning. That's when it is going to make landfall, then it speeds up through the Ohio Valley into the Northeast and out by Tuesday. But before that, the impact – storm surge, four to six feet, anywhere in red; the Mobile bay, Gulf shores, up to eight feet; and then up to 10 inches of rain along the Gulf Coast." **Muir**: "All right, tracking it into the weekend. Ginger, thank you."

ABC: Hurricane Nate-US Preparations.

[ABC World News Tonight](#) (10/6, story 2, 1:55, Muir, 7.27M) reported, "In the cross hairs of this storm, New Orleans and the low-lying cities right along the Gulf. Dangerous flooding and, as Ginger just said, storm surge is likely, and this question tonight: Are the pumps ready in New Orleans? ABC's Steve Osunsami is there." ABC (**Osunsami**) added, "Across the Gulf tonight, this is the state of emergency, and they're racing to get ready for this storm." Carron Andrews, resident: "We're going to flood. I know we're going to flood. That's why I'm here. Otherwise, I'd be still at the office right now." **Osunsami**: "In New Orleans, they're especially worried. A dozen of the city's drainage pumps that they need to keep the city dry aren't working tonight. Teams are out this evening clearing drains. In parts of Orleans, St. Bernard, and Jefferson parishes, more than 1,000 families are being forced to leave their homes." **New Orleans Mayor Mitch Landrieu**: "One of the greatest threats to this storm is not necessarily interior rain, but storm surge." **Osunsami**: "Billy Rost is leaving tonight. He's moved everything off the ground." **Billy Rost III**, resident: "You don't know what the surge is going to do. If you don't pick it up, you lose it. This is like a gamble." **Osunsami**: "Three feet of storm surge and he's fine. Six feet, he loses everything. He's expecting five." **Rost**: "I mean, you only can do so much. You can't run from water, baby." **Osunsami**: "The storm has already killed. At least 11 dead in

Nicaragua, eight in Costa Rica. Dozens more missing after mudslides washed away homes." **Muir**: "And Steve joins us live tonight from one of those pumping stations in New Orleans. And Steve, you were telling us that those pumps can actually pull out an inch of rain in an hour?" **Osunsami**: "Yes, David, but that's just during the first hour. After that, the ability of a pumping station like this one behind me drops to about half an inch an hour, and that's of course assuming all of these pumps are working, which would surprise just about everyone in this city. What that means is that if several inches of rain fall over New Orleans all at once, this city will still flood, even with all of the pumps working properly." **Muir**: "We are thinking about that city and every city along the Gulf tonight. Steve, thank you."

CBS: Hurricane Nate-Alabama. The [CBS Weekend News](#) (10/8, lead story, 2:50) reported, "Good evening, I'm Elaine Quijano. For the fourth time in six weeks, Americans are mopping up after a hurricane. This time, its Nate. It made landfall in Louisiana Saturday night and again Sunday morning in Mississippi. Tonight Nate's deflating and rolling north, still bringing heavy rain and strong gusts. The storm killed more than 30 last week in central America, but the deep south was spared that level of destruction. Streets, homes and businesses are flooded, and many are without power. Mark Strassmann is in Biloxi." CBS (**Strassmann**) added, "Nate's sprint into Biloxi was a second landfall in three hour, and the first for a hurricane in Mississippi since Katrina in 2005; 85 mile per hour winds and rains buffeted this coastal playground for families and gamblers. This is the churning Gulf of Mexico in downtown Biloxi. Nate is a night hurricane, and night storms can be killers. You often can't see rising water until it's too late. And forecasters are calling for up to 11 feet of storm surge. At several coastal casinos here, the house took a beating. Waste deep flood water poured into the Beau Rivage Resort. In the Hard Rock Casino's parking lot, the surge slammed cars into each other. By then, the gamblers were long gone, the state's gaming commission had ordered the casinos to close. But many residents rolled the dice and chose not to evacuate." **Unidentified Speaker**: "I can remember Katrina and it was terrible, and I know this isn't as bad but we have to take everything seriously for sure." **Strassmann**: "Sixty miles east in Mobile, Alabama, firefighters rescued a family of four who drove into trouble. And from Cooper

Riverside Park, one person tweeted, hard to tell where the river ends. But Nate's fury largely spared Florida and Louisiana, including New Orleans. Good news for FEMA, strained by a summer of major storms." **Administrator Long:** "Nearly 85 percent of my entire agency is deployed right now. We're still working massive issues in Harvey, Irma as well as the issues in Puerto Rico and the Virgin Islands." **Strassmann:** "No one was reported killed or injured. But in Alabama and Mississippi, more than 100,000 customers spent at least part of their Sunday without power. More than 50,000 in Mobile alone. This is the Biloxi Lighthouse Pier, which was battered by the storm. But Nate was no Harvey, no Irma and no Maria. There is damage, there will be cleanup, but nothing extreme. And for that, Elaine, all along the gulf coast there is also relief."

CBS: Hurricane Nate-New Orleans. The [CBS Weekend News](#) (10/8, story 2, 1:05, Quijano) reported, "There were fears that Nate could overwhelmed the troubled drainage system in New Orleans, but Michelle Miller says the Big Easy is breathing easy tonight." CBS (**Miller**) added, "The sun has been shining all day here in New Orleans, a far cry from what many expected to wake up to. Residents had hunkered down, fearing Hurricane Nate what drench southeast Louisiana and repeat the August 5 flash flooding that dumped five inches of rain here in as many hours. That uncovered deficiencies in the city's drainage pumping system. Right now 109 of the city's 120 water pumps are working. Nate veered east, producing very little precipitation for the Big Easy. Much of Louisiana breathing a collective sigh of relief. October storms are unusual for this part of the gulf. And with a month and a half left before the end of hurricane season, folks around here are hoping the worst is over."

CBS: Hurricane Nate-US Preparations. The [CBS Weekend News](#) (10/7, lead story, 2:25, Ninan) reported, "Good evening. I'm Reena Ninan. Hurricane Nate is pounding at the door of American shores. It's expected to make landfall tonight between New Orleans and Mobile, Alabama as a Category 2, with gusts topping 100 miles an hour. Perhaps the biggest threat – an overwhelming surge of sea water. Nate follows a trio of more powerful hurricanes – Harvey, Irma, and Maria – but forecasters warn: Do not underestimate Nate. It killed at least 30 people across Central America, mostly in Nicaragua and

Costa Rica. That's before it picked up speed and strength. Michelle Miller is in New Orleans." CBS (**Miller**) added, "Rain from Nate pelted the Gulf Coast Saturday, but it's the threat of deadly storm surge that causes the most concern. Louisiana Gov. John Bel Edwards." **Louisiana Gov. John Bel Edwards:** "We don't want people driving at night. It's especially difficult at night because it's almost impossible to gauge the depth of the water and the current." **Miller:** "The National Weather Service said from the mouth of the Mississippi River to the Alabama coast could see seven to 11 feet of storm surge and a half-foot of rain." **Rupert Lacy,** Emergency Management Director, Harrison County: "That's different from Katrina because that was an early-morning storm." **Miller:** "Is it worse?" **Lacy:** "Yes. Nighttime storms always kill more people." **Miller:** "Rupert Lacy is the emergency management director for Harrison County, Mississippi. When the strength of a hurricane increases at the very end before it hits landfall, how dangerous is that for you to be effective at what you do?" **Lacy:** "It – it – it can kill people. We understand that. The message is: Don't take it lightly; you can be a fatality." **Miller:** "New Orleans could see storm surges of up to nine feet, and potential 100-mile-an-hour winds. Those could knock out power, impacting the city's pumping system." **New Orleans Mayor Mitch Landrieu:** "That's why we call it a risk-reduction system. We cannot guarantee to people that there's not going to be any loss of power for any period of time." **Miller:** "On Friday, New Orleans Mayor Mitch Landrieu said 109 of the city's 120 water pumps are working. He's confident they'll do the job, but --" **Landrieu:** "If the entire system goes down, that is a catastrophic failure of epic proportions." **Miller:** "State officials have called for a mandatory evacuation for anyone living in unprotected flood zones and low-lying areas. Those officials say they've done everything that they can and they're simply hunkering down to brace for the storm. Reena?" **Ninan:** "Michelle Miller. Thank you, Michelle."

CBS: Hurricane Nate-Tracking. The [CBS Weekend News](#) (10/7, story 2, 1:40, Ninan) reported, "Eric Fisher is our chief meteorologist at our CBS Boston station, WBZ. What's the latest, Eric?" CBS (**Fisher**) added, "Reena, we've been watching Nate intensify today. Now a hurricane, yet another hurricane that will make landfall in the United States this evening. Moving exceptionally fast, upwards of 25 miles per hour to the north."

That's very unusual for the Gulf of Mexico. It means that wind is going to come in very quickly, the surge, as well. It's also a little bit of a lopsided storm. There's a look at wind speeds. You can see all the strongest winds are on that northeast side, so that will really push the strongest wind gusts around New Orleans eastward over toward Biloxi, Gulfport, Mobile Bay, even the western part of the Florida Panhandle. And those winds will be at least Category 1 hurricane strength, Reena."

Ninan: "So, Eric, when this ultimately makes landfall, what can we expect?" **Fisher:** "I think the biggest impact here is storm surge. This is a part of the Gulf of Mexico where water can really pile up. A seven- to eleven-foot inundation possible in southeastern Louisiana, across Gulfport, also Biloxi area, and then a six- to nine-foot surge into Mobile Bay. Still some significant surge on either side of those higher-end amounts. And because it's moving so fast, those strong winds will be able to extend well inland. So we have tropical storm warnings ahead all the way up into Birmingham, tropical storm watches into North Georgia, where destructive winds will be possible there, power outages, some downed trees. But if you look at the speed, by Sunday morning, already moving into Georgia. As we head toward Sunday evening, it's almost exiting Tennessee, and by Tuesday morning, it's in Canada. So we are talking about a very rapid movement. Heavy rain along the path. We could see some areas of flash flooding because of that heavy rainfall, though I think the wind and the surge are the biggest issues. Because this storm is moving so fast, the rain will have a tough time really adding up. Reena?" **Ninan:** "Eric, thank you."

CBS: Hurricane Nate-Tracking. The [CBS Evening News](#) (10/6, story 3, 1:25, Mason, 5.33M) reported, "A new storm is on the way. Tropical Storm Nate is blamed for 22 deaths in Nicaragua and Honduras. It could hit the central Gulf Coast as a hurricane over the weekend. A hurricane warning is up from Louisiana to the Alabama-Florida border. Eric Fisher is chief meteorologist at our CBS station WBZ in Boston. Eric?" CBS (**Fisher**) added, "Anthony, good evening to you. I've been watching Nate become more better organized and stronger throughout the course of the day today. You can see that on satellite. The center is just off to the east of Cozumel in Mexico. Winds are up to 60 miles per hour. It's moving very rapidly, north-northwest at 21 miles per hour, which means it'll close in on the

Gulf Coast very rapidly, as well. So we take a look at the current warnings. They include the city of New Orleans, eastward across Biloxi, Mobile bay, then hurricane watches up toward Pensacola into the Florida Panhandle. The track takes it with a landfall just east of New Orleans and very close to the Biloxi-Gulfport area tomorrow night. So just about 24 to 30 more hours over water, that will be it. It is expected to intensify into a hurricane, bringing strong winds, storm surge of four to eight feet, and very heavy rain, then it accelerates northeast and weakens and brings rainfall along its path all the way to New England by Columbus Day. There you see the rain totals. Not just a coastal storm. With rain totals like this – several inches up to a half foot across Alabama, North Georgia, into Tennessee – Anthony, we could have some significant flash flooding this weekend." **Mason:** "Eric Fisher of WBZ. Thanks, Eric."

CBS: Hurricane Nate-US Preparations.

The [CBS Evening News](#) (10/6, story 4, 1:45, Mason, 5.33M) reported, "The mayor of New Orleans ordered some neighborhoods evacuated, as well as a mandatory curfew beginning at 6 p.m. Saturday. Michelle Miller is there." CBS (**Miller**) added, "With Tropical Storm Nate heading this way, New Orleanians are operating on muscle memory. Sandbagging is the first line of defense for 20-year resident Kathy Adams. When you heard about Nate, what went through your head?" **Unidentified Speaker:** "Start packing, because I don't want another Katrina. If you look at my car, I'm packed, ready to go." **Miller:** "Packed, ready to go." **Unidentified Speaker:** "Clothes are in the car in the suitcases." **Miller:** "Her property has flooded three times. The most recent was last month when a storm dumped nearly a foot of rain in less than a day. The water was waist deep in some areas. Nineteen of the cities pumping stations failed that day. Eleven are still offline with at least four feet of storm surge expected when Nate hits." **New Orleans Mayor Mitch Landrieu:** "I know that you can see now that we are ready for whatever comes our way." **Miller:** "Mayor Mitch Landrieu. Can you guarantee the people of New Orleans that that pumping system will work as it should?" **Landrieu:** "As a matter of fact, I can. We have plenty enough power and plenty enough pumping capacity to handle those potential rain events." **Miller:** "As Nate bears down on the Gulf Coast, power crews are prepping for outages. Still, Kathy Adams says she survived Katrina."

She'll survive this, too. So there's no giving up for you." **Unidentified Speaker:** "No giving up. After Katrina, I wanted to come back home. But now this is what I'm facing again. So you can't run." **Miller:** "City officials are just as concerned about wind as they are rain. And if the power grid is knocked out, that could make this pumping system far more vulnerable. Anthony?" **Mason:** "Michelle Miller with the preparations in New Orleans. Thanks."

NBC: Puerto Rico-Hurricane Recovery. [NBC Nightly News](#) (10/9, story 6, 1:55, Holt, 16.61M) reported, "Now to Puerto Rico where the death toll now stands at 39 in the aftermath of Hurricane Maria. The most critical need right now, rebuilding the shattered power grid on that devastated island. Now some big name billionaires from the tech world are stepping up to offer some help. NBC's Gabe Gutierrez is there with more." NBC (**Gutierrez**) added, "Tonight most of Puerto Rico is powerless." **Unidentified Speaker:** "Water. We need water." **Gutierrez:** "Nearly three weeks after Hurricane Maria, 85 percent of the island still has no electricity. That's almost three million Americans. The three-star general spearheading military relief efforts says he'll take whatever help he can get." **Lt. Gen. Jeffrey Buchanan,** US Army North: "The power of America, my own belief, is not the federal government. It's the local government. It's private organizations all coming together as one team to help people in the time of need." **Gutierrez:** "That help could be coming from big tech. Tesla founder Elon Musk saying he wants to help rebuild the island's power grid using solar technology. How long before this project gets off the ground?" **Gov. Ricardo Rossello,** Puerto Rico: "We're getting our teams together talking already." **Gutierrez:** "The potential partnership with Governor Ricardo Rossello started last week over Twitter." **Rossello:** "We can't be thinking about just putting back up the old system. We need to take this opportunity to remake the system, to be innovative." **Gutierrez:** "Other tech giants also want in. Google's parent company is sending massive balloons to restore cell service. Facebook is launching what it calls a connectivity team to the island. But for so many here, recovery seems far off. Joselli says she waited in a gas line for 17 hours the other day. Now she waits for food and water at a grocery store, chugging along on a generator." **Unidentified Speaker:** "We have to

wake up very early to go to the supermarket to get anything." **Gutierrez:** "She waits for the day she can tell her seven-year-old son they have power once more. Gabe Gutierrez, NBC News, Isabella, Puerto Rico."

NBC: Puerto Rico-Hurricane Recovery. [NBC Nightly News](#) (10/8, story 12, 2:15, Snow, 16.61M) reported, "Finally tonight, for all the hardship we've been reporting about in Puerto Rico after Hurricane Maria, we want to tell you about a remarkable effort by one man that's been having a big impact in recent days. He's one of the most famous chefs in America, and Ron Mott caught up with him in Puerto Rico." NBC (**Mott**) added, "Out of chaos, comfort. Offered slice by slice by steaming, heaping mounds. It's a recipe for recovery, cooked up by famed Chef Jose Andres, who created the World Central Kitchen in the wake of the Haiti earthquake. The non-profit brought relief to hurricane victims in Houston." **Chef Jose Andres:** "People of Houston, the best barbecue chicken." **Mott:** "Now, to those in Puerto Rico." **Andres:** "You create this bond between the giver and receiver. That's what you want. The people feel like somebody's really taking care of them." **Mott:** "This massive volunteer force isn't just a nod to his global humanitarian mission, but an ode to the transforming and healing power of food. Does it feel like work or a calling?" **Unidentified Speaker:** "We're having fun. It's all about having fun and helping others, so it's more of a calling." **Mott:** "Chef Andres quickly assembled his team, infused with an energy to nourish the soul as much the body. She says giving back to the community has helped heal her own personal pain." **Unidentified Speaker:** "No matter what, I was still living, and I get around because I don't have my stuff. But it's okay." **Mott:** "This weekend, they came, they ate, smiled even. A quarter million servings so far. Super good, this woman said. And you got a nice couple of bowls of hot food. How good does that feel?" **Unidentified Speaker:** "Thanks to God." **Mott:** "In a place where finding the next meal is a constant worry for many, a chance to relax, to saver a moment." **Andres:** "It's here and this will be forever the biggest step in my life." **Mott:** "Fuel for the long road ahead. Ron Mott, NBC News, San Juan."

NBC: Puerto Rico-Hurricane Recovery. [NBC Nightly News](#) (10/7, story 6,

1:50, Diaz-Balart, 6.31M) reported, "Two and a half weeks after Hurricane Maria struck Puerto Rico, the government of the island said today that while 56 percent of residents now have running water, the vast majority still do not have power. While many supermarkets have now reopened, people in more remote areas are still calling for help. We get more from NBC's Mariana Atencio." NBC (**Atencio**) added, "In the town of Comerio, people are pleading for water." **Unidentified Speaker**: "From the bottom of my heart, please help us, because we're dying here." **Atencio**: "We're with a group led by San Juan's mayor and medical teams from as far away as New York and California. Susan Gillespie is a nurse practitioner from Oregon." **Unidentified Speaker**: "It's a war zone, they need help here." **Atencio**: "Have you seen any sign of supplies coming this way?" **Unidentified Speaker**: "None, zero." **Atencio**: "Medicine?" **Unidentified Speaker**: "Nothing." **Atencio**: "The volunteer doctors and nurses climb this mountainous neighborhood called 'Cielito,' which means 'Heaven,' to deliver supplies and give medical care. There are around 20,000 people here in the city of Comerio. The mayor says 60 percent of the homes – totally damaged after Hurricane Maria. It's especially tough on the elderly and sick to get the care they need. You have cancer? Across Puerto Rico, so many are struggling, roughly 90 percent of this island still has no power. Slightly more than half have running water. Today, a bipartisan congressional delegation surveyed the damage. For those in this countryside, help can't come fast enough. How happy are you to see these doctors from the mainland? Are you happy? That's a smile we wanted to see. After days of despair, today hope in this village called 'Heaven.' Mariana Atencio, NBC News, Puerto Rico."

NBC: Puerto Rico-Hurricane Relief Song. [NBC Nightly News](#) (10/6, story 13, 2:05, Holt, 7.22M) reported, "Finally tonight, more than two weeks after Hurricane Maria slammed Puerto Rico, that US territory remains in dire need. That's why Lin-Manuel Miranda, Tony and Grammy award-winning creator of the smash hit 'Hamilton,' got some of his fellow music superstars together for a song benefiting the relief effort. Tonight, our Gabe Gutierrez has an inside look." NBC (**Gutierrez**) added, "If the song was only about a storm, it wouldn't be so personal. But for Lin-Manuel Miranda, his new single 'Almost Like

Praying,' inspired by the West Side Story song 'Maria,' cuts deeper. Featuring Jennifer Lopez, Gloria Stefan, and Marc Anthony. The music gives a voice to each of Puerto Rico's 78 towns." **Lin-Manuel Miranda**, actor and writer: "Like many people I have family on the island, and what we all experienced if we weren't on the island was this terrible silence in the wake of the storm. And our social media feeds were full of the names of town." **Gutierrez**: "It's the latest private voice in the hurricane relief effort. Stephen Colbert raising more than one million dollars getting celebrities to post their awkward adolescent pictures. A group called Vieques Love rallying support for Puerto Rico's hard-hit southeastern coast. From Houston, still recovering itself from Hurricane Harvey --" **Bill Baldwin**, Harvey Relief Hub volunteer: "And we give back to any in need, as the nation has done so for us." **Gutierrez**: "-- to Asbury Park, New Jersey today, where supplies were rushed to the local food bank en route to San Juan." **Unidentified Speaker**: "It is devastating." **Gutierrez**: "Deedee Montenero grew up in Puerto Rico and didn't hear from her 75-year-old mother on the island for days after the storm." **Unidentified Speaker**: "The pain is so deep that you can't even express it. I have cried so much in the past couple of weeks." **Gutierrez**: "But for Puerto Ricans, from that pain has come pride. Miranda's tribute helping make sure 78 towns are not forgotten. Gabe Gutierrez, NBC News, New York."

ABC: Puerto Rico-Hurricane Recovery. [ABC World News Tonight](#) (10/8, story 6, 0:30, Llamas, 14.63M) reported, "An update on the crisis in Puerto Rico. The mayor of San Juan slamming FEMA's response again. Tweeting, 'Power collapses in San Juan hospital with four patients now being transferred out. Have requested support from FEMA, nothing.' And later, 'Increasingly painful to understand the American people want to help, and the US government does not want to help.' Today, FEMA Administrator Brock Long called the mayor's criticism a political noise and said FEMA is making progress every day, working with the governor."

ABC: Puerto Rico-Hurricane Recovery. [ABC World News Tonight](#) (10/6, story 7, 0:35, Muir, 7.27M) reported, "To Puerto Rico tonight and new numbers from FEMA. More than two weeks after the storm, just 10 percent of

the island has electricity back; a little more than half now has drinkable water. President Trump marking Hispanic Heritage Month at the White House today, stressing the federal government's commitment, and then pronouncing Puerto Rico this way." **President Trump:** "We are also praying for the people of Puerto Rico. We love Puerto Rico. Puerto Rico." **Unidentified Speaker:** "We love you." Trump: "And we also love Puerto Rico." **Muir:** "The President on Puerto Rico tonight."

CBS: Puerto Rico-Hurricane Recovery. The [CBS Weekend News](#) (10/7, story 9, 2:00, Ninan) reported, "Shortly after President Trump praised Puerto Ricans this week for the relatively low death toll from Hurricane Maria, it more than doubled to 34. Dr. Jon LaPook took an aerial tour of the island and saw the overwhelming challenges that still remain." Nick Prouty, Puerto Rico resident: "There is misery all over this island." CBS (**LaPook**) added, "For two weeks, resident Nick Prouty has been flying almost daily runs to pick up the sick and drop off supplies." **Prouty:** "The roads seem impassable up here." **LaPook:** "Even now, it's hard to measure the staggering toll of the hurricane." **Prouty:** "Where do these people go? There's absolutely nothing left. These houses are absolutely destroyed. They're in splinters." **LaPook:** "Many of the new deaths are from the island's rural interior, where most people are still without water, without power, and aid is arriving very slowly. estimates are it will take months to restore electricity." **President Trump:** "Flashlights, you don't need 'em anymore! You don't need 'em anymore!" **LaPook:** "That's at odds with the President's upbeat remark about power to a selected crowd in a church. Further inland, we landed near a community hospital in Utuado. With dwindling supplies, Dr. Jose Villafane is struggling to get help for his sickest patients." **Dr. Jose Villafane, Utuado:** "As we stabilize them and try to transfer them to another hospital, they are dying in the other settings." **LaPook:** "So they end up dying, either on the way to the hospital elsewhere or in San Juan?" **Villafane:** "That's true." **Prouty:** "There are people who we haven't recovered yet that are dead in their houses." **LaPook:** "As Prouty looks down, he knows there's more suffering than he can see." **Prouty:** "We don't see it because we can't get to those people. No one's going out to them yet. Finding out who's in there, who's missing, it literally – it has to happen on a

door-to-door basis." **LaPook:** "Puerto Rico's governor told me the rising toll includes drownings and deaths from mudslides that had not been reported previously. Three deaths were from loss of oxygen when the power went off. Dr. Jon LaPook, CBS News, New York."

CBS: Unemployment-Hurricanes. The [CBS Evening News](#) (10/6, story 8, 0:15, Mason, 5.33M) reported, "The White House today was talking up a drop in the unemployment rate. It fell two-tenths of a point last month to a 16-year low of 4.2 percent. The Labor Department blamed the loss of 33,000 jobs on hurricanes Harvey and Irma."

NBC: California-Wildfires. [NBC Nightly News](#) (10/9, lead story, 2:40, Holt, 16.61M) reported, "We start with a deadly fire emergency in California. Well over a dozen wildfires, raging from one end of the state to the other, destroying homes and sending people fleeing for their lives along smoke-obscured highways, all fueled by unrelenting winds. Among the areas on fire tonight, northern California's sprawling wine country where more than a thousand homes have been destroyed. Residents fleeing, describing feeling the heat through their cars. Trees were on fire like torches said one evacuee. With late details, here's NBC's Joe Fryer." NBC (**Fryer**) added, "Across northern California, fire's fury powered by winds the likes of a tropical storm. Gusts topping 50 miles per hour." **Unidentified Speaker:** "Hell on earth. It's insane. I've never seen anything like it." **Fryer:** "The governor has declared a state of emergency, mobilizing the National Guard joining the thousands of firefighters already on the front lines. At least 15 major fires are burning in eight counties, including the so-called Tubbs Fire, which quickly grew overnight from 200 acres to more than 25,000." **Unidentified Speaker:** "This is my neighborhood in flames." **Fryer:** "Forces thousands to flee with minutes to spare." **Unidentified Speaker:** "It's horrible. I couldn't stay because I couldn't breathe." **Fryer:** "California's Highway Patrol used helicopters to rescue more than 40 people who were trapped. In Santa Rosa, wine country's largest city, two hospitals had to evacuate, one of them moving 130 patients, rushing the most critical to safety through heavy smoke as an entire neighborhood nearby went up in flames." **Unidentified Speaker:** "This wind and this fire behavior is relentless at the moment." **Fryer:** "So