

far across the region, one person has died with at least 1,500 homes and businesses now destroyed." **Unidentified Speaker:** "I've lived here for 26 years, raised my kids here. All our pictures are gone. Everything." **Fryer:** "Will and Bev Buchanan were hoping to retire in their home. Late today, they learned it did not survive, but they're grateful they did. Tonight, more houses are burning. The massive scope of destruction still unclear. The winds have died down tonight, but fires are still burning all around here, and where I'm standing in just this one block in Santa Rosa, there were 15 homes. Every single one of them is gone."

NBC: Wildfire-Southern California.

[NBC Nightly News](#) (10/9, story 2, 1:00, Holt, 16.61M) reported, "We were in Santa Rosa, north of San Francisco, hundreds of miles away in Southern California, another dangerous fire is on the move. Let's go to NBC's Gadi Schwartz. He's in Anaheim. Gadi?" NBC (**Schwartz**) added, "Let me show you what's going on right now. Check this out. These are firefighters putting out hot spots in this home, and they were protecting this home over here. In this neighborhood, it's house after house that's already gone up in flames. From above, you can see it's house after house that's been destroyed by this fire. A very different fire than the one that is burning up north because these homes are so close to each other and the wind is so strong that it's traveling from house to house, neighborhood to neighborhood at lightning speed. And this is something that you can see from all across Southern California. You can see the smoke cloud from Disneyland, from the ballpark, from the traffic snarled all way around here. A very stark reminder that this is the type of danger that people live with every day here in Southern California."

ABC: California-Wildfires. [ABC World](#)

[News Tonight](#) (10/9, lead story, 3:00, Muir, 14.63M) reported, "We begin with California burning tonight. States of emergency, as the fires now turn deadly. We're watching fires outside LA and north of San Francisco tonight. Homes, neighborhoods, thousands of acres burning. Zero percent contained. Families escaping through the flames in hard-hit Santa Rosa. The fires unstoppable, all day long. Homes lost to the flames. And look at this tonight. An entire neighborhood gone. Street after street, just the charred frames of homes. ABC's Matt Gutman is

right there tonight, where the speed of these fires still burning is of great concern tonight." ABC (**Gutman**) added, "Tonight, that swarm of fires consuming Northern California towns whole. Those powerful winds propelling the flames."

Unidentified Speaker: "We're really at the mercy of the weather right now. This wind is making a serious push. And that is out of our control."

Gutman: "At least 1,500 structures destroyed north of San Francisco. Tens of thousands of acres incinerated. Every available firefighter battling flames up to ten stories high. The fires only ignited late last night and exploded to over 80,000 acres in just 18 hours." **Mark Ghilarducci**, Director, CAL OES: "We know we have a number of injuries and possibly some fatalities, which we're still trying to get our hands around."

Gutman: "That jet engine sound you hear, that's that gas main that burst. You can feel the heat from here. Now, so many parts of this town have burned down that firefighters aren't even dealing with that right now. The fire galloping through a Santa Rosa shopping center, a mobile home park and threatening the city's hospital. Staff carefully balancing that IV, racing this gurney down the street as the hospital was evacuated and the fire roared behind them. And it was in this smoldering neighborhood that we found Ryan. He'd ridden in on his bike and under his arm, the only remnant of his house. This is it. This is all that remains?"

Unidentified Speaker: "Yes. Matched the House. 1312 Cashew Road."

Gutman: "Overnight, a mass Exodus from the storm. Tyler driving out through tunnels of fire." **Unidentified Speaker:**

"Let's go." **Gutman:** "And this blizzard of red hot embers. And there was Alyssa facing that orange behemoth ahead."

Unidentified Speaker: "This is my neighborhood. In flames." **Gutman:** "Kat's childhood home now gone."

Unidentified Speaker: "This is the stuff you have nightmares about, you know, your home burning down."

Gutman: "Our Nick Watt is in Napa." **Nick Watt**,

ABC: "Here in Napa, this is all that's left of the Cinderella Winery. You can see the bottles still on the shelves. Flaming coming out of gas lines. As the fire moved down this valley, it took out wineries and condos as it went."

Gutman: "Back in Santa Rosa, evacuations still underway. Strangers helping Jan save what she can."

Unidentified Speaker: "I'm in shock. This is your life."

ABC: Wildfire-Southern California.

[ABC World News Tonight](#) (10/9, story 2, 1:55,

Muir, 14.63M) reported, "Outside Los Angeles tonight, there are fires there as well. Red flag warnings from one end of California to the other. Mandatory evacuations in Anaheim tonight. We watched the feed coming in late today as the flames swept through an entire neighborhood there. ABC's Marci Gonzalez on the families who have lost everything. She's in Anaheim tonight." ABC (**Gonzalez**) added, "Tonight in Anaheim, an all-out assault, on the ground and in the air. What started as a small brush fire erupting into a 2,500-acre blaze within hours. Racing through neighborhoods, wildlife rushing to escape. Home after home here, burnt to the ground. This is just one of the homes destroyed. You can see the garage, the car inside still up in flames. Firefighters here at the scene doing everything they can to keep this fire from spreading to even more homes. Residents scrambling, some with just minutes to get out." **Unidentified Speaker**: "We've just been panicking and loading our cars up." **Gonzalez**: "Parents rushing to get their children from school. Others frantically trying to spray their homes down on their way out." **Unidentified Speaker**: "It's probably going to get worse before it gets better." **Unidentified Speaker**: "Just please leave. Life is our primary focus here. And we need you to evacuate. So we can protect you." **Gonzalez**: "Those flames, whipped by 40-mile-per-hour gusts of the Santa Ana winds, carrying dangerous embers." **Unidentified Speaker**: "With winds like this, you get little embers, it can land anywhere and start a fire." **Gonzalez**: "Massive flumes of smoke seen today at nearby Angels Stadium and hovering over Disneyland." **Muir**: "Let's get to Marci Gonzalez now. And you were telling us, 1,000 homes evacuated tonight, and these families did not have a lot of time." **Gonzalez**: "David, it all happened very quickly. The first evacuation orders were issued within 15 minutes of when this fire was first reported. Adding to the challenge out here is just how close together these homes are. And tonight, we've learned at least one firefighter has been injured."

ABC: California Wildfires-Tracking.

[ABC World News Tonight](#) (10/9, story 3, 0:45, Muir, 14.63M) reported, "Let's get to Ginger, who is tracking this." ABC (**Zee**) added, "And the simple answer for why this is happening, David, is wind. But let me get a little bit more into it for you. You've got two pressure systems, a high and a low. These create a big difference in pressure

over a very small area. And so that's going to make the wind even greater. We've seen gusts upwards of 70-miles-per-hour. The Santa Ana, classic setup with that offshore flow. Air rushes over the mountainsides. It heats up, it dries out even more. That's why you still see red flag warnings for almost the entire state. But just to let you know, humidity not going to be helpful tomorrow. Still in the five to 15 percent range, especially in Southern California. Even as winds start to release."

CBS: California-Wildfires. The [CBS Evening News](#) (10/9, lead story, 2:40, Quijano, 11.17M) reported, "Much of California is on fire tonight, or at risk of going up in flames. Red flag warnings, meaning conditions are ripe for wildfires, are up all over the state. More than 20 major fires are burning. Fifteen of them started in just the past 24 hours. And they are moving quickly, fueled by strong winds. They have already burned more than 70,000 acres, destroyed 1500 homes and commercial buildings, and forced 20,000 people to evacuate. The fires are blamed for at least one death. Here's Mireya Villarreal." CBS (**Villarreal**) added, "In Southern California this afternoon several hillside homes went up in flames, pushed by strong Santa Ana winds. Firefighters are making a desperate stand to save others that are burning. It is just one of several wildfires that is overwhelming the state. The worst in Northern California's wine country, which broke out late last night, home after home completely engulfed. Some burning to the ground before firefighters could even arrive." **Unidentified Speaker**: "I just saw flames up on the hill behind my house." **Villarreal**: "The fire was fanned by nearly 50 mile per hour winds, raging through several towns in Napa and Sonoma Counties. It was well after midnight when many homeowners got the urgent call. They had just minutes to get out." **Unidentified Speaker**: "I want to evacuate." **Villarreal**: "Patients from two hospitals were also evacuated as flames grew close. And this is what a Alyssa saw as she fled her home." **Unidentified Speaker**: "It is just my neighborhood inflames, completely in flames." **Villarreal**: "By day break, the extent of the damage became painfully clear. Entire neighborhoods overrun, little left, but the smoldering remains of hundreds of homes, block after block reduced to rubble. Today as the fire kept growing, it threatened even more communities. Residents like David tried to salvage whatever he could, just seconds after he fled, his

home caught fire. Yet another total loss. Several homes and businesses are on fire right now in the Santa Rosa area. We were trying to get to another neighborhood, turned the corner, and we saw this building on fire right behind us. A couple of guys walking down the street trying to put it out with extinguishers, I asked the firefighter who had trucks here why they weren't trying to put this out. He said right now, with their resources, it's all about risk versus reward."

'Great Team' At FEMA Is 'Prepared' For Hurricane Nate

By Daniel Chaitin

[Washington Examiner](#), October 7, 2017

President Trump sent his first tweet about Hurricane Nate on Saturday, touting the "great team" at the Federal Emergency Management Agency which is helping states along the Gulf Coast prepare for the storm.

"Our great team at @FEMA is prepared for #HurricaneNate. Everyone in LA, MS, AL, and FL please listen to your local authorities & be safe!", Trump tweeted in the late morning right after he arrived his golf club in Virginia.

Trump is still reeling from bad press over assertions of a slow federal response to the last hurricane to threaten the U.S. – Hurricane Maria, which devastated Puerto Rico late last month – despite his administration's efforts to defend its actions.

Earlier in the morning, Trump approved an emergency declaration for Louisiana, authorizing the Homeland Security Department and FEMA to coordinate relief efforts in the state and provide federal assistance.

Brock Long, the administrator of the Federal Emergency Management Agency has named William Doran III as the federal coordinating officer for federal recovery operations in the affected areas, the White House said in a statement.

Hurricane Nate is speeding toward the Gulf Coast and is strengthening over the warm waters of the Gulf of Mexico. Forecasters expect it to make landfall somewhere between Louisiana and the Florida panhandle late Saturday.

"#GulfCoast please take Hurricane #Nate seriously, and please be prepared for heavy inland rainfall," tweeted White House homeland security adviser Tom Bossert.

Trump Approves Mississippi Emergency Declaration Ahead Of Hurricane Nate

By Julia Manchester

[The Hill](#), October 7, 2017

President Trump approved an emergency declaration for Mississippi on Saturday as Category 1 Hurricane Nate made landfall in southeast Louisiana.

The storm is expected to hit Mississippi later Saturday night.

The declaration authorizes the Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA) to coordinate all disaster relief work, supplementing local and state work.

The storm currently has sustained winds of 85 mph, and has already soaked parts of Louisiana and Alabama.

Despite the storm's category being low, officials stressed the importance of safety and preparedness ahead of the storm.

"The storm surge is a big thing that really traps everyone," Biloxi, Miss. Mayor Andrew Gilich told CNN.

There was no mandatory evacuation for the storm in the state, however Jackson County, which is located on the Gulf Coast, issued a 7 pm CT curfew.

Gov. Phil Bryant (R) urged people in the state's coastal regions to head north.

This is the third Hurricane in six weeks to hit the U.S. mainland.

Hurricane Harvey brought catastrophic floods to Texas and parts of Louisiana in August, while Hurricane Irma brought heavy winds across Florida's Atlantic and Gulf coasts.

Trump Approves Louisiana Emergency Declaration Ahead Of Hurricane Nate

By Jesse Byrnes

[The Hill](#), October 7, 2017

President Trump has approved an emergency declaration for Louisiana as officials prepare for Hurricane Nate, the White House announced Saturday.

Trump issued the declaration Friday, allowing federal assistance to supplement state and local efforts. The order allows the Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA) to coordinate all disaster relief work.

The president emphasized in a tweet Saturday morning that FEMA was prepared for

the storm, urging residents in Louisiana, Mississippi, Alabama and Florida to "please listen to your local authorities & be safe!"

Our great team at @FEMA is prepared for #HurricaneNate. Everyone in LA, MS, AL, and FL please listen to your local authorities & be safe!— Donald J. Trump (@realDonaldTrump) October 7, 2017

Nate strengthened to a Category 1 storm heading into Saturday, and was about 245 miles southeast of the mouth of the Mississippi River with maximum sustained winds of 85 miles per hour Saturday morning, according to the National Hurricane Center.

"Nate is a little stronger over the central Gulf of Mexico," the hurricane center said in its latest advisory, indicating that the storm was heading toward Louisiana at 22 miles per hour.

Louisiana Gov. John Bel Edwards (D) warned residents ahead of the approaching storm on Friday, which is expected to hit the state as a Category 1 storm this weekend.

"I want to reiterate that no one should take this storm lightly. It has already claimed the lives of at least 20 people in Nicaragua and Honduras. And as we know from past storms, low intensity does not necessarily mean low impact," Edwards said at a press conference.

Trump has approved a number of disaster declarations for states in recent months preparing for Hurricanes Harvey, Irma and Maria, which primarily affected Texas, Florida and Puerto Rico, respectively.

—Updated at 10:17 a.m.

New Orleans Braces For Flooding Ahead Of Tropical Storm Nate

City has spent months repairing drainage system equipment; Mayor says 108 of 120 pumps working

By Cameron McWhirter

[Wall Street Journal](#), October 6, 2017

Full-text stories from the Wall Street Journal are available to Journal subscribers by clicking the link.

Airlines Begin Waiving Change Fees For Tropical Storm Nate

By Ben Mutzabaugh

[USA Today](#), October 6, 2017

Airlines had begun waiving fees for the latest tropical system that threatened to snarl flights on the U.S. mainland.

American, JetBlue, Southwest and United were among the big carriers to invoke flexible rebooking policies as of Friday morning for Tropical Storm Nate, which threatened to make landfall along the U.S. Gulf Coast this weekend as a possible hurricane.

The storm was centered in the western Caribbean early Friday. It was projected to move past Cancun and into the Gulf of Mexico on Saturday, according to the National Hurricane Center. By late Saturday or early Sunday, projections suggested Nate would come onshore somewhere between Louisiana and west Florida.

Most of the flexible rebooking policies now in place for Nate covered New Orleans and some other smaller airports along the Gulf Coast.

The policies vary by airline, but – generally – they permit eligible customers to make one change to their itineraries without paying change fees that can cost \$200 or more per passenger. The policies also typically allow fliers to move their flights without paying a fare difference, though there's usually a finite travel window to do so. For passengers wishing to move their flights to dates beyond those booking windows, most carriers will allow customers to apply the full value of their remaining ticket toward a newly booked one.

Nate comes after Irma and Harvey combined to force the cancellation of tens of thousands of flights from airports in the mainland U.S.

It was still unclear what impact Nate might have on flight schedules here, but it was unlikely to create flight disruptions anywhere near what was seen during Harvey and Irma.

If Nate did make landfall as a hurricane, it was likely to be a relatively weak Category 1 storm. Travelers scheduled to fly through airports in the region should keep tabs on Nate's track and brace for the possibility of disruptions.

In the meantime, scroll down for links to the latest airline change-fee waivers in place for Nate.

Hurricane Nate Menaces US Gulf Coast With \$4 Billion Loss

By Brian K Sullivan

[Bloomberg News](#), October 7, 2017

Hurricane Nate still has a chance to grow to a Category 2 storm as it bears down on the Mississippi coast, threatening to bring \$4 billion in losses after killing more than 20 people in floods across Central America and forcing crews off energy platforms in the Gulf of Mexico.

Nate's winds reached 90 miles (145 kilometers) per hour as it moves toward the Alabama-Mississippi border, where it could push as much as 11 feet (3.3 meters) of water on shore over night, the National Hurricane Center said in a 5 p.m. New York time advisory. While earlier forecasts showed the storm would probably become a Category 2, that's become less likely.

"Between the developing shear and the imminent landfall, Nate is about out of time to strengthen," Jack Beven, a senior hurricane specialist at the center, wrote in an analysis. "While not explicitly shown in the intensity forecast, there could still be some intensification to Category 2 status in the next few hours."

Even as Category 1 hurricane, Nate may cause as much as \$4 billion of damage and economic losses across an area of the Gulf Coast dotted with casinos and resorts, said Chuck Watson, a damage modeler with Enki Research in Savannah, Georgia. About \$1 billion of that would be insured loss. All told, 14 storms have formed across the Atlantic this season, killing hundreds in the U.S., Mexico and the Caribbean and causing an estimated \$300 billion in damage.

"With Nate the big thing is you've got those tourist areas, the casinos and stuff, along the coast," Watson said by phone. "Damage will be concentrated right on the Gulf Coast of Mississippi and Alabama."

An intensification from one hurricane category to the next-highest can result in billions of dollars more in damage, said Jeff Masters, co-founder of forecaster Weather Underground in Ann Arbor, Michigan.

"If you look at all the statistics from the last 117 years and normalize all the landfalls for increases in wealth and property, a Category 2 hurricane causes \$4.3 billion in damage, whereas a Category 1 is about \$2.5 billion," Masters said. Casino Coast

Twelve casinos stretch along Mississippi's Gulf Coast, according to the Gulf Coast Regional Convention & Visitors Bureau website. About 76,000 homes from Louisiana to Florida with an estimated reconstruction cost of \$16 billion could be affected by Nate, according to CoreLogic Inc., a property analytics company in Irvine, California.

The storm's track and asymmetrical shape, with its highest winds and heavy rain on its east side, could spare New Orleans from any real damage, Watson said.

There could be two U.S. landfalls from Nate if the storm clips one of Louisiana's barrier islands late Saturday, said Dan Pydynowski, a meteorologist with AccuWeather Inc. in State College, Pennsylvania. Damage Estimates

Preliminary damage estimates for Nicaragua, Honduras and the rest of Central America stand at about \$250 million. About 155,000 utility customers in the U.S. may lose power, based on a forecast model developed by university researchers.

Drillers including BP Plc and Chevron Corp. evacuated and shut oil and gas platforms in the Gulf. Phillips 66 said it would shut the Alliance plant south of New Orleans, and the U.S. Coast Guard limited vessel traffic in the region.

Platforms in the Gulf of Mexico account for about 17 percent of U.S. oil output and 4 percent of gas production. Roughly 45 percent of petroleum refining capacity is on the coast. Gulf gas output may drop as much as 1.4 billion cubic feet a day, according to Shunondo Basu, an analyst at Bloomberg New Energy Finance.

Nate will dump rain across U.S. Gulf Coast states, the eastern Tennessee Valley and southern Appalachians through the weekend, with some areas getting as much as 10 inches, the hurricane center said. That's "definitely" doing damage to cotton there and slowing harvesting, said Donald Keeney, a senior meteorologist with MDA Weather Services.

The storm will be the third hurricane to hit the continental U.S. this year, the first time that's happened since Gustav, Dolly and Ike struck in 2008, said Phil Klotzbach, hurricane researcher at Colorado State University.

The most tropical storms and hurricanes to hit the U.S. was in 1916 when nine came ashore, Masters said.

—With assistance by Marvin G Perez, and Mark Chediak

More U.S. Gulf Oil Producers Halt Output Ahead Of Tropical Storm Nate

By Ernest Scheyder

[Reuters](#), October 6, 2017

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

Another Storm, This One Called Nate, Takes Aim At Gulf Coast

By Katy Reckdahl And Alan Blinder

[New York Times](#), October 6, 2017

NEW ORLEANS — Laurent Paige, 66, waved to his neighbor on Friday from his front-porch swing in the Broadmoor neighborhood of this city.

"I'm ready — I got my life jacket," he hollered, pantomiming some swim strokes.

New Orleans residents like Mr. Paige were keeping an eye on Tropical Storm Nate, the latest system of this busy Atlantic hurricane season. It strengthened into a hurricane on Friday night and could hit the Gulf Coast late Saturday or early Sunday.

While forecasters believe that the brunt of the storm will slide east of New Orleans, Mr. Paige was taking no chances and stockpiled bottled water, batteries and ready-to-eat food.

And yet: "I really don't think that this storm, Nate, is anything to be scared of," he said with the confidence of someone who has endured more than six decades of hurricane seasons. What did worry him, though, was the water that will fall and accumulate — and might not move for a while.

In the past, New Orleans residents feared that the levees that protected the city would give way, and much of the city was flooded when the levees did just that in 2005, after Hurricane Katrina. Now concerns have shifted to the city's antiquated and hobbled interior-drainage system, which has been plagued by breakdowns.

With the city relying on a network of century-old pumps, the malfunctions have left it vulnerable to flooding from even ordinary rainstorms. Now the system may have to reckon with a hurricane.

The authorities in Central America have blamed Nate for at least 22 deaths, and the storm moved quickly toward the United States on Friday. It was expected to be well into the Gulf of Mexico by Saturday morning, taunting and frustrating forecasters. Even as the outlook narrowed, the storm's strength seemed to be its central mystery.

Although Nate's sustained winds increased on Friday, they had not yet reached hurricane force — 74 miles an hour or faster — and many forecasting models suggested that the system would ultimately arrive along the coast as a powerful tropical storm. But with Nate poised to spend Saturday traversing hundreds of miles of warm Gulf waters that have a long history of strengthening storms, forecasters also cautioned that a landfall as a Category 1 hurricane remained a possibility.

"Conditions appear favorable for continued strengthening up to landfall on the northern Gulf Coast, and Nate is expected to make landfall there as a hurricane," the National Hurricane Center in Miami said on Friday night. The forecasters warned of "rapid intensification."

While the authorities remained uncertain of the storm's strength, they were becoming more confident about where it would go, and they feared it would bring a storm surge that could be life-threatening.

Officials said the eyewall of the storm was likely to pass over, or very near, southeast Louisiana before moving toward the Alabama and Mississippi coasts. A hurricane warning was in effect for parts of Alabama, Louisiana and Mississippi, and the authorities posted a hurricane watch for a stretch of the Florida Panhandle.

No hurricane has made landfall in Louisiana since 2012, when Hurricane Isaac moved ashore near the mouth of the Mississippi River. Mississippi has gone even longer without a hurricane landfall: Its last was Katrina in 2005.

"I would ask the public not to look at the center of circulation, not to guess where the storm is," said Lee Smithson, the executive director of the Mississippi Emergency Management Agency. "This storm will impact the entire Mississippi Gulf Coast. Our plans are no good if the public does not heed the warnings that we're putting out."

A weakened storm, most likely a tropical depression, could sweep over Virginia on Monday. But before Nate reaches that part of the country, the Hurricane Center said, the storm was likely to produce notable rainfall totals from the Gulf Coast through southern Appalachia.

Some local governments in Louisiana ordered evacuations, and New Orleans imposed a curfew that is to begin on Saturday. New Orleans officials also said people would be allowed to park their cars on raised street medians, and officials warned that high winds could leave parts of New Orleans without power for up to a week.

"There will be standing water in the streets," warned Mayor Mitch Landrieu, who urged residents not to drive and has spent his waning months in office coping with the city's drainage troubles.

The extent of problems were brought to light this summer, after a City Council hearing that looked into the extensive flooding that followed a severe thunderstorm on Aug. 5. After the storm

dumped about 10 inches of rain, hundreds of cars and properties flooded.

The problems infuriated Mr. Landrieu, who has cultivated a reputation as a pragmatic manager. After the hearing, which revealed unmanned and broken pumps and stalled drain-cleaning plans, Mr. Landrieu fired some officials, telling them that their "obfuscation" was "insulting to the public."

Now Mr. Landrieu's makeshift, rapidly developed response will be tested, as will the team he appointed to deal with the drainage problems. The system has, so far, shown signs of improvement. Still, after a rainstorm went over New Orleans on Monday, several cars were mired in knee-deep water.

With the latest storm approaching, a handful of pumps are still inoperable, and city officials said they had made arrangements to monitor and staff all pumping stations. Even with additional personnel, supported by National Guard troops who were deployed to New Orleans ahead of the storm, the city will still face the challenge of running the system without a fully functioning network of steam turbines that provide power.

They are likely to have little choice but to shut off some pumps in order to turn on others where the flooding could be more severe.

During the rainstorm on Monday, Mr. Paige said the water rose above the curb. That made him uneasy, especially because he had already used a tire iron to open his catch basin's heavy lid and clean out debris.

He was hoping, even with weeks left to go in the hurricane season, that the crisis would be nearing its end.

"It's getting too late for more hurricanes," he said. "It's October. Nate is going to be it. It'll be the last one."

So this city hoped.

Hurricane Warning For Northern Gulf Coast As Nate To Strike Saturday Night; New Orleans At Risk

By Jason Samenow And Brian McNoldy
[Washington Post](#), October 6, 2017

(This article, first published Friday morning, was updated at 11:00 p.m. based on the latest National Hurricane Center advisory.)

After killing at least 22 people in Nicaragua and Costa Rica, intensifying Tropical Storm Nate is on a collision course with the northern U.S. Gulf

Coast. Southeast Louisiana, including vulnerable New Orleans, lies in the path.

The storm, which is predicted to strengthen into a hurricane, should make landfall between late Saturday night or early Sunday morning. Damaging winds and flooding threaten the region from roughly Morgan City, La., to Pensacola, Fla.

Along the coast, near and just to the east of where the storm center moves ashore, a storm surge or rise in ocean water of several feet above normally dry land is expected. "Life-threatening storm surge flooding is likely along portions of the northern Gulf Coast, and a storm surge warning has been issued from Morgan City, Louisiana, to the Okaloosa/Walton county line in Florida," the National Hurricane Center said.

The Hurricane Center has issued hurricane warnings for southeastern Louisiana and coastal Mississippi and Alabama, including New Orleans, Biloxi and Mobile. Rainbands and tropical-storm force winds could begin there as soon as Saturday afternoon.

"[P]reparations to protect life and property should be rushed to completion in these areas," the Hurricane Center said.

Over the warm waters of the Caribbean, strengthened and became much better-organized Friday afternoon and evening. At 11 p.m. Friday, it packed 70 mph maximum winds and was entering the southern Gulf of Mexico. The storm is booking to the north-northwest at 22 mph.

On Saturday, the storm could gain more strength as it traverses the Gulf before slamming into the U.S. Gulf Coast on Saturday night or early Sunday.

While the official National Hurricane Center forecast indicates Nate will be a Category 1 hurricane at its U.S. landfall with 85 mph winds, because it is passing over areas of very warm water, there is also the outside chance it becomes a destructive Category 2 or 3 hurricane.

The track forecast is more certain, and the majority of model simulations have converged on landfall between Southeast Louisiana and the Alabama-Florida border. Of course, exactly where in this zone the storm comes ashore is important, as the core of strongest winds is likely to be fairly small and the storm's most severe hazards will tend to occur near and just to the east of where it makes landfall.

New Orleans in focus

Around New Orleans, while damaging winds

are a possibility, the main concerns are the storm surge and potential for flooding rain.

If the storm makes landfall just west of the city, it could push a surge of 5 to 8 feet above normally dry land, causing significant inundation. Landfall east of the city would reduce the surge potential some.

In a worst-case surge scenario, the National Weather Service warns that "large areas of deep inundation" could occur, causing "structural damage to buildings, with several washing away." It also said roads could be washed out with "major damage to marinas, docks, boardwalks and piers."

Two to four inches or more of rain are forecast in New Orleans, enough to cause localized flooding, the Weather Service said. Because Nate will move through the region relatively quickly, it will limit the potential for more serious rainfall. The Advocate, a news organization serving New Orleans, wrote that several of the city's pumping stations, which help dislodge floodwaters, are not at full capacity, which could cause problems if rainfall is at the high end of projections.

The broader Gulf Coast and eastern United States

The last time this part of the coastline experienced a hurricane landfall was Category 1 Hurricane Isaac in late August 2012, and Nate should produce similar impacts.

Because the worst weather is expected near and just east of the storm center, areas east of New Orleans, including Biloxi, Mobile and Pensacola, are somewhat more likely to experience serious impacts, including damaging wind gusts, a storm surge of several feet and at least several inches of rain.

After Nate crosses the coast, it is likely to carry a serious swath of heavy rainfall to the north and northeast between Sunday and early next week. The Southern Appalachians, in particular, may face a flash flooding risk Sunday and Monday — as at least 3 to 6 inches of rain could fall in a short time.

Hurricane Nate Makes Landfall Near Mouth Of Mississippi River

U.S. Gulf Coast braces for heavy rainfall, flooding and severe winds

By Douglas Belkin

[Wall Street Journal](#), October 7, 2017

Full-text stories from the Wall Street Journal are available to Journal subscribers by clicking the link.

Hurricane Nate Makes Landfall On The Gulf Coast

By Jess Bidgood And John Schwartz

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

BILOXI, Miss. — This year's crushing hurricanes have submerged Houston, wrecked the Florida Keys and decimated Puerto Rico, but spared the central Gulf Coast — at least until now.

Hurricane Nate, the fourth hurricane to lash the United States in just over six weeks, gained strength on Saturday and made landfall in southeast Louisiana, near the mouth of the Mississippi River, as a Category 1 system.

The governors of Alabama, Florida, Louisiana and Mississippi declared states of emergency ahead of the storm, and counties along the coast issued curfews and ordered evacuations.

"Sooner or later, living here, you're going to get hit," said Rich Hazen, 52, of Diamondhead, Miss., as he stopped for a coffee, having already prepared his generator, cleared his yard and gathered drinking water ahead of the storm.

After amassing power in the Gulf, the hurricane raced toward land and was lashing coastal cities with rain by late afternoon. Some areas were expected to receive 6 to 10 inches of rainfall as the storm passed through, although forecasters said that a "life-threatening" storm surge, or an abnormal rise in water levels of up to several feet, as well as wind were likely to cause the biggest problems.

Gov. John Bel Edwards of Louisiana said on Saturday afternoon that Nate was moving at "an extremely fast rate" of 26 miles an hour, which he said was "almost unheard-of for a storm of this type."

Even though its speed would limit the amount of time it could deluge any single place, Mr. Edwards said, "this is a very dangerous storm nonetheless."

"It has proven to be very deadly in Honduras and Nicaragua and that area," Mr. Edwards said. "We have to make sure we are not taking it lightly." At least 22 storm-related deaths have been reported in Central America.

The hurricane hit the same stretch of coast that is, in many ways, still recovering from Hurricane Katrina in 2005. At the 17th Street

Canal between New Orleans and Metairie, La., workers from the Army Corps of Engineers lowered a set of enormous gates at the mouth of the canal. On Friday, divers checked the beds that the gates rest on to make sure that they would be able to close.

In 2005, there were no gates there or at the three other rainwater drainage canals in New Orleans. Katrina's surge pushed water from Lake Pontchartrain deep into the canals. When levees along those canals breached, much of the city was inundated, and stayed underwater for weeks, until the breaches could be closed and the neighborhoods pumped dry. The corps later acknowledged the hurricane protection system it built was "a system in name only."

Now the corps is building permanent pumping stations at the very end of these canals. Until then, a structure of gates and temporary pumps has been built to protect nearby neighborhoods.

Mayor Mitch Landrieu of New Orleans said at a news conference Saturday that he expected the city's pump system to function effectively. Of the 120 pumps, 108 were working. "We have plenty enough to deal with the potential rain," he said. "Everything that we can see, we think we can handle."

The city could be without power for as long as a week, officials said. As for the question of how protective the city's \$14.6 billion system of levees, flood walls and gates would be against Nate, Mr. Landrieu expressed cautious optimism. "There is limited or no risk for storm surge in the city of New Orleans," he added.

In the afternoon, as Nate's outer bands hit New Orleans, rain pounded the streets, pushed by heavy gusts. Pedestrians took off running or huddled under overhangs.

Nia Johnson, 23, who lives on Alvar Street a few dozen blocks from the Mississippi River, said that she and her family had planned to pile into the car and drive to Lafayette, La., because the streets of her area "always flood." The power would almost certainly go out because of the high winds, she said, leaving them unable to cook for days.

Many of the larger chain establishments in the French Quarter had closed. But along Bourbon Street, the daiquiri and pizza-slice joints were open, and music spilled out of bars like the Beach, where customers wearing fleur-de-lis-

covered ponchos were drinking and watching college football.

Bridesmaids tried to stay dry in front of Arnaud's restaurant, where a Rolls-Royce waited for the bride and groom. Around the corner, a wedding party was out on a second-floor balcony despite the splitting rain.

Farther east, in Biloxi, a casino city that lost 6,000 structures in Hurricane Katrina, officials urged residents to prepare for Nate as quickly as possible. The Mississippi Gaming Commission ordered all coastal casinos closed.

Vincent Creel, the public affairs manager in Biloxi, said Hurricanes Harvey and Irma, which passed west and east of the area, had served as stark reminders of a hurricane's havoc.

"It's been to the left, to the right, and now right to us," Mr. Creel said.

In the coastal cities of Gulf Shores and Orange Beach, Ala., officials issued curfews and ordered mandatory evacuations in low-lying areas, including all beachfront condos and duplexes. Streets normally filled with traffic were desolate, drubbed by the rain, and beaches were empty except for whipping red flags. Gas stations ran out of fuel.

Just a few hours earlier, there had been an air of calm along the coast.

Merlin and Suzie DeCorte, of Metairie, La., stopped at the R & O restaurant with their son Jacob, 8, near the 17th Street Canal in New Orleans, all wearing Louisiana State University T-shirts.

"It didn't seem like it was going to be that bad," Ms. DeCorte said of the storm. They had more time, she said, to get away from the city if needed.

In Gulfport, La., Mr. Hazen and his wife, Dawn, were completing their errands with a decided sense of normalcy.

"Church hasn't been canceled for this evening," Ms. Hazen said.

"And Waffle House is still open," Mr. Hazen said, citing the ever-reliable barometer of Southern disaster.

"If they close," Ms. Hazen said, "then you know you're in trouble."

Hurricane Nate Makes Landfall At Mouth Of Mississippi River, Damaging Winds And Surge Coming Ashore

By Greg Porter

[Washington Post](#), October 7, 2017

(This story was last updated at 10:05 p.m. to reflect the latest National Hurricane Center advisory and observations along the coast from the hurricane.)

The center of Hurricane Nate made landfall at the mouth of the Mississippi River at 8 p.m. Saturday evening with maximum sustained winds of 85 mph. The core of the Category 1 storm is surging north at 20 mph — a very fast speed for hurricanes in the Gulf of Mexico (in fact, the fastest on record), toward coastal Mississippi and Alabama. Rain bands had already reached the zone from southeast Louisiana to the western panhandle of Florida earlier in the day, and conditions have been deteriorating.

As the storm continues northeastward, a second landfall is likely to occur along the Mississippi or Alabama coastline later Saturday evening.

The latest

The inner bands of the storm are coming onshore the northern Gulf Coast, and wind speeds and rain intensity will continue increasing Saturday evening. The most severe storm effects are mostly focusing east of New Orleans.

When the center of the storm approaches and crosses the Mississippi-Alabama coastline between 10 p.m. and 1 a.m. (9 and midnight central), sustained tropical storm-force winds are likely and hurricane-force gusts are possible.

At 9 p.m., a buoy offshore of the Louisiana coast reported a gust of nearly 90 mph. When the storm made landfall near the mouth of the Mississippi River, just before 8 p.m., a nearby weather station clocked a gust to 74 mph.

Just before 7 p.m., water levels in Mobile had risen 3.5 feet above normal in Mobile and storm surging flooding was reported in the region.

A similar rise in water was observed in Shell Beach, Louisiana, which is southeast of New Orleans.

Coastal Mississippi was also experiencing storm surge flooding.

Numerous waterspouts (tornadoes over water) have been observed along the coast, prompting a tornado watch from roughly Gulfport, Miss. to Pensacola, Fla..

Hurricane warnings are in place from Grand Isle, La., to the Alabama border with Florida. A dangerous combination of damaging winds — gusting over 80 mph at times — severe coastal flooding and torrential rain are likely in this region.

Because the core of the storm is passing east of New Orleans, the hurricane warning was changed to a tropical storm warning there.

Nate is the ninth hurricane to form in the Atlantic this season, which is the highest total since the infamous 2012 season featuring Hurricane Sandy.

The storm, which started forming earlier this week in the southwestern Caribbean, reportedly killed 25 people as it passed along Central America.

Since Friday, Nate has steadily become better organized over the warm waters of the Caribbean and southern Gulf of Mexico. Some wind shear prevented the storm from gaining more strength prior to landfall.

Storm surge and damaging wind gusts are the most pressing hazards

Nate made landfall as a strong Category 1 hurricane. Hurricane-force wind gusts are likely to affect some locations from Southeast Louisiana to the near the Alabama-Florida border. These winds could cause downed trees and power outages, as well as some structural damage. The most severe damage will tend to be concentrated in a relatively narrow zone near and just to the east of the storm center. Hurricane-force winds extend about 35 miles from the center, mainly on the east side.

But wind may not be the most dangerous hazard from Nate.

The most immediate threat for the coast will be storm surge generated from the hurricane. Storm surge is best thought of as a general rise in the water level at the coast as the storm comes ashore. It does not include waves on top of it. Water levels as high as seven to 11 feet above normally dry ground are expected in the hardest-hit parts, which the National Hurricane Center expects to be from roughly from the mouth of the Mississippi River to the Mississippi-Alabama border. Around that — as far west as Grand Isle, La., and as far east as the Okaloosa-Walton County line in Florida, less severe but still problematic water rises are anticipated — and this whole zone is under a storm-surge warning.

“Unfortunately, locations from Grand Isle, La., to Panama City, Fla., will have high tide around midnight, coinciding with landfall and peak storm surge, maximizing coastal inundation anywhere east of the landfall point,” said Brian McNoldy, Capital Weather Gang’s tropical weather expert.

On top of the surge, there are giant waves. Nate is already generating wave heights upward

of 24 feet in the Gulf of Mexico. While heights seen in open water are unlikely to make it to shore, battering waves are likely to accompany surge along the coast, especially to the east of the center.

Forecast trending to the east of New Orleans

The first round of model runs Saturday morning showed a bit of an eastward shift in Nate's forecast. This track has transpired, keeping New Orleans on the west, and generally less intense, side of the storm.

There had been some concern about the city's ability to manage Nate's storm water, as its pumping system is still reeling from several heavy rain events over the summer, with 11 of the 109 citywide pumps still out of service as of earlier this week.

After landfall

Nate will also be carrying a lot of moisture and promises to drop a large amount of rainfall, despite the fact that the storm is moving quite fast.

A widespread two to six inches of rain is expected to fall along its track through Sunday. Higher amounts are likely in spots. All of this rain will fall in under 24 hours, so flash flooding will be a concern.

Because the storm is moving so fast, tropical-storm-force winds, which could down trees and cause power outages, may extend fairly far inland through much of Alabama. The National Hurricane Center predicts it could sustain tropical-storm strength into Sunday evening, when it should be passing through Tennessee.

Both the "cone of uncertainty" for Nate's future path and the rainfall forecast for the system include the Mid-Atlantic and Northeast as well. What's left of Nate will pass west of Washington on Sunday, but we will still be close enough to tap into some much-needed rain.

Capital Weather Gang's Jason Samenow and Angela Fritz contributed to this story.

Weakening Nate Brings Rain, Tornado Warnings To U.S. South

By Rod Nickel And Jessica Resnick-Ault
[Reuters](#), October 10, 2017

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

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

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

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

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.

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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FEMA Head Says Puerto Rican Politics Slowed Storm Response

By Christopher Flavelle

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

The Trump administration's emergency management director said political infighting in Puerto Rico has slowed the pace of recovery from Hurricane Maria.

"Politics between Republicans and Democrats is bad enough – but in Puerto Rico, politics is even worse," Brock Long, administrator of the Federal Emergency Management Agency, said at a briefing with reporters Monday in Washington. "When you can't get elected officials at the local level to come to a joint field office because they disagree with the politics of the governor that's there, it makes things difficult."

Almost three weeks after Maria struck Puerto Rico, just 15 percent of the island's electricity customers have power, according to numbers posted on a website run by the government of Puerto Rico. Half the island lacks phone service, and about 40 percent of households lack access to potable water. Long said the main cause of the slow response lay with the political leaders on the devastated island, not with his agency, which is charged with responding to emergencies.

"I fully believe we did everything we could," he said.

While Long didn't mention any particular officials by name, he has previously criticized the mayor of San Juan, Carmen Yulin Cruz, as insufficiently involved in the effort. Cruz and President Donald Trump have been at odds since a week after the hurricane, with the mayor accusing Trump of not doing enough to save lives.

After acting Homeland Security Secretary Elaine Duke called the federal government's response to Maria "a good-news story," Cruz responded: "If anybody out there is listening to us, we are dying and you are killing us with the inefficiency and the bureaucracy."

Trump hit back on Twitter.

"Such poor leadership ability by the Mayor of San Juan, and others in Puerto Rico, who are not able to get their workers to help," Trump tweeted Sept. 30. "They want everything to be done for them when it should be a community effort."

Efforts to reach Cruz's spokesman on Monday were unsuccessful. In an interview with Bloomberg last month, however, Cruz said, "I have only one goal, and it is saving lives."

A message left with the commonwealth's Washington office wasn't returned. But in an interview Oct. 4, Puerto Rico Governor Ricardo Rossello, who aligns with Democrats, said that he saw no point in fanning controversy in a crisis.

"After all is said and done, after all the noise is reduced, the only thing that really matters is results, outcomes and how the people of Puerto Rico end up," said Rossello.

"It is my job that I stay focused, that I keep my team focused and that I eliminate any other narrative that might be distracting to that. I think in general that has been my MO, but certainly under these circumstances, it was pretty clear to me that we had to focus on outcomes," he said.

Long also rejected the idea that FEMA should have sent more provisions to Puerto Rico before Maria made landfall, arguing that if the agency had delivered more food, water or fuel beforehand, the supplies could have been damaged by the storm.

"There's only so much you can store safely," Long said. "It's not solely on our shoulders. It never should be."

The FEMA chief also said it wasn't his agency's role or responsibility to move supplies to individual homes. "FEMA never takes commodities door to door," Long said. And he said the answer to more frequent and severe storms wasn't changing how FEMA operates, but getting individuals to do more to prepare for disasters.

"It's got to be more than FEMA improving," Long said. "If you're relying on FEMA to come in and be the first responder, then the system's not going to work very well."

— With assistance by Jonathan Levin, and Naureen S Malik

FEMA Administrator: Puerto Rico's Politics, Lack Of Unity, Hindering Hurricane Response

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

The federal response to Hurricane Maria has been hampered by Puerto Rico's political culture and a lack of unity among leaders on the island, Federal Emergency Management Agency administrator William "Brock" Long said Monday in a briefing with reporters at FEMA headquarters in Washington.

In the continental U.S., "politics between Republicans and Democrats is bad enough, but in Puerto Rico, politics is even worse in many

cases,” Long said, adding that divisions on the island had undermined unity of purpose there.

His comments came at the end of an hour-long session in which he and two U.S. military generals defended the Trump administration’s response to the devastating hurricane. Long singled out the total collapse of communications across Puerto Rico as the greatest impediment to delivering food, water, fuel and other supplies to desperate survivors of the storm, which hit the island Sept. 20.

Reporters also were given a glimpse of the National Response Coordination Center, a war room that’s been operating around the clock since Hurricane Harvey hit Texas in late August.

“You definitely have battle fatigue,” Long said of the protracted tropical storm season in which four hurricanes have made U.S. landfall.

Long’s stated desire has been to be apolitical, he said Monday. But Long is a political appointee of the president — he was overwhelmingly confirmed by the Senate in June — and the administration’s response to Maria has been subject to abundant criticism.

Most prominently, San Juan’s mayor, Carmen Yulín Cruz, has expressed outrage at what she sees as a failure of the administration to deliver life-sustaining resources. She posted a series of tweets this weekend accusing FEMA of doing nothing when hospitals were in crisis.

President Trump has attacked Cruz on Twitter, claiming she has shown poor leadership, and he also has blamed Puerto Rico’s poor infrastructure for much of the humanitarian crisis since the storm hit.

Long, speaking Sunday on ABC’s “This Week,” said he’d long ago “filtered out” the mayor. On Monday he echoed that comment. A reporter asked him if he viewed criticism of FEMA as justified or as simply a political attack on the administration; that’s when he said the political divide in Puerto Rico is worse than it is in the mainland United States.

“What I’ve experienced firsthand is, a successful response relies on unity, okay,” Long said. “To give you an example, when you can’t get elected officials at the local level to come to a joint field office because they disagree with the politics of the governor that’s there, it makes things difficult and the information fragmented.”

Puerto Rico Gov. Richard Rosselló generally has expressed appreciation for the administration’s efforts.

Asked if there’s a lack of unity, Long said, “The unity is not where I want it to be when it comes to a unified effort.”

Reporters on the ground in Puerto Rico have heard repeatedly that there was little sign of the government, or none at all, in the days after the storm hit the island, especially in remote rural and mountainous areas that found themselves isolated. The ongoing recovery effort has been mired in bureaucracy and frustration, residents say.

People often find themselves filling out paperwork in English and walking out from encounters with officials with no assurance that anything they have requested will materialize.

In the city of Yabucoa, for example, FEMA officials conducted assessments of needs and have been working him, but none of the necessary supplies have materialized for the city’s residents, according to the mayor. There is an ongoing, desperate need for tarps, because many people lost their roofs. Heavy downpours hit the region over the weekend.

Lt. Gen. Todd Semonite, Commanding General of the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers, attended Monday’s FEMA briefing and offered new metrics on the scale of the disaster. He said officials need to remove debris that could fill 350 Olympic-size swimming pools. An estimated 60,000 homes need some kind of help, he said.

As for the critical issue of electrical power, he said 14 percent of the grid is up and running. The island needs 2,700 megawatts of electricity to operate and at last count had 376 megawatts available. Four hundred 75-foot-tall transmission towers were “wiped out” by the storm, he said. Semonite said a dam in western Puerto Rico continues to erode and will need to be rebuilt.

On Monday, Brig. Gen. Jose Reyes, assistant adjutant general of the Puerto Rican National Guard, said the opening of the port of Ponce in the south will speed the delivery of life-sustaining resources to storm survivors. Asked why such efforts have taken so long, Reyes blamed the double-whammy of hurricanes Irma and Maria.

“You have to understand, this is a situation never seen before,” Reyes said in an interview. “We were hit by two hurricanes, Cat 5, within less than 10 days. We were not even getting back on our feet after Irma, then suddenly we got hit by Maria. It’s like getting all the leadership in a warehouse and you turn off the lights and the

communications, and tell them, all right, get it fixed. When you go to Texas, or you go to Florida, help will come through the roads. And it may hit a portion of Texas, but not the whole state."

Puerto Rico's long-term rebuilding plan is beyond the responsibility of FEMA or the Army Corps, the federal officials said. They said that, under federal law, their job is to restore the island's infrastructure to the level of function it had before the hurricane, but that long-term resiliency will require an additional effort and funding from Congress.

Since before this extraordinary hurricane season began, Long has said in interviews that FEMA is not a first responder but a supporting agency answering requests from governors. He repeated that Monday.

"We're not designed to be first responders," Long said. "We're designed to support response and recovery operations."

He later explained that the problem in Puerto Rico is diminished capacity: "A large portion of local workers as well as state workers were disaster victims. We had to play a greater first responder role than typically we would on the continental United States. We're not really designed to do that in many cases, speaking honestly."

Hernandez reported from San Juan, Puerto Rico.

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.

San Juan Mayor Pleads For Help: 'We Need Water!'

FEMA Director Brock Long dismissed her complaints as "political noise."

By Daniel Marans

[Huffington Post](#), October 8, 2017

Carmen Yulin Cruz, the mayor of San Juan, Puerto Rico, said on Sunday that despite the compassion of the U.S. public, the federal government "does not want to help" Puerto Rico.

"WE NEED WATER!" she added in an early morning tweet.

Close to three weeks after Hurricane Maria hammered Puerto Rico, much of the island remains without running water after Hurricane , according to a Thursday report in The Miami Herald. Many residents are still bathing and collecting drinking water in limited quantities from freshwater sources, or using bottled water provided by the U.S. military.

In an interview on ABC News' "This Week" on Sunday, Brock Long, director of the Federal Emergency Management Agency, dismissed Yulin Cruz's comments as "political noise."

"We filtered out the mayor a long time ago," Long told "This Week" co-anchor Martha Raddatz. "We don't have time for the political noise."

"The bottom line is, is that we are making progress every day in conjunction with" Puerto Rico Gov. Ricardo Rossello, Long said. "And in regards to the power failure, we're restringing a very fragile system every day."

Cruz and the Trump administration have been engaged in a running battle over the adequacy of the federal response to the damage cause by Hurricane Maria, a Category 4 storm that devastated the island.

Responding to criticism on Sept. 29 that aid from the United States was arriving in Puerto Rico too slowly, President Donald Trump chalked it up to the logistical difficulty of getting aid to an island "surrounded by water. Big water, ocean water."

In televised remarks that same day that went viral, Cruz lit into FEMA and put the onus on Trump to fix the situation.

"Mr. Trump, I am begging you to take charge and save lives," she declared "After all, that is one of the founding principles of the United States of North America. If not, the world will see how we are treated not as second-class citizens but as animals that can be disposed of. Enough is enough."

Her complaints prompted a public feud with Trump, who took her comments as a personal affront.

In a series of tweets, Trump accused Cruz of acting on the advice of mainland Democrats and argued that she was showing "such poor leadership ability." He added that Cruz and other Puerto Rican leaders "want everything to be done for them," a comment that prompted charges that Trump was deliberately employing a stereotype of Latinos as lazy.

The attacks from Trump drew widespread condemnation from Democrats, who noted that Trump launched the broadside while spending the weekend at his golf resort in Bedminster, New Jersey. Cruz, by contrast, had been seen walking through waist-deep water with a megaphone as part of her personal participation in rescue efforts.

The tiff continued when Trump visited Puerto Rico on last Tuesday, attending a meeting with Puerto Rican officials, including Cruz. Trump raised eyebrows by saying Hurricane Maria was not "a real catastrophe" like Hurricane Katrina, given that many more people died in the 2005 storm that battered Louisiana and Mississippi. He

also tossed paper towel rolls to a crowd of Puerto Ricans as if he were shooting basketballs.

Cruz responded by calling Trump the "mis-communicator-in-chief," denouncing his visit as "terrible and abominable."

This story has been updated with details on the continuing disputes between Cruz and the Trump administration.

San Juan Mayor Slams FEMA

By Mallory Shelbourne

[The Hill](#), October 8, 2017

San Juan Mayor Carmen Yulín Cruz early Sunday went after the Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA), claiming it has not responded to recent requests for help as Puerto Rico recovers from Hurricane Maria.

"Power collapses in San Juan hospital with 2 patients being transferred out. Have requested support from @FEMA_Brock NOTHING! @cnnbrk," Cruz wrote in one tweet.

"Power collapses in San Juan hospital with 4 patients now being transferred out. Have requested support from FEMA. NOTHING! @DavidBegnaud," she wrote in another to a CBS reporter, in an apparent attempt to call attention to circumstances on the United States territory.

Increasingly painful to understand the american people want to help and US Gov does not want to help. WE NEED WATER! @DavidBegnaud— Carmen Yulín Cruz (@CarmenYulinCruz) October 8, 2017

FEMA Administrator Brock Long responded to Cruz's criticisms during an appearance on a Sunday show, saying the agency "filtered out the mayor a long time ago."

"We don't have time for the political noise," Long said.

"As far as the political noise, we filter that out, keep our heads down and continue to make progress and push forward restoring essential functions for Puerto Rico," he later added.

The Trump administration has come under scrutiny in recent weeks over its response to the two hurricanes that ravaged Puerto Rico last month, with critics like Cruz calling it "inefficient."

FEMA Chief On San Juan Mayor: We 'Filter' Out Political Noise

By Mallory Shelbourne

[The Hill](#), October 8, 2017

The head of the Federal Emergency Management Agency on Sunday said FEMA has "filtered out" ongoing criticism about the agency's

response to hurricane relief in Puerto Rico from San Juan Mayor Carmen Yulín Cruz, calling it "political noise."

"We filtered out the mayor a long time ago. We don't have time for the political noise," FEMA administrator Brock Long told ABC News when asked about early morning tweets by Cruz.

"Power collapses in San Juan hospital with 2 patients being transferred out. Have requested support from @FEMA_Brock NOTHING! @cnnbrk," Cruz wrote.

"Power collapses in San Juan hospital with 4 patients now being transferred out. Have requested support from FEMA. NOTHING! @DavidBegnaud," she wrote in a separate tweet.

Cruz's tweets come as the Trump administration faces scrutiny over its response to Puerto Rico, with critics saying it's been slower than the response to states in the mainland that were also battered by hurricanes this season. Cruz has been a vocal critic.

But Long insisted that the agency is focused on the recovery and said there will be a "greater conversation" with Congress about rebuilding the United States territory.

"As far as the political noise, we filter that out, keep our heads down and continue to make progress and push forward restoring essential functions for Puerto Rico," he said.

Long also noted that almost 85 percent of FEMA is deployed after the series of hurricanes that have hit the United States, most recently Hurricane Nate, which has been downgraded to a tropical storm and is moving through the South.

San Juan Mayor's Complaints Dismissed As 'Political Noise' By FEMA Chief

By Ellie Smith

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

The San Juan mayor's continuing complaints about the federal emergency response to the devastation in Puerto Rico from Hurricane Maria are just "political noise," said Brock Long, administrator of the Federal Emergency Management Agency.

"We filtered out the mayor a long time ago," Long told ABC News "This Week" co-anchor Martha Raddatz on Sunday. "We don't have time for the political noise."

The mayor of Puerto Rico's capital city, Carmen Yulín Cruz, has slammed President Donald Trump and the federal response to the

damage to the U.S. territory since Hurricane Maria struck over two weeks ago.

Cruz continued her criticism in a tweet this morning, claiming that San Juan had requested support from FEMA following power outages but had received "nothing," and that the U.S. government "does not want to help."

Long said FEMA is flying patients from Puerto Rican hospitals without power to a massive Naval hospital ship, the U.S.N.S. Comfort docked at San Juan.

He added that in regard to ongoing work to restore Puerto Rico's power grid, "we're restringing a very fragile system every day. As we make progress, simple thunderstorms pass through, knock the progress out."

With another hurricane, Nate, having hit the Gulf Coast early today – the fourth to make landfall in the U.S. this hurricane season – the FEMA chief told Raddatz that the emergency management agency is stretched thin.

"Money's not the issue. Congress has been on top of that working with us," Long said.

But, he said, the "bottom line is ... that over nearly 85 percent of my entire agency is deployed right now. We're still working massive issues in [response to hurricanes] Harvey, Irma, as well as the issues in Puerto Rico and the Virgin Islands, and now this one."

"In regards to resources, of course we're strained," Long said.

He said, however, he is confident in FEMA's relief efforts to respond to the latest storm as it heads through the U.S., saying, "The bottom line is, is that we're positioned to support Nate very well."

FEMA Head Brock Long Dismisses San Juan Mayor's Complaints: 'Political Noise'

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

FEMA Administrator Brock Long said on Sunday that as his agency responds to the crisis in Puerto Rico, it's also "filtered out" San Juan Mayor Carmen Yulín Cruz, adding: "We don't have time for the political noise."

More than two weeks after Hurricane Maria lashed the island, killing 36 people, Cruz tweeted Sunday: "Increasingly painful to understand the american people want to help and US Gov does not want to help. WE NEED WATER!" She later wrote, "Power collapses in San Juan hospital with

2 patients being transferred out. Have requested support from @FEMA_Brock NOTHING!"

"We filtered out the mayor a long time ago," Long told ABC News' Martha Raddatz on "This Week" Sunday, after Raddatz mentioned the tweets. "We don't have time for the political noise. The bottom line is, is that we are making progress everyday in conjunction with the governor."

Cruz and President Trump have traded shots in the weeks after the monster storm made landfall. Late last month, the mayor appeared on television in a black shirt with white letters that read, "HELP US, WE ARE DYING." Cruz argued that federal aid had been slow to reach Puerto Rico following Maria, which knocked out power to the entire island.

Trump tweeted the following day: "Such poor leadership ability by the Mayor of San Juan, and others in Puerto Rico, who are not able to get their workers to help." He added that Cruz was "very complimentary only a few days ago," but "has now been told by the Democrats that you must be nasty to Trump."

Later, Cruz wore a shirt emblazoned with the word "NASTY" for an interview with Univision.

Trump visited the island last Tuesday. Afterwards, while Cruz said she hoped new channels of communication with the White House would "put in motion what is needed" to save lives, she also said Trump sometimes was more a "miscommunicator in chief" than a commander in chief.

"In regards to the power failure, we are restringing a very fragile system everyday," Long explained. "As we make progress, simple thunderstorms pass through, knock the progress out."

Rebuilding the island, he said, "is going to be a greater conversation for the Congress in conjunction with the governor."

When hospitals have power failures, intensive care unit patients are being flown to the USNS Comfort, according to Long.

"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," Long said in the interview.

FEMA Director: 'We Filtered Out' San Juan Mayor 'A Long Time Ago'

By Connor O'Brien

[Politico](#), October 8, 2017

The chief of the Federal Emergency Management Agency said Sunday that criticism of relief efforts in Puerto Rico by the mayor of San Juan had been "filtered out."

In an interview on ABC's "This Week," FEMA administrator Brock Long brushed off criticism from San Juan Mayor Carmen Yulín Cruz, who has slammed the Trump administration's response to Hurricane Maria. Cruz tweeted earlier Sunday that requests for assistance from FEMA in response to power outages at a San Juan hospital had gone unanswered.

"We filtered out the mayor a long time ago. We don't have time for the political noise," Long said. "The bottom line is, is that we are making progress every day in conjunction with the governor."

Long said FEMA is "restringing a very fragile system every day."

"Rebuilding, rebuilding Puerto Rico is going to be a greater conversation for the Congress in conjunction with the governor on ... what the way forward is in the future of Puerto Rico," Long said.

Long added that while funding "is not the issue" for FEMA, the agency is still "strained."

"Money is not the issue. Congress has been on top of that working with us," Long said. "Back on Oct. 1, we had another \$6.7 billion added to the disaster relief fund. And we continue to update them on a regular basis and will ask for supplementals as needed."

"In regards to resources, of course, we're strained. You know, bottom line is, is that over nearly 85 percent of my entire agency is deployed right now," he added. "We're still working massive issues" from Hurricanes Harvey and Irma "as well as the issues in Puerto Rico and the Virgin Islands, and now this one."

'We Filtered Out' San Juan Mayor 'A Long Time Ago'

By Daniel Chaitin

[Washington Examiner](#), October 8, 2017

Federal Emergency Management Agency head Brock Long said Sunday that the federal government response to the devastation caused by Hurricane Maria in Puerto Rico doesn't have time for the "political noise" that is still coming from San Juan Mayor Carmen Yulín Cruz, who engaged in a war of words with President Trump about the situation late last month.

In a string of tweets early Sunday morning, Cruz complained that there were "power

collapses" in San Juan hospitals with two patients being transferred out, though she didn't specify by whom and to where. She tagged Long, adding "NOTHING!"

"Increasingly painful to understand the american people want to help and US Gov does not want to help. WE NEED WATER!", she said in a separate tweet, also tagging Long.

Asked to respond on ABC's "This Week," Long echoed a comment he made last weekend, saying, "we filtered out the mayor a long time ago. We don't have time for the political noise."

Long continued by explaining how FEMA is "making progress every day" in coordination with Puerto Rico Gov. Ricardo Rossello, despite setbacks caused by such things as thunderstorms.

He detailed how FEMA helped build "an entire 911 system" and works to monitor the hospital system daily in case of a power failure. He mentioned that two hospitals this past week did have power outages and to that said, "we're actually life fighting the [intensive care unit] patients out of those hospitals onto the USNS Comfort."

The vessel received four critical patients from Caguas after a power generator failure on Oct. 6, two days after responding to a hospital power outage in Humacao.

"We continue to stabilize that situation with hospitals," Long said, before asserting again that he has no appetite for political posturing.

"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," he said.

A Mayor In Puerto Rico Calls For FEMA Help. FEMA's Director Says He's "Filtering [her] Out."

By Dylan Matthews

[Vox](#), October 8, 2017

There's been sharp criticism of the Trump administration and the Federal Emergency Management Agency's response to the disaster following Hurricane Maria in Puerto Rico, not least from Carmen Yulin Cruz, the mayor of San Juan, the territory's capital and most populous city. "Increasingly painful to understand [sic] the american people want to help and US Gov does not want to help. WE NEED WATER!" Cruz tweeted Sunday morning. Indeed, more than two weeks after the storm made landfall, 43 percent of

the island still lacks water access and more than 88 percent lacks electricity. At least 34 people, and likely many more, have died of storm-related causes.

She continued: "Power collapses in San Juan hospital with 4 patients now being transferred out. Have requested support from FEMA. NOTHING! ... The Hospital had requested support from FEMA and no response. Oh sorry they are collecting data..." @CarmenYulinCruz

When ABC News's Martha Raddatz interviewed FEMA Director Brock Long on Sunday, she asked about Cruz's allegations that the agency was falling down on its recovery duties. Long did not appear fazed. Indeed, he appears to not believe the mayor's concern was worth his or the agency's time, telling Raddatz, "We filtered out the mayor a long time ago. We don't have time for the political noise."

"If there is a power failure at a hospital, which we've seen two over this past week, we're actually life-fighting the ICU patients out of those hospitals and onto the USNS Comfort," a Navy hospital ship currently supporting the island, Long said. Navy press releases confirm the island has received a total of nine critical patients from Puerto Rico hospitals after they experienced power failures.

It's not clear whether the most recent Navy-reported hospital power failure, on Saturday, is the one Cruz was referring to in her tweets; that evacuation happened at Hospital Menonita in Caguas, about 20 miles from San Juan.

Long's criticism of Cruz follows in the footsteps of President Trump, who insulted Cruz on Twitter last weekend and on Saturday night told former Arkansas Gov. Mike Huckabee in a TV interview that Cruz "did a very poor job" and was "not a capable person."

Cruz has a right to be frustrated. Since the vast majority of the island still lacks power, generator failures at hospitals are likely to recur and lives may be lost. Trump dithered in dispatching the USNS Comfort and waiving the Jones Act, which raises the cost of shipping to Puerto Rico (and the Jones waiver expired as of Sunday). As of this writing, Trump still hasn't authorized the level of infrastructure rebuilding assistance he has for Texas following Hurricane Harvey. And as the administration was overseeing this slow response, the Trump administration briefly removed data on how many Puerto Ricans still lack water and power from FEMA's website, before restoring it following public pressure.

Long's comments, however, suggest that the administration is trying to shut out criticism of the response from Cruz and other local Puerto Rican leaders.

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.

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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FEMA Chief: Employees Suffering 'Battle Fatigue' After Hurricanes

Suggests a culture shift needed in Washington to plan ahead for disasters

By Laura Kelly

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

The chief of the Federal Emergency Management Agency says its employees have "battle fatigue," having worked 12-hour shifts five days a week for the past six weeks in response to three major hurricanes.

FEMA Administrator Brock Long on Monday held a roundtable discussion about his agency's efforts, describing coordination between the administration and dozens of federal partners as "herculean."

This hurricane season, which tracks from June 1 to Nov. 30, has been one of the busiest on record and ranks at least in the top eight since records started in 1933, according to Weather.com. A total of nine hurricanes and 15 named storms have occurred, including the Category 5 tempests Harvey, Irma and Maria that ravaged Southeast Texas, Florida, Puerto Rico and the U.S. Virgin Islands.

Mr. Long has been on the job a little over three months. In that time, about 85 percent of the agency's manpower has been deployed, he said, adding that anyone who's left is tasked with "keeping the lights on" and continuing FEMA's mission as the main grant provider of the Department of Homeland Security to support state emergency preparedness.

"FEMA is not a first responder. We're not designed to be first responders," he said. "We're designed to support response and recovery operations. States and their governors are technically tasked with managing disaster response recovery and helping us set unified

disaster objectives — and locals also have a major role in executing the plans."

Mr. Long said he expects FEMA will be engaged in relief efforts in Texas, Florida and Puerto Rico for years to come, but he added that discussions need to be had about a culture shift in preparing for disasters, both natural and human-made.

"It's got to be a whole community, unified response, and that's what we've been preaching," he said. "Everybody has a role when it comes to a successful response."

Before that can happen, thousands of employees are engaged in recovery efforts in all affected areas. One of the most pressing needs facing the agency is restoring power to Puerto Rico, which has recovered only about 14 percent of its electricity-generation capacity since Hurricane Maria wiped out the entire power grid on Sept. 20.

"The most difficult aspect was total silence when it comes to communications capability, the telecom being completely out. You can't disseminate a message," Mr. Long said, adding that relief workers have used loudspeakers and dropped leaflets to relay information.

Maria also destroyed sea ports and airports in the Caribbean, forcing delays in the delivery of federal aid, said Mr. Long, noting that first responders also became disaster victims.

Lt. Gen. Todd T. Semonite of the Army Corps of Engineers is overseeing the recovery and rebuilding efforts on Puerto Rico. One of the biggest challenges is rebuilding the electrical grid, whose power plants were described by the chief engineer as "very, very old."

"They've had a lot of backlogged maintenance, and they're not overly reliable," Gen. Semonite said.

A temporary power plant has to be shipped to the island on a barge, the general said, adding that it will take about a month and a half to get the power plant up and running.

Meanwhile, communities are running on petroleum-powered generators while Army engineers rewire the island and replace hundreds of miles of downed power lines.

"It could be up [to] as many as a million [utility] poles," Gen. Semonite said. "We're still assessing how many of those were damaged."

FEMA Seeking Workers For Disaster Relief After Devastating Hurricanes

By Linley Sanders

[Newsweek](#), October 9, 2017

FEMA has put out a "Help Wanted" sign.

The Federal Emergency Management Agency, struggling to respond to 28 simultaneous natural disaster relief efforts, says it is in desperate need of temps to help victims of super-powerful hurricanes Harvey, Irma, Maria and, to a lesser extent, Nate.

The agency is advertising 29 positions, including crisis counselors, registered nurses, insurance specialists and even writers. Most temporary positions will last about four months and all locally hired workers are paid. The hiring increase comes as the agency is reportedly strapped for cash. It's 2016 budget was \$13.9 billion, but President Donald Trump has proposed cutting that by \$667 million.

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"FEMA hires local residents, who are often disaster survivors themselves, to help their fellow citizens in the recovery process," the agency said in a statement. "Local hiring allows disaster survivors to get back to work while adding to the long-term recovery of the local community."

The disaster relief is a response to four major storms that have struck the U.S in less than two months.

Hurricane Maria left thousands of Puerto Ricans displaced in shelters and killed at least 34 residents. Puerto Rico has requested \$4.6 billion from Congress to meet the residents's needs. Hurricane Maria followed Hurricane Irma, which struck Barbuda as a Category 5 hurricane and eventually swept Florida, killing at least 68. Hurricane Harvey brought 40 inches of floodwaters to Texas in August and killed 82 people, while Hurricane Nate, the most recent tropical depression to strike Alabama and Louisiana, killed at least 30 people, but did far less property damage.

Millions hit by the hurricanes remain without electricity, while others are searching for ways to rebuild their homes and businesses.

FEMA did not immediately respond to a request for comment.

Embarking On A Puerto Rican FEMA Aid Mission

[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. Source: CNN

FEMA Restores Count Showing Puerto Rico Clean Water, Power

By Ted Bridis

[Associated Press](#), October 6, 2017

The Trump administration, criticized for its slow response to hurricane victims in Puerto Rico, said Friday it had restored an online tally of how many people have access to clean drinking water and electricity. The figures had quietly disappeared from the Federal Emergency Management Agency website earlier in the week.

The republished numbers said about 56 percent of customers of the Puerto Rico Aqueduct and Sewer Authority had potable water, nearly three weeks after the storm. They said just over 9 percent of customers have electricity, although the U.S. Energy Department separately reported Friday that just over 10 percent of customers had power restored.

FEMA acknowledged it had removed the running tally early Thursday from its own website but said the same information was available elsewhere, including on a website maintained by the office of Puerto Rican Gov. Ricardo Rosselló.

The decision to remove the information fueled suspicion the Trump administration was trying to improve perceptions about its response in Puerto Rico. The island, nearly 1,000 miles southeast of Florida, suffered severe damage to its power grid and other infrastructure from the powerful storm.

FEMA said Friday the figures will remain on its Hurricane Maria website going forward.

"While some information was not included in yesterday's update to our website, at no point was the data not publicly available," FEMA spokesman William Booher said in a statement. "Reports suggesting an effort to remove any data points are simply erroneous."

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Trump To Executive Branch: Don't Worry About Puerto Rico

By Jonathan Bernstein

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

Almost three weeks since Hurricane Maria struck Puerto Rico, the island is in terrible shape.

Most people do not have electricity. Almost half do not have access to safe water. Dozens of Americans have perished. By any measure, this is an extraordinary tragedy for the nation. And yet, Trump instead has constantly signaled business-as-usual.

Is it clear that the federal government is making a serious commitment to the relief effort? Absolutely. Do we know all of what Trump is doing behind the scenes? No, although early reports were not promising.

But what the president says in public is important as well.

The executive branch bureaucracy is large and unwieldy, and will not automatically shift to do anything a president might want it to do – there are thousands of routine tasks to be completed, and all sorts of competing priorities to attend to. If presidents want the government to turn to a single purpose, they need to send clear, consistent signals that what they want to happen is now the highest immediate priority. That is simply not happening:

The weekend after Maria was when Trump kicked off his war on the NFL; ever since, he's demonstrated much more public interest in taking on protesting football players than in helping recovery in Puerto Rico.

Golf. I'm normally very hesitant to attack presidents for "vacations" or indulging in some golf. The office follows presidents wherever they go, and everyone needs exercise and even a little down time. But for Trump to keep up his vigorous schedule of golf outings over the last three weekends (and again today) is a statement that everything is normal – a statement that everyone in the bureaucracy can hear.

He's consistently downplayed the damage to Puerto Rico, saying among other things that it wasn't a "real catastrophe like Katrina."

He's also blamed Puerto Ricans: feuding with the mayor of San Juan, repeating false rumors about local truck drivers, and generally treating the people as responsible for their troubles.

In fact he's even mocked the local accent.

After personally donating \$1 million to Hurricane Harvey relief, Trump hasn't made any public donation for Puerto Rico.

He also hasn't used his Twitter account, which he considers one of his most powerful tools, to publicize support for other relief funds; nor has he thanked the five former presidents who are spearheading charity efforts.

He's allowed the Jones Act waiver to expire without plans to extend it, according to Reuters.

He has, however, repeatedly bragged about his own role and whined about how unappreciated he is – not exactly a message likely to stir others to action.

Meanwhile, Trump still has not nominated anyone for the vacant Secretary of Homeland Security position, some 10 weeks after John Kelly moved to White House chief of staff.

It all combines to send a strong message to the executive branch that there's nothing particularly extraordinary about the effort in Puerto Rico.

Of course, people at FEMA, in the military, and with the other agencies involved are for the most part serious professionals, and they will try their best whatever the president says. And it's impossible to connect any specific failure of this type by the president with any specific failure on the ground.

Overall, however, it's the president's job to push the bureaucracy in the direction of pressing priorities, and Trump – at least publicly – just isn't doing his job, and that's beyond how he's mostly abdicated his head of state responsibilities of comforting those who need comforting.

If we look at it less as a question of specific links to specific actions and more as a question of tendencies, we can say that the more he focuses the government on solving a problem, the better job it will do – and at least from what we know so far, he's doing a terrible job of it. Everyone can hope that relief efforts will mostly succeed despite presidential failure, but that's a pretty tenuous way to run a government

Trump Defends Throwing Paper Towels To Puerto Ricans

By Jacqueline Thomsen

[The Hill](#), October 7, 2017

President Trump defended tossing paper towels into a crowd at a church in Puerto Rico last week.

Trump said in an interview with former Arkansas Gov. Mike Huckabee (R) Saturday that media coverage of his trip to Puerto Rico after Hurricane Maria was unfair, using the incident during which he tossed the paper towels as an example.

"They had these beautiful, soft towels, very good towels. And I came in and there was a crowd of a lot of people, and they were screaming

and they were loving everything," Trump said. "I was having fun, they were having fun."

"They said, 'throw 'em to me! Throw 'em to me Mr. President!' Trump said, before pantomiming shooting a basketball in the same way he tossed the paper towels.

"So the next day they said, 'oh it was so disrespectful to the people.' It was just a made-up thing. And also when I walked in, the cheering was incredible."

"You were a rock star," Huckabee replied.

Trump was filmed tossing the paper towels at one of his stops on his tour of Puerto Rico Tuesday, where he helped to distribute supplies to victims of Hurricane Maria.

He also met with local officials for a briefing on recovery efforts after the storm, where he noticeably left out San Juan Mayor Carmen Yulín Cruz, who had criticized the Trump administration's response to the storm.

Trump had also attacked the media coverage of his administration's response to the storm, telling Puerto Ricans to "not believe the fake news."

Pence Promises Long-Term Help For Storm-Stricken Puerto Rico

[Bloomberg News](#), October 6, 2017

Vice President Mike Pence pledged that the federal government will continue providing assistance to Puerto Rico until the hurricane-ravaged island has fully recovered, saying there is still "a long way to go."

"We will be here for the long haul. We will be here until all the people can say with one voice 'Puerto Rico se levanta. Puerto Rico is rising'," Pence said Friday during a visit to Iglesia Santa Bernadita, a church in San Juan.

Pence, traveling to Puerto Rico two days after President Donald Trump visited with hurricane survivors and federal relief personnel, praised the government effort to provide food and resources to residents.

"But we have a long way to go. President Trump and I know this," he said. "We will see this challenge through."

Pence also said he "had faith" in Puerto Rico's governor and local leaders. Trump criticized the mayor of San Juan after she complained of inefficiency in the federal response.

The federal board overseeing Puerto Rico's troubled finances has cited estimates that the massive rebuilding effort needed could cost as

much as \$95 billion, roughly 150 percent of the island's economy. **Debt Load**

Pence said that while the focus now is getting the U.S. territory back on its feet, there will be discussions within the administration and Congress about Puerto Rico's \$74 billion debt. The island began a bankruptcy-like proceeding in May, the largest such process in the history of the U.S. municipal bond market. The island's debt-service payments have been on hold while it restructures its obligations in court.

"I'm confident we'll also be working with members of Congress to give the leadership in Puerto Rico the tools to address their long-term needs, including addressing the debt that Puerto Rico faces today," Pence said. "We'll work very closely with the leadership here in Puerto Rico as well as members of Congress."

Trump earlier this week rattled the \$3.8 trillion municipal bond market by suggesting Puerto Rico's debt will have to be wiped out. His budget director, Mick Mulvaney, and White House press secretary Sarah Sanders later walked back the president's remarks, saying the debt will have to be dealt with through the existing bankruptcy process established under a law passed last year.

Pence and second lady Karen Pence visited the U.S. Virgin Islands earlier in the day and flew over St. Croix, St. Thomas and St. John. On all three islands, they witnessed roofs ripped off houses, mangled and leafless trees, and felled power lines.

The Pences, who were also traveling with Transportation Secretary Elaine Chao, the acting Health and Human Services secretary and the new U.S. Surgeon General, appeared at church services both in St. Croix and Puerto Rico.

Congresswoman Urges Trump To Extend Puerto Rico Jones Act Waiver

By Laila Kearney

[Reuters](#), October 6, 2017

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Jones Act Waiver For Puerto Rico Expired Sunday, Not Being Extended: DHS

By Stephanie Kelly

[Reuters](#), October 9, 2017

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The Jones Act Waiver For Puerto Rico Just Expired And Won't Be Renewed

That means the U.S. island decimated by Hurricane Maria will go back to paying double the shipping costs for food and supplies.

By Jennifer Bendery

[Huffington Post](#), October 9, 2017

WASHINGTON — The Jones Act waiver for Puerto Rico expired on Sunday night and “it is not being extended at this time,” Department of Homeland Security spokesman David Lapan told HuffPost on Monday.

DHS had temporarily waived the Jones Act — an arguably outdated law that imposes exorbitant shipping costs on the U.S. island — on Sept. 28. The waiver has meant that Puerto Rico has been able to import food, fuel and supplies more quickly, and for half the costs, in the aftermath of Hurricane Maria.

With the 1920 law back in effect, the island will go back to paying much higher shipping costs to import supplies. The Jones Act requires that all goods shipped between U.S. ports be carried by American-owned and operated ships, which are more expensive vessels than others in the global marketplace. That’s meant that Puerto Rico pays double the costs for goods from the U.S. mainland compared with neighboring islands — and that U.S. vessels are making bank.

The return to higher shipping costs won’t help Puerto Rico as it tries to climb out of economic devastation. Nearly half of the 3.4 million Americans on the island still don’t have drinking water since Maria hit nearly three weeks ago. Just 15 percent have electricity. Many people still haven’t heard from loved ones, and at least 39 deaths have been attributed to the storm.

Lapan said DHS is “always prepared to review requests on a case-by-case basis and respond quickly” to possible waivers of the Jones Act. But those decisions have to be related to national defense, he said, and are not driven by cost-related matters.

“We believe that extending the waiver is unnecessary to support the humanitarian relief efforts” on Puerto Rico, Lapan said. “There is an ample supply of Jones Act-qualified vessels to ensure that cargo is able to reach” the island.

President Donald Trump, who is spending Monday golfing, had originally hedged on waiving

the Jones Act for Puerto Rico at all, saying “a lot of shippers” didn’t want him to do it. He eventually caved to pressure from lawmakers including Sen. John McCain (R-Ariz.).

McCain has been pushing to get rid of the Jones Act altogether. It costs Puerto Rico hundreds of millions of dollars every year, and he recently introduced legislation to nix the law.

“Now that the temporary Jones Act waiver for Puerto Rico has expired, it is more important than ever for Congress to pass my bill to permanently exempt Puerto Rico from this archaic and burdensome law,” McCain said in a statement to HuffPost. “Until we provide Puerto Rico with long-term relief, the Jones Act will continue to hinder much-needed efforts to help the people of Puerto Rico recover and rebuild from Hurricane Maria.”

U.S. Won't Extend Waiver On Shipping Law

By Costas Paris

[Wall Street Journal](#), October 6, 2017

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A Jones Act Head Fake On Puerto Rico

Will Trump side with the swamp to raise rebuilding costs?

[Wall Street Journal](#), October 6, 2017

Full-text stories from the Wall Street Journal are available to Journal subscribers by clicking the link.

Lawmakers Seek Puerto Rico Exemption To Law That Slowed Aid

By Matthew Daly

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

WASHINGTON (AP) — Republicans and Democrats in Congress are pushing to exempt Puerto Rico from a federal law that prohibits foreign-flagged ships from shuttling goods between U.S. ports. President Donald Trump temporarily waived the Jones Act last month amid criticism that the once-obscure law hindered relief efforts to in Puerto Rico following Hurricane Maria.

The 10-day waiver expired on Sunday night and was not renewed. A spokesman for the Department of Homeland Security said an extension was not needed to support relief efforts on the island, adding that there’s “an ample

supply" of U.S.-flagged vessels to ensure cargo reaches Puerto Rico.

Sen. John McCain, R-Ariz., said Monday that the expiration of the Jones Act waiver added renewed urgency to his push to permanently exempt Puerto Rico from what he called an "archaic and burdensome law."

"Until we provide Puerto Rico with long-term relief, the Jones Act will continue to hinder much-needed efforts to help the people of Puerto Rico recover and rebuild from Hurricane Maria," he said.

Rep. Nydia Velázquez, D-N.Y., said the temporary waiver should be extended for at least a year while Congress debates a permanent exemption for Puerto Rico.

"Significant numbers of Puerto Ricans remain displaced and still lack food, drinking water and electricity," she wrote in a letter to Trump. "If the Jones Act is reinstated, building supplies will cost significantly more in Puerto Rico, compared to costs on the mainland. This will serve only to slow Puerto Rico's long-term recovery."

The Trump administration initially said a waiver was not needed because there were enough U.S.-flagged ships available to ferry goods to Puerto Rico. Delays in getting relief supplies to Puerto Rico occurred because of bottlenecks that resulted from the island's damaged ports and blocked roads, not a lack of ships, officials said.

Even so, Trump waived Jones Act restrictions on Sept. 28, just as he had done to help ease fuel shortages in the Southeast following hurricanes Harvey and Irma.

Rep. Pramila Jayapal, D-Wash., called the Jones Act "incredibly important to our country's economy and to the maritime industry," which she said supports nearly 500,000 jobs and is responsible for more than \$92 billion in annual gross economic output.

In Washington state, the Jones Act supports more than 16,000, mostly unionized jobs, Jayapal said. "Without these jobs, our economy would suffer tremendously," she said.

"To be clear, everywhere in the country where we have Jones Act jobs, they are better jobs, better wages and a better future for our Americans across the country," Jayapal said last week in a speech on the House floor.

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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.

Legislators Take 'Sobering' Flight Over Puerto Rico, Vow More Troops, Relief

By Tim Johnson

[McClatchy](#), October 7, 2017

A bipartisan group of legislators flew over the devastated interior of Puerto Rico on Saturday and returned to the island's capital voicing astonishment at the level of destruction left by Hurricane Maria.

"The scope of the devastation was really sobering," said Rep. Lloyd Smucker, R-Pennsylvania, whose district has a heavy Puerto Rican presence.

The legislators voiced broad support for a robust relief package, saying that Puerto Rico, a U.S. territory, should be treated like the Gulf Coast following Hurricane Katrina in 2005 and the Northeast after Superstorm Sandy slammed into land in 2012.

Sen. Richard Blumenthal, a Connecticut Democrat, said he was told by the head of Puerto Rico's National Guard that the Pentagon would soon boost its post-hurricane deployment to 17,000 military personnel. It currently stands at around 12,000 troops.

"That's a tremendous ramp up," Blumenthal said, adding that his "heart broke" on seeing the island's devastation.

"We have a moral obligation as Americans, and my fear very simply is that America will fail Puerto Rico," Blumenthal said.

But Republican and Democratic legislators in the delegation said they would try to ensure that doesn't happen, starting with emergency help to get the island's power grid back in shape. About 90 percent of Puerto Rico remains without power after the Sept. 20 hurricane.

"We are fully aware of your plight, your suffering," said Sen. Ron Johnson, a Wisconsin Republican who chairs the Senate homeland security panel. "You will not be forgotten."

Johnson and a fellow Republican, Sen. Cory Gardner of Colorado, said their first priority would be to restore power to the island of 3.4 million U.S. citizens.

"If you're a utility CEO and you're listening to this right now, I hope you will contact the Puerto Rico power authority," Sen. Gardner said. "Come into Puerto Rico. Contact them. Let's make sure we get this grid built."

Earlier in the day, the chief of staff to Gov. Ricardo Rossello, William Villafañe, said he believes as many as 100,000 people lost their wooden homes in Puerto Rico's interior.

"I have never seen anything of the magnitude of this," Sen. Tim Kaine, a Virginia Democrat, said after the flyover the 10 legislators made.

Kaine said the storm knocked down two pillars of the island's economy, agriculture and tourism, and that Congress cannot deal with the disaster "on the nickel and dime."

"Look at what we did after Katrina at \$100 billion in relief. Look at what we did after Sandy at \$50 [billion] to \$80 billion in relief," Kaine said. "It's not about throwing a dollar here and there."

A current Hurricane Maria relief proposal winding through Congress totals \$29 billion but the majority of the funds deal with a national flood insurance program and funds to help fight wildfires in the West, leaving \$12.5 billion for Hurricane Maria relief, Kaine said.

He said he was heartened that federal officials told the delegation that the allotment, when approved on Capitol Hill, would pay for "an assessment of what the real needs are."

A battle over relief will certainly unfold on Capitol Hill, Blumenthal said.

"We're going to have a fight. There's no question," he said. "I went through this fight to get relief on Sandy and Sandy was in the Northeast, just a train ride from Washington D.C."

Puerto Rico's representative in Congress, Jenniffer Gonzalez Colon, said House Speaker Paul Ryan, a Wisconsin Republican, would lead a

second congressional delegation to Puerto Rico in the coming week.

Senators Pledge To Support Long-Term Rebuilding Of Puerto Rico

By Ezra Fieser

[Bloomberg News](#), October 7, 2017

U.S. lawmakers pledged on Saturday to back Puerto Rico's recovery as Governor Ricardo Rossello prepares to request a multibillion dollar Congressional aid package to help rebuild from the devastation caused by Hurricane Maria.

Rossello said his government would make a request to Congress by January for long-term assistance. The U.S. territory continues to dig out after the Category 5 storm left much of the island in tatters and caused an estimated \$80 billion to \$100 billion in damages. He made his case to a bipartisan delegation of U.S. Senators on Saturday, as they flew over some of the island's hardest hit areas.

"We need the resources so that Puerto Rico can get out of the emergency stage, stabilize, and then start rebuilding," Rossello told reporters in San Juan, flanked by lawmakers. "This is the most devastating event in the modern history of Puerto Rico."

Puerto Rico has said it needs as much as \$8 billion in emergency funding to keep the government running and respond to the disaster while it prepares a separate request for long-term assistance.

The territory's government was struggling long before the storm, having entered into a bankruptcy-like process in May to restructure \$74 billion in debt. The White House is requesting \$29 billion in disaster aid for a series of storms that hit parts of the U.S. this season, including Hurricane Maria. Lawmakers plan to take up the measure as early as this week. 'Moral Obligation'

"We have a moral obligation as Americans and my fear, quite simply, is that America will fail Puerto Rico," said Senator Richard Blumenthal, Democrat of Connecticut. "We are going to have a fight. And we are going to need bipartisan cooperation."

Republicans Cory Gardner of Colorado and Ron Johnson of Wisconsin were among the lawmakers' delegation, along with Democrats Blumenthal, Tim Kaine of Virginia, and Kirsten Gillibrand of New York.

More than two weeks after Hurricane Maria, nearly 90 percent of households and businesses

on the island remain without power, the majority of phone lines and cell towers are still down, small towns are isolated by destroyed roads and bridges, and many communities are without running water.

Rossello said it was unclear what form the funding package would take, whether it be appropriations, loans or other federal programs. His government plans to submit a detailed request to Congress in coming weeks.

"We are fully aware of your plight, your suffering. And we are fully committed to make sure that you are not ignored, you're not forgotten," said Johnson, who added that re-establishing the electrical grid is the top priority.

The Congressional delegation visit follows trips to the island from President Donald Trump and Vice President Mike Pence this week. Food and Drug Administration Commissioner Scott Gottlieb also visited, in part to investigate damage to Puerto Rico's large pharmaceutical manufacturing plants that threaten shortages of drugs on the mainland.

Fewer States Sent Help To Puerto Rico Than To Texas Or Florida

By Christopher Flavelle

[Bloomberg News](#), October 6, 2017

Fewer states sent assistance to Puerto Rico since Hurricane Maria than sent help to Texas and Florida after similar hurricanes this year, new data shows.

Twenty states have committed or sent help to Puerto Rico through the Emergency Management Assistance Compact, which runs most state-to-state disaster response. By comparison, 35 states sent help to Texas for Hurricane Harvey, and 39 sent help to Florida for Hurricane Irma.

The number of people states have sent is also smaller. The National Emergency Management Association, which runs the interstate compact, said Friday that states sent or committed 1,989 personnel to Puerto Rico, compared with 5,260 people for Texas and 3,904 for Florida.

States have said they're constrained by how much assistance Puerto Rico asks for. The island had made 49 specific requests for help from other states as of Wednesday, compared with 115 requests by Florida and 90 requests by Texas in the corresponding period before and after hurricanes Irma and Harvey.

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.

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.

A Light Amid The Darkness, A Puerto Rico Church Stands Up As Its Community Struggles

By Arelis R. Hernández

[Washington Post](#), October 7, 2017

UTUADO, PUERTO RICO — Our Lady of Monte Carmelo Catholic Church tried to hold Mass right after Hurricane Maria passed, but a landslide had knocked out the east wall and filled the tiny sanctuary with thick mud.

The lakeside village of Caonillas had been savaged. The hillsides appeared as if bleeding, scarred by the streaks of dislodged earth and frond-less palm trees. Maria's winds spirited away zinc and tin roofs. Her deluge sent blood-orange topsoil into homes, onto cars and across roads.

"It was hellish," said Midge Battistini, a teacher who lost her home near the banks of Lake Caonillas. She said the winds changed direction, creating a funnel effect that sucked up every green thing around.

Tucked into the sparsely populated central mountainsides, the village had been cut off from the rest of the world. No services. No contact. The people of Caonillas had weathered storms before. Hurricane Hugo had been through here. So had Georges. But Maria showed no mercy. There was nothing holy about her.

Carmen Ortiz and her family live nearest to Our Lady of Monte Carmelo, and they worked for a week to dig it out from the mud and clean the pews. On the first Mass after the Sept. 20 storm, the church opened and the Ortiz family — the four of them — were the only ones who could make it. Ortiz sought solace in Father Rafael Rodríguez, sharing her worries, her fears and what her family

experienced trapped inside their home as Maria lashed outside.

The church "is the only light I've seen in the midst of all this darkness," she said.

At that first Mass, they prayed that more people would come.

More than two weeks after Hurricane Maria tore a devastating path through Puerto Rico, communities such as this one are still isolated and struggling to meet basic human needs. They are frustrated at what they see as the lack of local and federal attention to their plight. In Caonillas, the effort to re-energize the church has given people a special kind of faith — a special kind of mission — while the world around them remains unsettled and unnerving.

'There will be Mass'

Local officials estimate that nearly every state road in Coanillas and greater Utuado were impassable or collapsed after the hurricane. No homes were left completely untouched in this region of the Central mountain range once ruled by the indigenous caciques, or Taino chiefs, who dominated the high altitude interior until the 15th century, when Christopher Columbus arrived.

"There were roads I didn't recognize and homes that I was used to seeing that were gone," said Idhem Heredia, the parish secretary. "There were other homes that I hadn't seen before because there was so much vegetation. Now they are clear to see."

Heredia said the region simply wasn't prepared for what Maria wrought.

When it became obvious that help wasn't quickly on its way, local residents began fending for themselves as they assessed the ruin around them.

Hector Quiles got busy, using a bulldozer to clear the mud and dead trees from mountain roadways. The coffee grower said Maria wiped out his entire harvest.

Quiles, 40, had coffee, plantains and fruits and vegetables, but he estimated that "about 5 percent is left over, and that is for my family's consumption."

Another grower, Angel Gonzalez, vice president of Cafe Don Alonso, had similar laments: "There's no coffee to process."

As shock turned to despair, parishioners focused on Our Lady of Monte Carmelo. Roads began to clear and the church started to return to some semblance of its former self. Ortiz's extended family arrived for a midweek mass,

increasing the number of worshipers from four to eight.

Still, they believed, more would come. The parish posted a yellow sign on the front gate: "There will be Mass on Sunday at 11 a.m."

'Out of this world'

That Sunday was Oct. 1 — 11 days after Maria made landfall — and the parishioners began setting up. Plastic chairs were placed at the rear of the church instead of at the altar, away from where the mud had invaded the room. The sound of a tambourine and guitar strokes emanated from the darkened interior, where Ortiz and her daughter were practicing choruses for the service. A painting of La Virgen de la Divina Providencia, the patroness of Puerto Rico, watched over the elements for the Eucharist with the island's flag — red and white stripes with a blue triangle emblazoned with a white star — draped behind her.

Then the people started arriving.

Jose Maldonado Jimenez, 71, sat outside waiting for the service with about a dozen others; they milled about and shared their stories and traded hugs and kisses. Children chased after a skinny black mutt in the church courtyard, and men with sun-kissed faces wanted to know what President Trump had said about the Puerto Rican recovery that had people so upset down in the town at the base of the mountain.

"This has been out of this world. No one has come around here" with food and water, Maldonado Jimenez said. "Here in the country, we can eat from the earth and we can draw water from the mountain for a while. We can live without electricity, but we planned for seven days, not two weeks. But we will figure out a way."

The parish bell began to toll, signaling to the homes on the mountainside and the valley below that mass would soon commence.

Father Rodriguez put on his robes in a back room next to Quile's eldest son, who struggled to find the slot for his head in his altar boy cassock. The doors all were open.

The bell rang again, and 20 people took their seats. It was steamy, uncomfortable. Whispered conversations broke into chuckles when one man clicked the switch of a fan. It didn't spin. No power here, and not expected for a long time. He smiled goofily.

"We've all been affected. There is much suffering. There is much anguish," the priest said as he began his homily. "What do we do? We look

to our faith, to the cross of Jesus and look around to see who needs help around us."

This moment of suffering, he told his flock, can become a time of blessing.

About halfway through the homily, Ines Lopez Serrano, 37, arrived with her three children, striding quickly toward a pew toward the back edge of the congregation. She smiled painfully. As the service continued, Lopez's face would tense up and she'd wince. Her young son noticed, and each time he saw her on the verge of tears, he wrapped his arms around her neck and pecked her cheek.

During the storm, Lopez's husband made the last-minute decision to move the family to his mother-in-law's house further down the mountain. But after nearly two weeks, the children were anxious to go back home.

Lopez didn't want them to see it.

The mountainside had fallen on their green-and-yellow home of seven years. The mud forced its way through the front door like a burly bandit and took out the kitchen and the children's bedrooms. Lopez said she resisted their pleas to see the house — she was worried what seeing the devastation might do them — but to get to the church, they needed to pass it.

The children got a glimpse of what was lost, just enough to know that the house their parents had scraped and sacrificed to own could no longer be their home.

"There was another family whose house slid off the mountain completely, and they were inside at the time," Lopez said. "They were able to escape, but they have it more difficult,"

It's the typical response in these mountains. No matter how bad one has it, there is always someone worse off and in need of an "Ay bendito" — a common refrain of compassion here in Puerto Rico.

Father Rodriguez prepared for communion to close the Mass. After the last person ate of the bread and drank of the wine, he invited everyone to pray. The congregation knelt together and closed their eyes.

The countryside is rarely silent these days, with generators buzzing in the distance and roosters crowing. But the church was soundless, still and stiff.

Then Lopez's daughter, Nahir Ortiz, sniffled, whimpered and began to cry. Her deepening sobs triggered a flood of tears across the congregation.

The 14-year-old, wearing a Superman shirt, flew into the arms of those around her.

Within minutes, the crying stopped. In its place was laughter.

Puerto Rico's Power Restoration Slowed By Miles Of Downed Lines

Only 11% of customers have electricity more than two weeks after Hurricane Maria

By Arian Campo-Flores

[Wall Street Journal](#), October 6, 2017

Full-text stories from the Wall Street Journal are available to Journal subscribers by clicking the link.

Alphabet Gets Approval For Giant Balloons To Restore Puerto Rico's Wireless Service

Before it can initiate service, Project Loon has to find a wireless carrier to serve as its partner

By John D. McKinnon And Drew Fitzgerald

[Wall Street Journal](#), October 7, 2017

Full-text stories from the Wall Street Journal are available to Journal subscribers by clicking the link.

Tesla To Send More Battery Installers To Puerto Rico To Restore Power

By Scott DiSavino

[Reuters](#), October 6, 2017

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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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FDA: Drug Shortages Possible Due To Puerto Rico Power Outage

By Linda A. Johnson

[Associated Press](#), October 6, 2017

The Food and Drug Administration on Friday warned that U.S. drug shortages are possible because power outages in Puerto Rico have stopped or limited production at many medicine factories there.

Nearly 10 percent of the medicines used by Americans, plus numerous medical devices, are made in Puerto Rico, which lost most electricity when it was hit hard by Hurricane Maria about two weeks ago.

FDA Commissioner Dr. Scott Gottlieb said in a statement that the agency is working to prevent shortages of about 40 crucial medicines. He has declined to identify those medicines but said Friday that the FDA would disclose any shortages if they occur; drug shortages are routinely listed on the FDA's website.

"We're keeping a close watch on the most critical medical products," Gottlieb said.

The FDA is working with drugmakers and device manufacturers, who are trying to restore partial operations with backup generators, according to the statement. In the most urgent cases, the FDA is helping companies get fuel to keep their generators running and ship finished products.

At a news conference Thursday, Puerto Rican Gov. Ricardo Rossello said power has been restored to 9 percent of customers. The government hopes to have the power back on for a quarter of the island within a month, and for the entire territory of 3.4 million people by March.

Gottlieb said the power disruptions could cause new medicine shortages and exacerbate shortages that existed before Hurricane Maria, and Irma before that, slammed the island.

At least for now, drugmakers say they should be able to prevent shortages by moving around inventory and, in some cases, increasing production at factories in other locations already making those products.

Medicines made in Puerto Rico include AstraZeneca's cholesterol drug Crestor, antibiotics and drugs for inflammation from Pfizer and Roche's Accu-Chek blood sugar test strips for diabetics. Eli Lilly makes the active ingredient for its diabetes medicines on the island. And Amgen, a huge biotech drugmaker, produces most of its medicines there, including widely used rheumatoid drug Enbrel, a number of cancer drugs, heart failure drug Corlanor and osteoporosis drugs Prolia and Xgeva.

Hurricane Maria didn't cause major damage to the roughly 80 medicine and device factories but many have needed cleanup and some repairs, according to several companies contacted by The Associated Press. The companies said operations were also hampered because workers couldn't get

to factories and they were dealing with damage to their homes.

The medical products industry, which set up a large base in Puerto Rico decades ago to take advantage of since-expired tax advantages, is key to the financial health of the debt-laden territory. The FDA said medicines and medical devices account for about 30 percent of Puerto Rico's gross domestic product, and about 80 percent of those products are used by residents of Puerto Rico and the 50 states.

Follow Linda A. Johnson at https://twitter.com/LindaJ_onPharma

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FDA Monitors Pharmaceutical Production In Puerto Rico Amid Hurricane Recovery

Regulator estimates that as much as 10% of the medicines taken by Americans are made on the island

By Thomas M. Burton

[Wall Street Journal](#), October 6, 2017

Full-text stories from the Wall Street Journal are available to Journal subscribers by clicking the link.

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.

Hospitals Scramble To Avert Saline Shortage In Wake Of Puerto Rico Disaster

By Laurie McGinley

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

The hurricane that wreaked havoc on Puerto Rico last month has disrupted production of widely used intravenous solutions. Several prominent hospitals across the country are scrambling to find alternative supplies, change the way they

administer drugs and devise backup plans to make the fluids themselves.

The products affected are smaller-volume bags of sodium chloride, known as saline, and dextrose. These normally ubiquitous solutions are used to rehydrate patients and to dilute medications from antibiotics to painkillers to cancer drugs. Their manufacturer, Baxter International, has said that “multiple production days” were lost in the wake of Hurricane Maria, and it has set up an allocation system for hospitals based on past purchases.

The situation could be a harbinger of further shortages resulting from the extensive damage to Puerto Rico’s sprawling pharmaceutical-manufacturing sector. Scott Gottlieb, commissioner of the Food and Drug Administration, said in a statement Friday that the agency is working to help the island “recover its medical product manufacturing base...a key component of the island’s economic vigor.”

However, he warned, even facilities with only minor damage are working at just partial capacity. “New shortages could result from these disruptions, and shortages that existed before the storms could potentially be extended,” he said.

More than four dozen FDA-approved drugmaking facilities are in Puerto Rico, including ones owned by Pfizer Inc., Merck, Eli Lilly, Johnson & Johnson, Bristol-Myers Squibb and Amgen. The plants produce treatments for cancer and HIV, as well as immunosuppressants for patients with organ transplants. Among the top-selling medications manufactured there are the blood thinner Xarelto and the cholesterol drug Lipitor, according to a report by Healthcare & Life Sciences Review.

Several manufacturers said recently that they didn’t anticipate product shortages resulting from the hurricane, saying their facilities weren’t heavily affected. But people on the island say it has been a challenge for many to get to work and to get products in and out.

A Baxter spokesman said Friday that “limited production” of IV fluids is occurring at its Puerto Rico facilities. He said the company is “working to leverage our global manufacturing footprint to support alternative production of these products as we work to restore operations.”

Some hospitals on the U.S. mainland said late last week that they haven’t been impacted by Baxter’s problems, while others said they are having trouble getting the popular “mini-bags” that

they use to deliver drugs to patients. While two other manufacturers make IV solutions, supplies are tight. Some medical centers are switching to other brands or to larger-volume IV bags that Baxter makes elsewhere.

But those and other changes can require a change in procedures on how drugs are administered — and new orders and training for the nursing staff — to ensure efficiency and patient safety, according to hospital officials.

Chicago’s Rush University Medical Center, like many other systems, uses a Baxter product called the “mini-bag plus” to administer IV solutions to patients. The bags allow a nurse to add a prescribed medication, mix it up and give it to the patient quickly.

Thomas Wheeler, corporate director of pharmacy at the medical center, said he no longer can get the Baxter bags and so has shifted to a product that works somewhat differently. Usually, he said, he would have made such a change slowly after extensive planning. But in this case, he added, he had to put it into place in 48 hours.

Kuldip Patel, associate chief pharmacy officer of Duke University Hospital in Durham, N.C., said he ran out of the mini-bags after getting only 25 percent of his normal order. Like other large hospitals, Duke has its own compounding service that can prepare IV solutions from raw ingredients if necessary, but the process is time-consuming, Patel said.

Jeff Thiel, assistant vice president for pharmacy services at NorthShore University HealthSystem, which is headquartered in Evanston, Ill., said he’s getting half his normal supply from Baxter. Switching to a different product “is not terrible,” he said, “but it does cause some disruption in the work flow.” And Erin Fox, director of the Drug Information Center at the University of Utah Health system, said it hasn’t been able to get the Baxter mini-bag plus since before the hurricane. “We are thinking,

how do we conserve the small bags that we have?” she said.

All the hospital officials said that patient care has not been impaired.

For years, hospital pharmacists have had to grapple with shortages of dozens of drugs. Experts blame several factors, including manufacturing glitches, quality-control problems and business mergers. The IV-solutions market has seen significant upheaval since last year. Pfizer bought Hospira, a pharmaceutical and

device company, and spun off its IV products to the infusion company ICU Medical Inc. Another company, B. Braun Medical Inc., has a smaller share of the IV market. Baxter remains the dominant player.

"This year has been challenging for multiple manufacturers," said Chris Snyder, drug information pharmacist for shortages and recalls at the Cleveland Clinic. "And the hurricane has definitely compounded it."

Several doctors and pharmacists remain on edge about the possibility of additional problems. Peter Adamson, who is chairman of the Children's Oncology Group, said that the clinical trials it conducts nationwide have not yet had participating hospitals hit by drug shortages related to Puerto Rico. But Adamson, a pediatric oncologist at Children's Hospital of Philadelphia, said "there remains great concern that treatment for children with cancer may soon be affected."

Several hospital officials are calling on the FDA and drugmakers operating in Puerto Rico to release more information about what other products might soon be in short supply, as well as to allow hospitals to purchase some supplies from overseas, if necessary.

An agency spokeswoman said it is working with some companies to speed up import of supplies from other manufacturing sites. It also is working to expedite approval of other dosage forms and generic versions, she said. In his statement, Gottlieb said he plans to provide more details on specific products as he learns more about the situation there.

In Puerto Rico, Lives Depend On Volunteer Doctors And Diesel Generators

By Robin Respaut And Nick Brown

[Reuters](#), October 6, 2017

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Puerto Rico Faces Looming Medicaid Crisis

By Nathaniel Weixel

[The Hill](#), October 7, 2017

Puerto Rico is facing an imminent Medicaid funding crisis, putting nearly one million people at risk of losing their health care coverage.

Even before Hurricane Maria caused major damage to the island's struggling health care

system, the U.S. territory's Medicaid program barely had enough money left to last through the next year.

Now, if Puerto Rico's federal Medicaid funding runs out, up to 900,000 people would likely be cut from Medicaid — more than half of total enrollment, according to federal estimates.

Hurricane Maria made things substantially worse.

Experts predict that unless Congress acts, the federal funding will be exhausted in a matter of months. If that happens, Puerto Rico will be responsible for covering all its costs going forward.

"Unless there's an assurance of stable and sufficient funding... [the health system] is headed towards a collapse," said Edwin Park, vice president for health policy at the Center on Budget and Policy Priorities.

Barbara Lyons, a senior vice president at the Kaiser Family Foundation, said this would mean major coverage reductions, increased problems for patients in accessing treatment and delays in payments to health care providers.

A massive influx of Puerto Ricans could also migrate to the mainland, which would put a strain on the Medicaid programs of the states they move to.

Nearly half of Puerto Rico's 3.4 million residents participate in Medicaid.

Since it is a U.S. territory and not a state, Puerto Rico doesn't receive nearly as much federal support as states do.

On average, the federal government covers 57 percent of a state's Medicaid costs.

But residents of the territories don't pay federal income tax; As a result, federal spending is capped and territories only get paid about 15 to 20 percent of their total Medicaid cost.

Experts say this formula has forced the Puerto Rican government to cover a large portion of the costs from its own budget, contributing to the island's debt crisis.

"If they were treated fairly as other states, the federal government would reimburse them the same as other states," said Lara Merling, a research assistant at the Center for Economic and Policy Research, a left-leaning think tank.

To help with the funding disparity, ObamaCare gave Puerto Rico a significant infusion, of about \$6.5 billion, to last through 2019. In May, Congress appropriated an additional \$300 million.

But those funds were already running low prior to Hurricane Maria, and the fallout from the storm has yet to be fully realized.

"People don't have water, electricity... people are going to get a lot sicker," Merling said.

As the economy and businesses struggle to get back up to speed, more people will also likely need Medicaid. Paying for those people could put additional financial strain on a system that's already on the verge of collapse.

Congressional Democrats have urged President Trump to do more to help out Puerto Rico, with some criticizing a slower response compared with the hurricanes in Texas and Florida.

On Tuesday, Trump and other members of the Cabinet traveled to the island after a Twitter feud between the president and San Juan's mayor.

While there, Trump made a reference to the island's debt, which totals \$74 billion, indicating it could complicate federal budget requests for disaster relief.

"I hate to tell you Puerto Rico, but you threw our budget a little out of whack, but that's fine," Trump said, according to a White House pool report.

Congress this week received a \$29 billion request from the White House for disaster assistance, but none of it was earmarked for Puerto Rico's Medicaid program.

House Energy and Commerce Committee Republicans have proposed giving Puerto Rico an additional \$1 billion over the next two years as part of a must-pass bill to fund the Children's Health Insurance Program.

A GOP aide said the \$1 billion is specifically meant to address the Medicaid cliff.

But Democrats have objected to the partisan way the GOP is trying to pay for the CHIP bill. Some of the offsets take aim at ObamaCare, putting the larger bill's passage in jeopardy.

Rep. Frank Pallone Jr. (D-N.J.), ranking member of the Energy and Commerce Committee, told The Hill the legislation's Puerto Rico funding is "woefully inadequate."

According to CBPP's Park, the House's \$1 billion proposal also doesn't take into account the damage from Hurricane Maria. The island needs a much larger increase, he said.

But that will likely need to be paid for, as congressional Republicans are balking at passing any disaster relief without offsets.

Adding more uncertainty, the Senate has not given any indication if it will take up legislation to address Puerto Rico's Medicaid cliff. The Senate Finance Committee passed its CHIP bill this past week, without any funding for Puerto Rico attached.

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 Rio 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.

'Hell To Pay' Over Water, Food Deliveries, Puerto Rico Governor Warns

[Reuters](#), October 9, 2017

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U.S. To Boost Military Personnel In Puerto Rico: Senator

By Yeganeh Torbati

[Reuters](#), October 7, 2017

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U.S. Mail Carriers Emerge As Heroes In Puerto Rico Recovery

By Hugh Bronstein

[Reuters](#), October 9, 2017

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Assured Guaranty Pulls Puerto Rico Lawsuit, Cites Hurricane

By Daniel Bases

[Reuters](#), October 7, 2017

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Puerto Rico Slum Transformed By 'Despacito' Seeks To Revive

By Danica Coto

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

Hope had come in with a song for La Perla, a seaside slum that had long been notorious as a violent enclave that served as Puerto Rico's biggest distribution point for heroin.

The sound of clicking cameras and excited chatter had begun to break the morning silence. Tourists rambled through the narrow streets lined with brightly painted homes. Restaurants and other shops were popping up, catering to tourists drawn by the setting for the video of the worldwide hit song "Despacito," which had been viewed billions of times since its release in January.

Then Hurricane Maria hit, ripping away power lines, water service, rooftops and even the newly installed banners that directed tourists to spots shown in the famed video.

With tourism to Puerto Rico as a whole abruptly halted, the only visitors to La Perla since the Sept. 20 storm have been people like the U.S. National Park Service workers who came to distribute bottles of water.

"Right now we're all mired in a depression," said Carmen Perez, a 77-year-old retiree who joined dozens of other La Perla residents with outstretched arms to receive the donated water.

One of the businesses that had boomed since "Despacito," the La Garita restaurant, lost all four concrete walls to the hurricane, leaving only the kitchen standing.

"People didn't use to fit in here," said owner Ibilson Morales as he gestured toward the largely vacant spot where his restaurant once stood. "This used to be the most visited neighborhood in Puerto Rico."

La Perla is a sort of scenic shantytown of about 350 people that emerged more than a century ago on a narrow strip of Atlantic shoreline between the crashing waves and the towering walls of Old San Juan. Few outsiders ventured through the handful of entrances to the place, nor were they welcome. At one spot, a wooden sign proclaimed: "Not open to visitors. Do not enter."

"Before, people were very afraid," said Angel Antonio Lopez, a 77-year-old La Perla resident.

The neighborhood's dark reputation was stoked by an old video showing a drug dealer run

up to another during the day and shoot him several times point-blank in the head. A self-described hit man turned federal witness said the bodies of many people killed in La Perla were tossed into the sea so sharks would eat them.

A bright yellow line painted on one of its narrow streets served as a boundary between rival drug dealers, some of whom used poisonous frogs to protect their drug stashes.

Much of the criminal activity was shut down when hundreds of agents from the U.S. Drug Enforcement Administration raided the slum in 2011 and arrested dozens of people, including a well-known community leader, who was later convicted.

Government and private-sector initiatives were launched to try to clean the place up. A new bakery was built, and houses were painted bright colors.

Then came "Despacito."

Puerto Rican singers Luis Fonsi and Daddy Yankee chose the slum as a backdrop for their video, which YouTube said attracted a record 3 billion views, and tourists began to pour in, greeted by welcoming calls from a bar owner and by a street vendor offering fried snacks and cold beers.

Many people in La Perla had hoped the transformation would help secure the community's future and protect it from real estate interests who have long eyed the seaside neighborhood as a prime spot for redevelopment.

The newfound vibrancy even prompted a visit by the island's tourism secretary, Jose Izquierdo.

"No one had given La Perla a chance," he said. "The song has helped break down the community's stereotypes and given the people of La Perla a chance to organize themselves and take advantage of this historic opportunity."

Among those hoping the opportunity returns is 26-year-old Yentil Ramirez, who had guided visitors on newly organized tours of the neighborhood.

"We have faith that they'll come down again like they used to before," she said, adding that Fonsi visited La Perla to distribute aid in recent days and promised to return to help with reconstruction efforts.

Fonsi has become the new face of Puerto Rico's government tourism company, getting \$700,000 as part of a deal in which the agency acquired rights to use the song. Tourism officials said searches for Puerto Rico on booking sites

had increased as much as 45 percent in the months before the hurricane — a spike they attributed to the song's popularity.

Now, the people flying into Puerto Rico are mostly volunteers, rescue crews and government officials helping to rebuild an island devastated by a Category 4 storm.

Tourism officials recently met with La Perla local leader Yashira Gomez, a daughter of the community leader arrested by the DEA in 2011. They asked her how long she thought it would take before La Perla could welcome tourists again.

"We told them to give us a month or two, that we were going to rise up again," Gomez said. "We are looking for any kind of help ... so that tourists can come back and see that La Perla is still pretty, that it's on its feet and that we're working hard to make it shine like before."

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After Hurricanes, Schools Accommodate Puerto Rican Students

By Elizabeth A. Harris

[New York Times](#), October 6, 2017

Students from Puerto Rico and the United States Virgin Islands who attend the State University of New York will pay in-state tuition this school year, the SUNY board of trustees said Friday.

In making the move, SUNY joins several school districts, colleges and universities preparing for an influx of students forced from their homes by recent hurricanes, which have shattered power grids and left residents scrambling for basic staples.

And while leaving Puerto Rico has been difficult, the exodus has begun. The office of Gov. Rick Scott of Florida said that since Tuesday, more than 10,000 people from Puerto Rico had arrived in Miami, Orlando and Fort Lauderdale.

The SUNY board's decision, which was adopted in a vote on Friday morning, extends in-state tuition on its 29 campuses not only to students fleeing the devastation, but also to students from Puerto Rico and the Virgin Islands who are already enrolled. H. Carl McCall, the chairman of the SUNY board, said students who could afford to pay full tuition a few months ago may now find themselves in very different circumstances.

"Our position is that in the long term, if they are able to continue their education, they will be in a better position to assist the rebuilding effort in Puerto Rico, which will go on for a long time," Mr. McCall said. So far, he said, SUNY has identified about 215 students from Puerto Rico and the U.S. Virgin Islands who will see their tuition reduced, a saving of about \$10,000 a year for those pursuing a bachelor's degree.

SUNY, like other public university systems, has extended similar relief after natural disasters in the past. Students displaced by Hurricane Katrina were offered in-state tuition at SUNY in 2005, and those affected by a devastating earthquake in Haiti were given the same benefit in 2010. SUNY says about 300 students took advantage of the two programs.

Other public universities are taking similar steps. The Board of Regents in Connecticut is expected to vote this month on giving in-state tuition to students displaced from United States territories, as is the City University of New York, which has more than 16,000 students who identify as being of Puerto Rican descent. The change at CUNY would also save students about \$10,000 per year.

In a statement urging SUNY and CUNY to offer the tuition discount, Gov. Andrew M. Cuomo, a Democrat, noted that more than 1.1 million Puerto Ricans live in New York State. In Florida, which also has a significant Puerto Rican population, Mr. Scott, a Republican, urged the state's public colleges and universities to offer a discount to Puerto Rican students. According to his office, more than three dozen schools have waived out-of-state tuition and fees.

While colleges can choose to accommodate displaced students, public elementary and high schools will generally be obligated to accept them, and some districts are already making preparations. Mr. Scott's office said Puerto Rican children have begun enrolling in Florida, and in New York City, a spokeswoman for the Department of Education said they have received anecdotal reports of students beginning to trickle in from the island. The New York City schools chancellor sent a letter to principals last week encouraging them to welcome arriving students.

The Rev. Samuel Cruz, the pastor of Trinity Lutheran Church in Sunset Park, Brooklyn, and a prominent Puerto Rican activist, warned, however, that the enticement of cheaper tuition could have a damaging effect on the already-beleaguered

University of Puerto Rico. Before the storm, amid the island's fiscal crisis, the university had experienced strikes and was facing severe budget cuts. Now, with the twin effects of Hurricane Maria and discounted tuition, the university system there could suffer a potential "brain drain," Mr. Cruz said.

"That's probably going to destroy the university," he said in an interview, adding that a migration of younger students could also be harmful to the island.

"I'm not going to tell a family that is without power over there not to come," he said. "But, perhaps those of us who are here should focus more on making sure schools are rebuilt, through pressure and also through donations, so that people don't feel they have to come this way."

James B. Milliken, chancellor of the CUNY system, said CUNY was trying to work with the University of Puerto Rico, making tuition assistance available and perhaps even providing temporary placements for faculty, but also did not want to exacerbate a flight from the institution.

"We don't necessarily want to take students on a permanent basis from the University of Puerto Rico, we want to be part of their rebuilding," Mr. Milliken said. "If there are things we can do in the interim period, in the rebuilding period, while they're having trouble getting back up, then we'll do everything we can."

Politicians With Puerto Rican Roots Challenge Trump In Push For Aid

By Rick Rojas

[New York Times](#), October 9, 2017

José E. Serrano has been elected again and again to represent a tiny, tightly packed congressional district in the South Bronx. But since the storm that ravaged Puerto Rico, the island where he lived until he was 8, another constituency far from New York City has commanded more of his attention. It is one that has never voted for him, but that he has nonetheless adopted as his own.

"I've often said that I represent two districts: one in the Bronx and one that's Puerto Rico," said Mr. Serrano, a Democrat and the longest-serving Puerto Rican in Congress. "This time, the effort is bigger than ever."

Puerto Rican politicians holding office on the mainland United States, especially those in New York, have long felt compelled to look after the territory, given its limited federal representation

and chronic financial distress. But the catastrophic aftermath of Hurricane Maria, which has thrust Puerto Rico to the edge of a humanitarian crisis, has ignited a dire sense of urgency.

The elected officials were driven at first by seeing the pain inflicted by the storm, with lives upended, homes destroyed and food, water and electricity difficult to come by. For some, though, that anguish has morphed into fury, as they have grown incensed by a federal response that they say is woefully lacking and by President Trump's handling of the situation, which has struck them as dismissive of Puerto Rico's plight.

"There is this view that, somehow, we don't merit that level of concern or attention or respect from this government," said Melissa Mark-Viverito, the speaker of the New York City Council, comparing the response in Puerto Rico with areas struck by recent hurricanes in Florida and Texas. "Somehow, we're a burden and we're mooching. That's the kind of language this president is throwing around."

A largely left-leaning cast of Puerto Rican politicians in New York, members of the diaspora or descendants of it, has emerged as a force pushing for aid and attention. They have used the bully pulpits of their offices, booking cable news appearances and writing letters to federal agencies. Representative Nydia M. Velázquez held a news conference in which she warned Mr. Trump that unless he stepped up his efforts for storm victims, "this will become his Katrina."

The politicians have also sought to wield their influence behind the scenes, lobbying congressional leaders for immediate relief aid as well as longer-term support. Mr. Serrano believes his position on the powerful House Appropriations Committee could help secure the money Puerto Rico needed, calling it "my first priority."

"It doesn't matter how many years you spend in New York. It doesn't matter that you're a member of Congress," Mr. Serrano said. "If you were born in Puerto Rico, that island is still in your heart. It's something that's very much a part of you and doesn't leave you."

Puerto Rico has long depended on those ties as people left for the mainland, where, especially in and around New York City, the community has become deeply entrenched and gained political influence over the course of several generations. "The greatest hope for Puerto Rico is its diaspora," said José Calderón, the president of the Hispanic Federation, a national advocacy

group. "If we're going to get Congress to do the right thing," he said, referring to aid, "it is going to be the diaspora that does it."

Officials and nonprofit groups in Puerto Rico say the immediate need remains for essentials like food and water. But some are already taking stock of the far more enormous investment a full recovery will surely require: rebuilding a health care system and energy grid that had been fraying before the hurricane and are now a shambles, and relief from a debt crisis that had set off its own wave of devastating consequences, including forcing officials to declare a form of bankruptcy this year and spurring an exodus.

As residents of a territory of the United States, Puerto Ricans are American citizens, but they have little clout in Washington: They cannot vote for president in the general election and their delegate in Congress is a nonvoting member. "Is that a disadvantage? Absolutely," said Edwin Meléndez, the director of the Center for Puerto Rican Studies at Hunter College, who noted that the island could be better served by having its own voting members in Congress. Still, he added, "you have this other network of elected officials that mitigates that lack of representation."

That network has not always served as a unified force. (Five of the 43 Latino members of Congress are Puerto Rican and all are in the House.) The financial crisis, for instance, was an issue that sowed division. But the storm's toll has brought many of these politicians together in championing a relief effort. In New York, such efforts have been encouraged by the city's Puerto Rican community, a significant bloc of support for Puerto Ricans running for elected office.

"It's not a monolith in terms of thinking," Mr. Calderón said. "But the hurricane has taken things to a different plane," he added. "It's heartening to see the community functioning and thinking as one and committed to what's important here, which is to get Puerto Rico back on its feet and running and having a resurgence."

Some have been more critical than others of the federal response. Jenniffer González-Colón, the territory's nonvoting congressional delegate, has argued that the federal government had been swift in deploying assistance and that Mr. Trump was "supporting Puerto Rico all the way."

"This is going to be a long road to recovery," Ms. González-Colón, a Republican, told reporters while traveling with Mr. Trump to Puerto Rico. "But we are not going to be alone."

During the president's visit, his fourth trip to a disaster area in two months, he greeted residents and, at one stop, tossed rolls of paper towels into a crowd. He has defended his handling of the storm, noting the logistical challenges and the promised support. In a television interview, Mr. Trump also raised the prospect of erasing or reducing Puerto Rico's \$74 billion in debt, saying that "we're going to have to wipe that out." (His administration has since walked that back.)

But by that point, Mr. Trump had already infuriated many Puerto Ricans who have found his statements since the storm to be insulting and feeding into a long-simmering suspicion that they are regarded as second-class citizens. In one post on Twitter, Mr. Trump said, "They want everything to be done for them when it should be a community effort." And during his visit, he compared Maria's death toll with that of Hurricane Katrina, which he called "a real catastrophe."

Ms. Mark-Viverito, a Democrat, denounced his statements as "deplorable and not acceptable," adding, "Our dignity is being stripped from us."

Hurricane Maria made landfall on Sept. 20, and since then, the demands on Puerto Rican politicians have been an endurance test. Ms. Velázquez, a Democrat from New York City, has had days that, as she described them, would have been punishing even without the flu and a fever topping out at 101.4 degrees. It has been a whirl of meetings, including with congressional leaders, and then traveling with Gov. Andrew M. Cuomo of New York to the island.

"My God, my first reaction was Puerto Rico was taken back 50 years," Ms. Velázquez said in an interview a week later, her voice still croaky from being sick. "It was just heart-wrenching. I just broke down right there. But I didn't want to cry because I didn't want the people of Puerto Rico to see me crying."

The public drive for aid has been matched by an effort that resembles case work, as their offices have become way stations between the island and the Puerto Rican community in New York. Ms. Velázquez said she had been inundated with calls: people in Puerto Rico asking for food and supplies and New Yorkers needing help tracking down relatives as lines of communication were cut off.

In some ways, the storm had reminded her of Hurricane Sandy in 2012, which caused considerable damage in her district, which

includes the Lower East Side of Manhattan and parts of Brooklyn and Queens. This time, the scale of the devastation and the personal toll — Ms. Velázquez also had relatives she struggled to reach — were different and in some ways more difficult to grapple with, but it also motivated her.

"I've never faced any crisis like this," she said.

An Exodus From Puerto Rico Could Remake Florida Politics

By Michael Tackett

[New York Times](#), October 6, 2017

ORLANDO, Fla. — Every day dozens of Puerto Ricans pour into the Orlando area, fleeing their homes and lives ravaged by Hurricane Maria. In the months to come, officials here said, that number could surge to more than 100,000.

And those numbers could remake politics in Florida, a state where the last two presidential and governor's races were decided by roughly one percentage point or less.

There are more than a million Puerto Ricans in Florida, a number that has doubled since 2001, driven largely until now by a faltering economy. But their political powers have evolved slowly in this state, and the wave of potential voters from the island could quickly change that calculus.

If the estimates hold, and several officials said they might be low, the Puerto Rican vote, which has been strongly Democratic, could have rough parity with the Cuban vote in the state, for years a bulwark for Republicans in both state and national races.

"What's clear is that this is going to be a more powerful swing group," said Anthony Suarez, a lawyer here, who has run for office as both a Republican and a Democrat. "Just like everybody has to go to Miami and stop in Versailles to have coffee to court the Cuban community, that is going to start happening here."

In Central Florida, home to more than 350,000 Puerto Ricans, their political impact has already been felt. Last year, Representative Darren Soto, a Democrat, became the first member of Congress of Puerto Rican descent elected from Florida when he won a Central Florida district with a large Puerto Rican population.

Mr. Soto said that any significant shift in population in such a highly competitive state could have an enormous impact.

"My district has the most island-born Puerto Ricans of any congressional district, and that is already changing Florida politics," he said. And that change could be even more significant because of the widespread anger over President Trump's response to the devastation caused by Maria — the president, accused of reacting slowly to the crisis, said islanders were not doing enough to help themselves.

The anger, Mr. Soto said, "could have huge repercussions." "You just don't attack people when they are down," he added. "These are things people will remember."

While Democrats see enormous potential for registering new voters, they know their efforts must wait until the newcomers' urgent need for housing, jobs, schools and medical care is met. Central Florida will be a magnet for many of the migrants who will join families here in Orlando and in neighboring communities like Kissimmee. They will see signs of home in the grocery stores, shops and churches in an area where the Latino influence is abundantly evident.

In a ballroom of a Puerto Rican service organization here this week, a dozen men and women, including activists, a lawyer, an Orange County commissioner, a police officer and a psychotherapist, said the storm had brought the community together like never before.

"Now we see the necessity to come out and organize," said Trini Quiroz, one of the activists. "So this tragedy brought us all together."

Under the umbrella of an organization called CASA, 14 different groups have banded together to help provide relief for hurricane victims, from collecting and delivering supplies to Puerto Rico to helping build a resettlement effort in Central Florida.

Emily Bonilla, a Democratic county commissioner who was elected from a district that is 80 percent white, is working to provide services for the new arrivals, mindful that they may soon be her constituents. "Puerto Ricans are unique," she said. "We support each other regardless of party, but no surprise, the majority become Democrats."

Mr. Trump won about 35 percent of the Latino vote in the state in 2016, exit polls showed, with 54 percent of that share coming from Cuban-Americans. Hillary Clinton won about 70 percent of the non-Cuban Latino vote and had an almost three-to-one edge among Puerto Ricans.

Still, Republicans say that Puerto Ricans in Florida, unlike those in New York who

overwhelmingly vote Democratic, can be a swing vote on many issues.

"We are not a monolith," said Mr. Suarez, the lawyer here, who is now also helping place law students from the island in schools in Florida.

While Puerto Ricans are swing voters on a number of issues like taxes and abortion, "when it comes to issues that affect the Puerto Rican community, they behave more like a voting bloc," said Edwin Meléndez, director of the Center for Puerto Rican Studies at Hunter College in New York.

Maribel Cordero, a psychotherapist who is running for a seat on the county commission in Orange County, said that there were signs of a political awakening. "A lot of things are going to change," she said. "They will have to win our trust," she said of elected officials, adding, "we are all united, and we want a place at the table."

That puts additional pressure on Mr. Trump to reverse the perception that he was indifferent to Puerto Rico, at least initially.

Several of the activists were intrigued by Mr. Trump's suggestion that he would try to wipe out Puerto Rico's bloated public debt, but then others noted that other administration officials had quickly dismissed that idea. And they were unanimous in their criticism of Mr. Trump for waiting two weeks before visiting Puerto Rico and about his harsh remarks about the mayor of San Juan, whom he accused of "poor leadership."

"That was horrible," said Zoraida Rios-Andino. "He treated us like a third-world country."

Gov. Rick Scott, who has been mentioned as a possible candidate for the United States Senate next year, and Senator Marco Rubio, both Republicans, have been pushing aggressively for assistance for the island and for services within Florida to help those who have been displaced. They are conscious that the antagonism toward the president could have consequences for them.

"One of the reasons you see Rubio and Rick Scott racing to Puerto Rico is they realize the potential danger of this bashing of the mayor for Florida Republicans," said Susan MacManus, a professor at the University of South Florida who has studied the state's Latino vote.

Ultimately, the impact Puerto Ricans have on politics will be up to people like Esteban Garces, state director of Mi Familia Vota, who has been working in the state since 2012 and said his group had registered more than 65,000 voters since then.

Puerto Ricans are American citizens by birth, so registering them is far easier than registering Latino immigrants. His organization has been building a network that will make it easier to register those who come from the island and declare Florida residency. "We have the capacity and the know-how to step up the scale," Mr. Garces said.

"This is a defining moment," he said. "Historically Cubans have always been thought of as the political powerhouse in Florida, but over the years their concentration has been decreasing. Now, there are almost more Puerto Ricans than Cubans, which will create a dynamic shift in how the Latino vote in Florida goes."

It is too soon, he said, to push to register people as they arrive, many stricken by loss. But with a governor's race next year, Mr. Garces is preparing to mobilize after the migrants have had time to settle in.

That election, and the presidential election in 2020 if Mr. Trump is on the ballot, will be a referendum in part for Latino voters on how politicians responded to the crisis in Puerto Rico.

"They have a lot of power in their hands with that vote," Mr. Garces said. "It's just a matter of flexing that muscle."

Puerto Ricans Are A Surging, Outraged Political Force In Florida In The Aftermath Of Maria

By Elise Viebeck And Joel Achenbach

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

ORLANDO — In Terminal A of the airport here, travelers from Puerto Rico typically say nothing at first as they pass security and reunite with their Florida families.

They hug. They cry. There are no words to describe adequately what they've been through since Hurricane Maria struck their island head on.

They are also angry. In interviews over the past week, local residents and storm refugees have expressed dismay at the slow pace of aid to Puerto Rico and have derided President Trump as callous in word and deed.

That could bring political ramifications here in the nation's largest swing state, where more than 1 million residents of Puerto Rican descent have become a powerful and coveted voting bloc — one whose numbers could swell as more residents of the island with relatives here permanently escape Maria's destruction. By one

estimate, at least 100,000 Puerto Ricans could relocate, at least temporarily, to Florida.

"This is his Katrina. He took too long," said Ralph Persia, a retired police officer who was part of an Orlando family at the airport to greet three relatives fleeing the island.

It's hard to overestimate Florida's political significance — or the potential electoral impact of a major influx of eligible voters. The nation's third-largest state boasts 29 electoral votes in presidential elections, an enormous and sometimes decisive haul often won by a razor-thin margin. Trump won Florida by fewer than 120,000 votes last year, aided more than past Republican candidates by non-Hispanic white voters. A boost of enthusiasm among Puerto Ricans — and a surge in their numbers, propelled by Maria — could alter that math in next year's midterm elections and beyond.

As U.S. citizens, Puerto Ricans can register to vote in any state as soon as they establish residency.

"All politics is about motivation, and at this point, the Hispanic community here is extremely motivated against Trump," said Anthony Suarez, a lawyer and local political elder who was elected the first Puerto Rican member of the Florida House in 1999. The community now has six of its own representing Florida between the state legislature and the U.S. House: three Republicans and three Democrats.

State and national politicians have taken notice of the post-Maria diaspora.

Sen. Marco Rubio (R-Fla.), a possible Trump challenger in 2020, was one of the first mainland politicians to visit Puerto Rico after Maria hit last month. Rubio has repeatedly urged a more robust federal response.

Sen. Bill Nelson (D-Fla.), who is up for reelection next year, recently visited a Puerto Rican neighborhood here in Central Florida to criticize Trump's response to the storm. Florida Gov. Rick Scott (R), a likely Nelson challenger, declared a state of emergency in every Florida county, traveled to Puerto Rico and visited the White House to discuss the response. Scott was running neck-and-neck with Nelson in a Senate poll released in August by Florida Atlantic University.

Even Vice President Pence arrived here Thursday, addressing the Puerto Rican community at a church, Iglesia de Dios, in

Kissimmee. Pence was scheduled to visit Puerto Rico on Friday.

But it is Trump who has dominated all political conversations — making Florida a special test in 2018 of whether the president will be a liability for Republicans on the ballot.

Raul Ramos, 73, a Trump supporter and board member of a nonprofit called Latino Leadership, said he was turned off by Trump's comments: "I don't call him Mr. President anymore. I call him Mr. Tweet."

Ramos pointed to Trump's broadsides against San Juan Mayor Carmen Yulín Cruz, who had criticized the federal government's response to the storm.

"She was just saying, 'I need help.' The Trump people made it political," Ramos said. "She has nothing to gain right now. She has enough on her plate. People are dying."

Trump has declared that his administration has done an "A-plus" job of responding to Maria, but the federal effort as well as the territorial emergency operations were overwhelmed when the storm knocked out the entire electrical grid and much of the water supply, rendered communication impossible and left countless people wondering why the cavalry hadn't arrived. Trump also issued combative tweets and comments that seemed to blame Puerto Rico for its problems even as local residents and officials pleaded for more help.

Marina Vasquez, 33, a lawyer arriving from San Juan, was taken aback by the president's comments about Puerto Rico's debt problems: "It's the fact that you're in the middle of a humanitarian crisis, and you can talk about debt while people are dying?"

Rep. Darren Soto (D), who represents a heavily Puerto Rican district in Central Florida, said this week, "We Puerto Ricans are going to remember where leaders were during the last few weeks."

People with resources and local connections have dominated the first wave of Puerto Rico evacuees. But even they are often showing up feeling physically ravaged — and sometimes thirsty.

"I'm sorry about the way I'm talking, but I haven't had water in two days," one of the evacuees said over the phone this week to Marytza Sanz, who works at Latino Leadership. Another woman told Sanz she had exactly 75 cents to her name.

The staff at Latino Leadership batted around many questions that illustrated the anxiety sweeping through the Puerto Rican community here: How high was the actual death toll from the hurricane? Would aid reach the people in the mountains? Would the shooting in Las Vegas overshadow the crisis and make people forget about Puerto Rico? Can Central Florida and its schools absorb the number of people ready to come? Can Puerto Rico, with a population of 3.4 million that was already dwindling, survive another brain drain?

Weaving in and out of the crowded office was Marucci Guzman, 34, the group's executive director, whose family moved to the mainland when she was 3.

Guzman was taken aback by the president's comment that Puerto Ricans "want everything done for them."

"People are surviving because of the sweat and tears of the people who live there. They weren't waiting for the government to do it for them," Guzman said, fighting back tears.

The steady flow of people to the mainland had already picked up over the past two years as Puerto Rico became mired in a debt crisis.

Even without a hurricane prodding immigration, Florida takes in more than a thousand new residents from across the United States every day. Massive planned residential communities have replaced many of the pastures, citrus groves and cypress swamps of Old Florida. That has produced an essentially different electorate every four years, making Florida the mood ring of American politics.

Last year, a report from the Hispanic Federation predicted that Puerto Ricans would surpass Cubans in Florida by 2020 as the state's largest group of Hispanics. This could have massive political implications, because Cubans are reliable Republican voters and Puerto Ricans are less predictable — even a "little more progressive," according to Esteban Garces, Florida state director for Mi Familia Vota, a nonpartisan, nonprofit civic engagement group.

And the growth in the Puerto Rican population is almost certain to accelerate in the wake of Maria: Soto expects 100,000 people to relocate here at least temporarily.

For many, Central Florida is now more enticing than the traditional Puerto Rican enclaves of the Northeast. "It's much harder to bring in three, four relatives and put them in an already

cramped New York City apartment than it is to bring them to Orlando," said Luis Martinez-Fernandez, a history professor at the University of Central Florida.

"I hope that folks realize that this influx is coming," Garces said in a telephone interview. "Puerto Ricans carry with them a lot of power when they move to the mainland, and it's likely they will settle here in central Florida. With that comes a lot of potential."

Puerto Ricans who migrated from the island to the American Northeast originally, and then to Central Florida, tend to vote Democratic, political analysts say. The ones coming directly to Florida from the island are more likely to be swing voters, though.

Puerto Rican voters in Florida strongly supported Barack Obama in the 2008 and 2012 presidential elections. But they also helped Charlie Crist win the Florida governorship when he ran as a Republican.

"The idea that if Puerto Ricans come here, or Puerto Rico becomes a state, that it will be blue is not accurate," said Florida state Rep. Rene Plasencia (R), who was elected in a district that leans Democratic. "They're not aligned with parties."

Many Puerto Ricans settled in Kissimmee, an old cow town where metal images of cowboy boots and bucking broncos are hammered into the downtown sidewalk. A local shopping mall has a store selling nothing but Puerto Rico souvenirs, including customized domino tables.

Finishing lunch at Melao Bakery, Neil Delgado, 48, a home inspector, said he feels guilty living in an air-conditioned home with plenty of food while his family on the island is suffering. But the older people will all stay, he said. They love their home. They will grow food to survive.

"We know how to eat from the Earth," he said. "The problem now is psychological. Everyone is stressed. They're in kind of a depression. And it's going to get worse."

The federal response to Maria is not the only issue that may weigh on the minds of Puerto Rican voters next year and beyond.

Suarez, who describes himself as a fiscal conservative and social liberal, switched his party registration from Republican to independent last month in protest of Trump suspending protections for unauthorized immigrants brought to the United States as children.

Contrary to conventional wisdom, Suarez said the immigration debate matters to Puerto Ricans because their families often include Hispanics from other backgrounds who are more directly affected.

Giving Puerto Ricans a path back to the island is also a priority for some. At a community center in East Orlando surrounded by fellow members of the Puerto Rican Bar Association, Suarez announced an initiative to help the island's second- and third-year law students temporarily continue their instruction on the mainland. Fifty-one students had already been placed in four schools.

He hopes they eventually return.

"We don't want to take the leadership of Puerto Rico out of Puerto Rico," Suarez said. "So they have to go back."

Gabriela and Carlos Rivera, sister and brother, ages 26 and 23, arrived at the Orlando airport Monday. They rode out the storm in their parents' home in the town of Humacao, above the family furniture store.

Sunday night, the family left home and drove to the airport in San Juan, where they all spent the night, hoping to get on an 8 a.m. flight. That was canceled, but Gabriela and Carlos managed to get on an 11 a.m. flight to Miami. They say their father was stoic, their mother weeping — "Because we don't know when we'll see each other again," Gabriela said.

From Miami they caught a flight to Orlando, where they were met by their uncle, who promptly took them to Orlando Lechonera, a buffet in East Orlando where they ate voraciously.

On Wednesday, they were at the kitchen table of their aunt and uncle in a beautiful home in a gated community in Sanford, Fla., recounting the terrible whistle of the storm, the massive destruction, the complete absence of a government response, no sign of the Federal Emergency Management Agency, no power, the whole nightmare.

Carlos: "The island went back, like, 50 years."

Gabriela: "Sixty years back."

He said of the president, "I don't expect Donald Trump to say the right things, because I have heard him since before he was president, but I did expect him to have some common courtesy for the people who are suffering on the island."

Gabriela: "It was a circus. He was throwing paper towels like it was a basketball — like it was a game."

They don't know what their future holds. She's a law student and may spend much of this year if not longer studying in a law school in Florida. He is getting close to a degree in computer science and hopes to finish up on the island. But he says he will leave the island if his career prospects are better elsewhere.

They have options. They say they want to go home to the island. For now they're in the wind.

Florida Keys Crisis: Help Wanted But No Place To House Workers

By Patricia Borns

[USA Today](#), October 8, 2017

Since arriving in the Florida Keys from Michigan, David Dodge had been sleeping in his van in the Kmart parking lot in Marathon — but not for long.

Leaving home with next to nothing, doing odd jobs along the way, the construction worker filled his van with tools strewn by Hurricane Irma on the Overseas Highway. Now he was going to fetch another Irma roadside freebie — a camper.

"There is work everywhere here, and a lack of people to do the work," Dodge said. "I guess I can help them help me."

As cleanup from the Category 4 hurricane segues into recovery, the Keys are reshuffling like a deck of cards. Out of money and homes, workers in growing numbers are leaving the islands, while businesses rebooting for tourist season hang out help wanted signs.

"Yes, there's a lot of work," said James Sullivan, a soft-spoken handyman living under a blue tarp outside his crushed green trailer in the Avenues on Big Pine Key. "It's just a matter of a roof."

Sullivan has a girlfriend waiting for him in Seattle. He and three other handymen he knows who also lost trailers are leaving the Keys.

"There are a lot of retirement homes here, and they won't find people to fix their doorknobs," he said.

A cashier at the Tom Thumb service station in Marathon, Alicia Zielinski said her company is "hiring for everything, even the in-store Subways. A lot of people left, and a lot of people need jobs."

One applicant apologized to Zielinski for being dirty because she's now homeless. "I told

her, 'I'm not worried about what you look like,'" the cashier said. Too little, too late for many workers

Before Irma, Monroe County counted less than 900 affordable places to live for the people who directly or indirectly support the Keys' roughly \$2.2 billion tourism industry. Between flooded ground floor apartments and mangled trailer parks, the options are gone.

About 933 residents are staying in hotels through FEMA's Transition Shelter Assistance program, the county reports. Marathon's Hyatt Place last week was filled with residents, many of whom had camped in their cars waiting to get a room near their damaged homes.

The Red Cross is sheltering another 70 people at the Sea Base Boy Scout camp on Summerland Key.

The first Keys family received a temporary trailer from FEMA last weekend out of 9,200 units the county requested. It will be months before a critical mass is available, a county website advised.

"It's almost like a genocide of our workforce," said Steve Henson, a Rockland Key site work contractor who offered 3 acres he has under agreement with Walmart as a staging area for the anticipated FEMA trailers.

Without the trailers, Henson estimates 50% of the working people in Key West, who live from Boca Chica to Duck Key — the Keys that took Irma's blunt force trauma — need temporary, and eventually permanent, homes. The only permanent solution may be leaving

It's not the first time the islands have had to worry about losing workers.

When 1,000 of them left the Keys in two and a half years, a 2006 study interviewed those remaining to see what could be done to stem the tide. Three out of five workers who responded — about 8,000 people — said they had plans to leave within five years.

The biggest reason cited: "the cost of housing."

The 125-mile island necklace has little land to begin with. FEMA regulates how much can be built on Keys lands for hurricane evacuation reasons — right now, less than 3,000 county building permits for the next 10 years. Already over half the housing is seasonal or second homes.

By 2015, the county reported a worker housing crisis, projecting a shortage of almost

7,000 affordable units. Key West Planning Director Donald Craig anticipated 6,500 more.

Such was the gap between need and available building rights that even before Irma, planners described "the futility of trying to build our way out of the crisis."

"The Lower Keys have the greatest workforce housing shortage of any place in America except maybe San Francisco," Historic Tours of America President Edwin Swift, III said. "This storm has exacerbated the situation."

More: Why Puerto Rico donations lag behind fundraising for Harvey, Irma victims

More: Hurricane Irma victims turn to GoFundMe, Facebook for help

wift is not only one of the island's biggest employers with 350 people, or cast members, as Historic Tours staff are called; he's also the biggest affordable housing builder with over 350 units for the cast and their families. "Our government has stood in the way of housing projects for the last 40 years," he said. "I've never built a project I haven't had to fight for."

Beyond 300 affordable units already in the pipeline before Irma, county staff were too focused on sheltering people temporarily to answer if or how Monroe County will build back its workforce housing.

Residents last year defeated a proposed apartment project that would have added 160 affordable homes on a former shrimp farm on Summerland Key.

"It was easy to say no before Irma," said co-developer Claude Gardner, a partner at Berkshire Hathaway Knight and Gardner Realty. "Post-hurricane, there will be consequences."

Gardner's cohort Joe Walsh, who owns five Keys restaurants, is already feeling them, with 40 of his 300 employees now homeless. The partners are scaling down the project to try again.

In a tent camp on Summerland Key that looks like a scattering of Conestoga wagons, Red Cross Communications Director Lynn Levine compared the post-Irma scene to international disasters she's served.

"The housing stock is sorely diminished now," Levine said. "The expectation in the non-profit sector is that property builders won't focus on affordable options. The word going around in the support and relief community is one of great concern."

FEMA spokesman John Mills agreed, "A disaster can exacerbate an already difficult

situation for different people. There's a valid concern that the amount of remaining available rental properties in the hardest hit areas is limited."

Swift predicted, "People will leave because they don't have a place to live. I think you will see business close because they can't get help."

In the short term, businesses are responding to the county's requests for help.

"The only way I can open today is that there are other properties that are not," said Cliff Taylor of Spottswood Companies, the Keys' only locally-owned, large flag hotel operator. "Their employees are coming to me."

Through a handshake of Florida Lodging and Restaurant Association members, 700 residents in Islamorada and Marathon who need work will temporarily be taken into businesses that are open. Spottswood, which has four properties including Key West Marriott Beachside, employs 350, Taylor said.

Gidgett Jackson, broker-owner of Realty Executives on Grassy Key, enlisted some of her short-term vacation home owners to rent rooms to displaced residents at reduced rates for 30 days.

Jackson also talked with trailer park owners, whose properties now look like boneyards, about letting people stay on their lots temporarily.

Many park leases are written to expire if the trailer is destroyed.

"One owner I spoke with wants to make sure people in his park have a place to stay," the broker said. "But ultimately, I have someone interested in buying the whole park. It makes more sense for him to sell it."

She predicts a huge transition in the next three to six months as people realize staying in the Keys won't be affordable when many of the parks rebuild. Survival of the fittest, financially

Meanwhile, those who can are hanging in as long as possible. Although tourist season doesn't begin in earnest until January, employers who can are opening to serve the trickle of day trippers and save some of their employees.

They're workers like Daire Perez, a house cleaner for Cudjoe vacation community Venture Out, who lost her trailer home and hasn't worked since Irma; now staying with her son Luis at the Red Cross shelter, living off her credit card, hoping to work again soon.

Like Keys Fisheries bartender Dustin Dornan, who evacuated to Ohio. After he and three friends lost the trailer they shared on Cudjoe Key, they

went in on a fifth-wheeler trailer and are headed back, confident of getting their old jobs back or finding new ones.

"I'm 42, and it's the first time in my life I've had a smile on my face every day," Dornan said. "I'm absolutely determined to be there."

And like Rachel Price, who until Irma managed family-owned White Sands Inn on Grassy Key and now can't pay herself a salary.

Here where the ocean smashed the windows and roared through the ground floor motel rooms, pushing whole buildings several yards over the sand, Price was scrambling to get an extra shift at Wreck and Galley to make the rent on her \$1,000 a month efficiency.

"The rent is due tomorrow, and I'm very concerned," Price said, wearing a mask to remove furniture from the moldy rooms with her friends. "If I give up the apartment, I don't think I could find another place that's affordable any time in the near future."

In lightly damaged Florida City and Homestead, workers who commute to hotel and retail jobs from Key Largo to Marathon still have their roofs, but they, too, have used up their rent reserves.

"My economy, being positioned at the end of the turnpike, depends on the Keys," Florida City Mayor Otis Wallace said. "One of the biggest effects, quietly under the radar, is that until businesses reopen, many of our people don't have a job."

That could soon resolve itself in their favor, however.

Since losing the room she rented in a house on Big Coppitt Key, Publix grocery store employee Gigi Gonzalez has been bunking at the Red Cross shelter while trying to get help from FEMA.

Meanwhile, the Lakeland, Fla.-based supermarket chain, which is opening two new stores on Islamorada, is busing in workers from the mainland to Marathon; even reimbursing the workers' commute times, Jackson said.

Although Gonzalez loves her Publix job and, before Irma, hoped to earn a promotion into management, "I'm willing to go anywhere to work," she said.

In the Keys' post-Irma housing shuffle, she might have to.

**Ryan On White House Relief Efforts:
Trump Has 'Tremendous
Compassion'**

By John Bowden

[The Hill](#), October 7, 2017

House Speaker Paul Ryan (R-Wis.) praised President Trump's "tremendous compassion" for disaster victims on Saturday when asked about the White House's hurricane relief efforts.

Speaking to MSNBC, Ryan told host Hugh Hewitt that Trump is doing what he can to avoid "jeopardizing" relief efforts with his visits to affected areas.

"I have talked to him about these things. He has tremendous compassion," Ryan said Saturday morning.

"He is flying to these emergencies as soon as he can without jeopardizing responses. He is stopping what he's doing. We have talked about the supplementals, these issues. The people who are suffering from these tragedies are in his mind front and center," Ryan added.

Trump has faced criticism from Democrats and members of the media for his remarks and his handling of Puerto Rico's hurricane recovery efforts. On Friday, "Hamilton" creator Lin-Manuel Miranda blasted the president for "adding insult to injury" with his visit to the island after a tweet that suggested Puerto Rican leaders aren't doing enough to help themselves in the recovery.

"I've never seen the president attack the victims of a natural disaster," Miranda, who is of Puerto Rican descent, told MSNBC's "All In with Chris Hayes."

"I've never seen a president attack the elected officials on the front line of a disaster," he said.

"At the same time, it's jaw-dropping," continued Miranda. "This has been an unprecedented disaster and it deserves an unprecedented response, or at least commiserate with the two other hurricanes that have also ravaged the United States of America."

Miranda's remarks come after Trump attacked the mayor of San Juan on Twitter last weekend, beginning a public feud with the local official that would last several days.

"The mayor of San Juan, who was very complimentary only a few days ago, has now been told by the Democrats that you must be nasty to Trump," Trump tweeted last Saturday. "Such poor leadership ability by the mayor of San Juan, and others in Puerto Rico, who are not able to get their workers to help."

U.S. Lost 33,000 Jobs In September; Unemployment Rate Dips To 4.2%

By Patricia Cohen

[New York Times](#), October 6, 2017

Staggering from the impact of hurricanes that walloped Texas, Florida and neighboring states, the economy lost 33,000 jobs in September, the first monthly decline in employment in seven years, the government reported on Friday.

But economists discounted the discouraging report, describing it as a blip in a job market that was fundamentally strong.

Some of the good news released by the Labor Department — a drop in the jobless rate to 4.2 percent and a year-over-year gain in wage growth of 2.9 percent — may also have been skewed by weather disruptions.

"The numbers were certainly blown around a lot by the storms," said Carl Tannenbaum, chief economist for Northern Trust. For that reason, he said, the Federal Reserve, which has been scrutinizing the employment report for signs of inflation, will probably look past this report. "As winds calm," he said, "my guess is employment figures will stabilize."

That pattern held true for Bruce Gropper, who runs Right at Home, a home-care franchise in Palm Beach, Fla.

"We put our hiring on hold" because of the weather, Mr. Gropper said, adding that many of the 50 to 75 caregivers who work for him and would typically have been in the field were unable or unavailable to work during a two-week period. "Now, things are back to normal."

It was the same in Texas. "There's a lot of manufacturing jobs in Beaumont, Corpus Christi, Houston, all of which suffered damage," noted Ray Perryman, president of the Perryman Group, an economic research and analysis firm based in Waco, Tex. "Some of these plants were shut down for an extended period of time, and that would have gotten into the September survey."

One upside may be a surge in hiring in subsequent months. Using Hurricane Katrina in August 2005 as a benchmark, Jim O'Sullivan, chief United States economist at High Frequency Economics, said he expected payrolls to bounce back by the end of the year.

"There's no question there were huge hurricane effects," he said. Food and drinking establishments alone lost 105,000 jobs last month, and the Bureau of Labor Statistics reported that the number of people who said they

were not working because of bad weather jumped by 1.5 million.

Mr. O'Sullivan and several economists agreed that the labor market was still pushing ahead — no matter how unevenly — in what is now the ninth year of an economic expansion. "The other data we've been seeing this week don't show any signs of a weaker trend," Mr. O'Sullivan said. "If you take out Texas and Florida, there's been no increase in jobless claims over the past five weeks."

The stock market's reaction to the news was mildly negative. The Standard & Poor's 500-stock index declined slightly from record levels after eight straight days of gains.

President Trump called attention this week to the economy's successes, writing on Twitter on Thursday, "Stock Market hits an ALL-TIME high! Unemployment lowest in 16 years!" Last week, Mr. Trump said that the Republicans' proposed tax cuts would provide further "rocket fuel for our economy."

Many workers have been waiting to see concrete evidence of economic progress in their paychecks. Although the Census Bureau last month reported a jump in annual incomes across a wide spectrum, households with incomes below the median remain worse off than they were in 2000.

The hefty growth in average wages reported on Friday was probably exaggerated, because many low-wage workers were temporarily displaced by the storms, bumping up the overall average.

At least a portion of the 0.5 percent average hourly wage growth last month, though, is likely to stick. There is plenty of evidence that broad swaths of the labor market are tightening. Target said last month that it would increase its base hourly pay by \$1, to \$11 — higher than or equal to the minimum wage in every state.

Amy Glaser, senior vice president of Adecco Staffing, said that employers she worked with were raising wages and reaching into less-common pools of potential employees like retirees, stay-at-home moms and people with disabilities.

Ms. Glaser said she expected wages to rise further, saying some of her clients were thinking about increasing hourly wages as much as 20 to 40 percent during the peak holiday season and early next year. Employers are also pushing to retain the workers they have — for example, by

offering more bonuses for e-commerce and other seasonal workers who stay through the holidays.

Some businesses are trying to generate and educate their work forces by offering more paid internships and apprenticeships. Others are shortening the interview cycle to improve their chances. "There is a need for speed," Ms. Glaser said. "Whoever gets to a candidate first is well positioned."

Radial, the second-largest direct-to-consumer e-commerce company behind Amazon, is hiring 27,000 people to work in its 25 warehouses around the country through mid-January. Even as brick-and-mortar retail is suffering significant losses, e-commerce continues to thrive.

"We're hiring 35 percent, or 7,000, more people than we did last year," said Stefan Weitz, Radial's executive vice president for technology services. "It's very competitive. A lot of logistics companies have operations in similar areas because of the proximity to air and ground transport."

At the upper end of the labor market, the competition for highly skilled workers is intense. Bryan Leach, founder of Ibotta, a Denver company offering a mobile shopping app, said he had hired more than 100 people this year, including engineers, product managers and data scientists, mostly at six-figure salaries.

"We are hiring national search firms to shop for talent in the coasts," in addition to seven in-house recruiters, Mr. Leach said. The company has also helped sponsor billboards in San Francisco promoting the benefits of living in Denver and is offering \$1,000 apiece to employees who refer friends who are hired.

Despite the scramble for workers, the labor market has stubborn weak spots. Many of the jobs available, like the seasonal positions at Radial, are at the lower end of the pay scale and do not offer long-term stability.

For some workers, such jobs have limited appeal. The labor force participation rate peaked its head above 63 percent in September, but many workers remain on the sidelines.

Revised hiring figures for July and August showed that a total of 38,000 fewer jobs were created in those two months than previously reported, bringing the monthly average gain in 2017 — excluding September — to 170,000. August's figures will be revised one more time, while September's will be revised twice over the

next two months. State-by-state tallies for September are not yet available.

(Although Hurricane Maria also devastated Puerto Rico in September, the survey of employers that the Bureau of Labor Statistics uses to calculate monthly payroll gains does not include the island.)

The Katrina experience showed that hiring can rebound quickly after a disaster, as damaged communities clean up and rebuild. Employment gains averaged 249,000 in the six months before the storm. After New Orleans found itself underwater, gains averaged 76,000 over the next couple of months before soaring to 341,000 in November 2005.

While the recovery from the latest storms takes shape, businesses and workers are still counting their losses. Brian Petranick, Right at Home's president and chief executive, said Palm Beach was not the only community where franchises were unable to connect workers and clients. He estimated hurricane-related losses to the company would end up at \$13 million to \$15 million. "During big storms, we see a loss of hours and services," he said. "That means caregivers are losing the opportunity to work and make money."

How Hurricanes Skewed September's Job Numbers

By Ben Casselman

[New York Times](#), October 6, 2017

The United States' nearly seven-year streak of job growth came to an end in September, as employers cut 33,000 jobs. But don't read too much into that decline — Hurricanes Harvey and Irma, which ravaged Texas and Florida, wreaked havoc on employment.

How do we know that the storms played a role? Workers said so themselves. The monthly jobs report is based in part on a survey of roughly 60,000 American households. One question on that survey asks whether people who normally have jobs were not at work because of bad weather. In a typical September, around 30,000 workers fall into that category; this year, that number was 1.5 million. Another nearly 3 million people reported working part-time because of the weather.

Teasing out the exact impact of the storms is tricky. The Bureau of Labor Statistics acknowledged that the storms reduced total employment but didn't estimate the size of the

effect. The government won't release state-specific data for another two weeks, and even then it will be hard to distinguish weather-related effects from other forces. (The monthly jobs numbers do not cover Puerto Rico, which was devastated by Hurricane Maria.)

Still, it is nearly certain that, had it not been for the hurricanes, job growth would have been positive for a record 84th consecutive month. Jonathan Wright, an economist affiliated with the Brookings Institution, estimated that Friday's report would have shown a 67,000 increase in jobs had it not been for the effect of the hurricanes.

The storms did not affect all industries or workers equally.

Jed Kolko, chief economist at Indeed.com, a job-search site, noted that September's employment declines were concentrated in low-wage industries. Employment in the leisure and hospitality sector, for example, which includes hotels, restaurants and other weather-dependent businesses, was cut by 111,000 jobs in September.

It was the first net loss of jobs in the industry since 2012, according to the government data. Low-wage, hourly workers in other industries may also have been disproportionately affected by the storm.

That pattern may help explain one of the pieces of good news in Friday's report: the unusually big, 12 cent jump in average hourly earnings. The — presumably temporary — disappearance of thousands of low-wage jobs probably skewed the overall average, making wage gains look bigger than they really were.

The good news is that the storm effects are likely temporary. Most of the workers kept home by the storms are back on the job now, or will be by the time October's jobs numbers come out next month. The storms will probably even bolster employment temporarily, at least in the affected states, as the recovery effort creates jobs for insurance adjusters, construction workers and others.

That means next month's jobs report will likely show big gains — and should be viewed with the same skepticism as this month's.

Hurricane-Battered U.S. Shed 33,000 Jobs In September

Unemployment rate fell to 4.2%; labor market shed jobs for first time in seven years

By Josh Mitchell

[Wall Street Journal](#), October 6, 2017

Full-text stories from the Wall Street Journal are available to Journal subscribers by clicking the link.

Analysis: Jobs Report Leaves Fed On Course To Raise Rates Again This Year

Strip away the job losses due to hurricanes Harvey and Irma and September's employment report looks very strong

By David Harrison

[Wall Street Journal](#), October 6, 2017

Full-text stories from the Wall Street Journal are available to Journal subscribers by clicking the link.

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."

Massive Wildfires Consume Homes Across Northern California

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

More than a dozen wildfires ignited and fed on powerful winds through California wine country overnight, state officials said Monday.

1. Fire glows on a hillside in Napa, California on Oct. 9, 2017, as multiple wind-driven fires whipped through the region.

Gov. Jerry Brown declared an emergency in Napa, Sonoma and Yuba counties as at least 15 new fires burned across the northern half of the state. The Federal Emergency Management Agency immediately agreed to the state's request for federal funds to help fight many of the fires, the Department of Homeland Security said.

2. Fire consumes a home in Glen Ellen, California.

3. A resident rushes to save his home as a wildfire moves through the area in Glen Ellen.

4. A truck burns as fire ravages the Napa wine region.

5. A firefighter walks near a pool as a neighboring home burns in the Napa wine region.

6. A structure at Journey's End mobile home park burns in Santa Rosa.

At least 1,500 homes and commercial structures were destroyed in the region in just 12 hours, authorities said.

7. Fire consumes a house in Glen Ellen.

8. The remains of fire damaged homes stand after a wildfire moved through the area in Glen Ellen.

All of the new fires started after 10 p.m. PT (7 p.m. ET) on Sunday, Cal Fire Director Ken Pimlott said, bringing the total spread of more than 25 fires across the northern half of California to about 73,000 acres at what he called the worst possible time.

9. Fire burns from an open gas valve near the pool area at the Journey's End mobile home park in Santa Rosa.

10. The remains of a home lie, left, as flames rise from another home, in the background, in Santa Rosa.

11. Flames overtake a structure in Napa.

12. A resident rushes to save his home in Glen Ellen.

13. A car lies near the remains of fire damaged home in Glen Ellen.

14. A firefighter walks in front of a burning home in Santa Rosa.

15. Fire rages at the Hilton Sonoma Wine Country Hotel in Santa Rosa.

16. Rudy Habibe, from Puerto Rico, and his service dog Maximus walk toward a burning building at the Hilton Sonoma Wine Country Hotel, where he was a guest, in Santa Rosa.

17. Fire consumes a barn in Glen Ellen.

18. Burned out wine bottles lie on a rack at the fire damaged Signorello Estate winery.

19. A man rides a bicycle past burned down homes in Santa Rosa.

20. Smoke rises as a wildfire burns in the hills north east of Napa. Wildfires whipped by powerful winds swept through Northern California sending residents on a headlong flight to safety through smoke and flames as homes burned.

21. An aerial photo shows the devastation left behind from the North Bay wildfires north of San Francisco.

22. A firefighter covers his eyes as he walks past a burning hillside in Santa Rosa.

23. Two people hug as they watch houses burn in Santa Rosa.

Inferno Destroys Parts Of Santa Rosa — Blocks Of Homes Gone

By Jill Tucker

[San Francisco Chronicle](#), October 9, 2017

Neighborhood after neighborhood is gone in Santa Rosa. One of them is Coffey Park, a homey cluster of single-family homes 2 miles northwest of downtown.

Arthur and Chavette Chaney used to live there.

"A few hours ago, we had a house," said Chavette Chaney, clutching the arm of her husband and sobbing on Monday.

They stood in the middle of Randon Way, which was still recognizable as a street, even if their home was not recognizable as a home.

"I don't know what to say," she said. I want to crawl into a corner and cry. But it's not just you — it's everybody."

Almost the entire subdivision of single-family homes, built in the 1980s, was gone. Nearby, another newer and upscale subdivision, Fountaingrove, was devastated, too. The two neighborhoods' combined population was about 8,000.

Among the few homes in Coffey Park that was spared was one belonging to Wayne Sims, who had ignored evacuation orders and stayed behind to hose down his home while houses on their side were igniting and exploding.

"I was just drowning this place," Sims said.

He figured if that didn't work out, he'd clamber over a fence and run south on the railroad tracks. But his luck held, unlike just about no one else's, and his house is still there.

Families started trickling back into the Coffey Park neighborhood about 10 hours after they had fled. They stood in front of smoldering rubble, their hands covering their mouths as they tried to take in the devastation. Some held each other and sobbed. Others just shook their heads.

One woman cried as she said her father's ashes had been in the house. Another sobbed after realizing her beloved turtle was amid the ruins.

Todd Trask just stared. His house was gone, as was every neighbor's home as far as he could see. House after house. Block after block. All looked like they belonged somewhere besides Earth.

On the ground were frozen rivers of metal that used to be parts of cars.

Trask left at 1:30 a.m. as neighbors woke them with honking and yelling, thinking evacuating was just a precaution. He left thinking it would be

hard to get the smell of smoke out of his home when he got back.

Instead, the smoke was all there was.

On Monday afternoon, he mourned the photos, the mementos and personal items. All gone. He had saved his dog. Also his bicycles, his computer and a basket of clothes from the laundry. He left behind a Salvador Dalí etching of a horse. It had been on the wall. The etching is gone, along with the wall.

Residents in Coffey Park said they never got an alert on their phones or any official evacuation notice. Many were awakened by the smell, others by neighbors banging on their door or car horns honking on the street.

Tim Ros got a call from a friend saying there was a fire. He decided to shower and shave and then head out. When he saw burning embers floating past the bathroom window, he decided to skip the shave.

"Why was there no alert?" he asked.

He's gotten emergency weather and Amber Alerts in the past, he said, but this time nothing. He was angry.

Ros' house was spared, one of only a handful in the area. He sat on his stoop and looked out at the barren, surreal neighborhood of nothing.

"I just don't have any words for it," he said.

Elsewhere in Santa Rosa, hundreds of homes and businesses are gone. Officials don't know exactly how many. They're still doing the counting.

East of Coffey Park, scores of upscale homes in the the Fountaingrove neighborhood east of the inn are gone. So are homes around Piner Road.

Two Santa Rosa mobile home parks, a furniture store and a gun store were among the structures that are no more.

Also engulfed were two hotels and a motel — the Fountaingrove Inn, the Hilton Sonoma Wine Country hotel and the Best Value Inn and Suites, where hundreds of rooms were reduced to charred heaps.

On Sunday, the Fountaingrove website said it was the "perfect home away from home." On Monday, the Fountaingrove website said the hotel was "unable to conduct business in any capacity."

Not far away, the fire claimed three restaurants and a market.

They were among the almost unbelievable number of structures — 1,500, according to

firefighters — that had been obliterated on Monday morning in the firestorms sweeping through the North Bay and elsewhere in Northern California.

Residents who went to sleep Sunday night woke up a few hours later to the smell of smoke or the sound of neighbors or cops banging on the door. Some had only moments to flee with whatever they could grab.

"We barely got out," said Eduardo Flores, 66, who fled the Journey's End mobile home park with his wife, Emily, and his dog, Rosy, ahead of a wall of flame that destroyed his home.

"I got up, smelled smoke in the bedroom, stepped outside and realized it was time to go," he said. "The whole park was on fire. We were driving out over burning branches."

The out-of-control Tubbs Fire in and around Santa Rosa, which by Monday morning had burned 25,000 acres, consumed restaurants, hotels, businesses at will. Those structures it spared seemed to escape by mere chance.

The fire knocked down trees and sent burning branches onto the ground. It knocked down power poles and left a tangle of dangerous wires on the ground. In the 800 block of Piner Road, it consumed a firearms store, and its heat caused ammunition to explode with loud pops.

It appeared that the Schmidt Firearms store was a total loss, along with the adjoining Furniture 2000 store and the Coddington mobile home park.

Andy Lahiji, the owner of the Furniture 2000 store, stood and watched as firefighters fought a losing battle to save the structures, including a furniture warehouse.

"I had \$300,000 in inventory in the warehouse," he said.

He also gazed at the remains of his large panel truck, reduced to a blackened hull.

About 3 miles north of downtown Santa Rosa, the fire destroyed Arby's and Applebee's restaurants in the 800 block of Hopper Avenue, along with a building that housed a mini-mart and a McDonald's restaurant at a nearby Chevron gas station. The Best Value Inn and Suites at 866 Hopper Ave. was fully involved.

But next door to the engulfed buildings, a Taco Bell, a Kohl's store and a Public Storage facility were largely undamaged.

Black smoke filled the sky, obstructing visibility and making breathing difficult. Hundreds of firefighters were on the scene.

The burning buildings were too far gone to save, and firefighters were unable to do anything but attempt to keep the flames from spreading.

Homeowners told similar stories of frantic dashes to safety and of a fire that picked and chose the houses to destroy.

Jerome Johnson, 55, a resident of the 2100 block of Northfield Drive in Santa Rosa, said he woke up to smoke and fire. He and his wife, Melissa, loaded their cat, Jazz, into the car and tried to drive to safety.

"The street was packed with cars," he said. "I thought, 'How the hell are we going to get out?' The fire was getting pretty damn close. I thought we'd be faster walking."

The Johnsons parked the car and walked to the emergency shelter at the Finley Community Center, carrying Jazz.

"You could see the wall of flames and hear the explosions," he said.

Not far away, in the Hidden Valley area of Santa Rosa, residents said the flames and smoke came upon them equally fast.

Bob Ochs, the retired chief probation officer for Sonoma County, who lives a few steps from the mandatory evacuation area, said he was awakened in the predawn hours by a neighbor and began packing his belongings and watering down his house, including a pile of ornamental bamboo plants he had just cut down that weren't ornamental any more, but kindling.

"You try to do whatever you can," he said.

Ochs said he was staying put, for now, and that his house was OK, for now. Anyway, he said, traffic was at a standstill and roads were closed.

"Some of my neighbors are anxious and ready to move out, and some are more patient," he said. "One man is walking his dog up and down the street."

Wildfires In Northern California Kill At Least 10 And Destroy 1,500 Buildings

By Thomas Fuller, Jonah Engel Bromwich
And Daniel Victor

[New York Times](#), October 9, 2017

SANTA ROSA, Calif. — Fast-moving wildfires raged across Northern California on Monday, killing at least 10 people, forcing the evacuation of up to 20,000 and destroying well over 1,000 buildings in one of the most destructive fire emergencies in the state's history.

Firefighters were battling blazes in eight counties, officials said.

In Santa Rosa, the fire gutted a Hilton hotel and flattened the Journey's End retirement community, a trailer park not far from the freeway that crosses the city. Most of the trailers were leveled, leaving a smoldering debris field of household appliances, filing cabinets and the charred personal effects of more than 100 residents. Pieces of ash fell like snowflake flurries, and a pall of white smoke across the city blotted out the sun.

Janet Upton, a deputy director of the California Department of Forestry and Fire Protection, said that at least 15 separate fires across the region had destroyed an estimated 1,500 homes and businesses and had burned over 73,000 acres since late Sunday night. Ten people have been killed, she said: seven in Sonoma County, two in Napa County and one in Mendocino County.

The property damage, already among the worst seen in a fire in California, was expected to increase. In Santa Rosa, the seat of Sonoma County, the authorities imposed a curfew starting at sunset and said they were watching for looters.

Gov. Jerry Brown issued emergency proclamations for Butte, Lake, Mendocino, Napa, Nevada, Orange, Sonoma and Yuba Counties, saying the fires had damaged critical infrastructure and threatened thousands of homes. He also asked President Trump to declare a major disaster.

"This is really serious. It's moving fast. The heat, the lack of humidity and the winds are all driving a very dangerous situation and making it worse," the governor said at a morning news conference. "It's not under control by any means. But we're on it in the best way we know how."

The fires began at about 10 p.m. Sunday and were fanned by wind gusts moving faster than 50 miles an hour, Ms. Upton said. The cause remained under investigation on Monday afternoon.

The worst fires in Northern California tend to hit in October, when dry conditions prime them to spread fast and far as heavy winds, known as north winds or diablo winds, buffet the region.

Ms. Upton said that conditions were critically dry, given the lack of moisture in the air and the buildup of grass, brush and trees.

"Combined, that's a recipe for disaster," she said.

Smoke billowed into the Bay Area, but the Marin County Fire Department reported that there were no separate fires in the area.

Reports suggested that residents in the region were caught unaware, many of them fleeing the area in cars and on foot as firefighters rushed to contain the outbreak. A number of roadways, including highways, were blocked by fire.

Neighborhoods in Santa Rosa, the county seat of Sonoma, were evacuated, according to the city manager, who said the Kaiser Permanente and Sutter hospitals were being cleared out. Flying cinders carried the fire across roads and ignited small patches of fire through neighborhoods: A pile of wood chips in the Home Depot parking lot caught fire.

Traffic lights at multiple intersections in Santa Rosa were not functioning. Columns of black smoke could be seen in the evergreen forests on the northern outskirts of the city.

The fires raged through the hills that are home to some of the country's most prized vineyards. The main north-south highway that connects San Francisco to the northernmost parts of California was closed Monday as fire engulfed both sides of the freeway. Santa Rosa is a hub for tours into wine country. At least two large hotels that cater to the wine tourism trade were destroyed by the fires.

North of Santa Rosa's downtown, residents of the Overlook, a hilltop apartment complex, used fire extinguishers to put out flames engulfing cypress trees planted along a building. Minutes later, the flames returned. At least three engines and ladder trucks arrived but could not stop flames on one of the buildings from spreading to the roof.

"It looks like they're giving up on that one," said Derek Smith, a Santa Rosa resident watching the blaze whose house was several blocks away.

Lisa Kaldunski, an operator at Sutter Santa Rosa Regional Hospital, said around 6:30 a.m. local time that the facility was being evacuated and that patients were being taken to other hospitals.

Marc Brown, a spokesman for Kaiser Permanente, said about 130 patients had been evacuated from the Santa Rosa medical center because of the fires.

The Lake and Mendocino County sheriffs' offices ordered evacuations. The Butte County sheriff announced that there were two fires in the

area and listed neighborhoods where evacuation was mandatory.

Belia Ramos, the chairwoman of the Napa County board of supervisors, said the county was dealing with three main fires. One has threatened more than 10,000 acres in northern Napa County, another has endangered 8,000 to 12,000 acres, and a third has affected about 2,000 acres, she said.

California was hit by fires throughout the summer. Late last month, several blazes led to the evacuation of about 1,000 people in Southern California.

"I've been with the department for 31 years and some years are notorious," Ms. Upton said. "I'm afraid that 2017 is going to be added to that list now."

Even into the early afternoon — many hours after the homes were destroyed in the Journey's End retirement community in Santa Rosa — flames shot from a large propane tank with a roar that resembled an aircraft engine.

Richard Snyder and Robert Sparks, both residents of the retirement community, said their neighboring trailers were incinerated. They lost televisions, books, laptops — and copies of the insurance policies that they had taken out.

"This is all I have," Mr. Snyder said, pointing to his jeans and turquoise T-shirt. "And one pair of glasses."

The fire was so intense it burned through the metal and glass trailers and safes that were advertised as fireproof.

"It was locked," Dana Walter, Mr. Sparks's daughter, said of the safe. "Passports, ID cards, everything gone."

Ofelia Razo, one of about a dozen residents whose houses were spared, fled her house with her purse in a pre-dawn evacuation with dozens of other residents. Her husband, Milton, took only his guitar. The flames were visible in the hills across the street from the retirement community.

When they returned around 10 hours later, Ms. Razo saw the smoking rubble in the distance and broke down.

"I started crying," she said.

As she came closer she saw that the fire had stopped at her wooden lattice fence. Her powder blue trailer had been bizarrely untouched. Even the plastic flowers in a ceramic pumpkin vase on the porch were intact. Her red rose bushes were only lightly singed.

"It's a miracle!" she said. "Gracias, Señor!"

Napa, Sonoma, Santa Rosa Fires Ravage Northern California's Wine Country, Killing 10 And Forcing Evacuations

By Breena Kerr

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

SANTA ROSA, Calif. — Fires pushed by warm winds and fueled by dry ground swept through California wine country Monday, killing at least 10 people, injuring numerous others and torching more than 1,500 homes and businesses.

State fire officials warned that the conditions, particularly winds that at times exceeded 50 miles per hour, would likely exacerbate the fires in the days ahead. At least 14 separate blazes burned in eight Northern California counties, prompting evacuations of more than 20,000 frightened residents, including patients in threatened hospitals.

"This is really serious; it's moving fast," Gov. Jerry Brown (D) said during a news conference in which he declared an emergency in three counties. "The heat, the lack of humidity and the winds are all driving a very dangerous situation and making it worse. It's not under control by any means. But we're on it in the best way we know how."

The fires, which whipped up overnight Sunday, added to what has already been a severe fire season in the West. More than 8 million acres have burned in at least four states, raising questions from across the political spectrum about the connection to climate change and forest management practices.

The current wildfires had burned more than 70,000 acres in Northern California by late Monday afternoon, nearly all of those in Sonoma and Napa counties, the heartland of the state's renowned wine industry. A smaller but fast-moving fire in Mendocino County to the north killed one person, according to Jonathan Cox, a battalion chief and spokesman for Cal Fire. The sheriff of Sonoma County confirmed seven additional deaths there, and Cal Fire confirmed two more deaths in the Atlas Fire in Napa County.

The pace of the burn took firefighters by surprise: The fires charred 20,000 acres in about 12 hours, which Cox called "a phenomenal rate of growth." He said firefighters had "zero percent" containment and warned that, while winds had weakened slightly over the course of the day, "because of heat and low humidity, fire growth is still likely."

The situation in Santa Rosa, the largest city in Sonoma County, appeared dire. The Tubbs fire, as the blaze in Sonoma is known, sped southwest from Calistoga in Napa Valley, jumped Highway 101 and entered Santa Rosa. Cal Fire officials said the cause is under investigation.

A resident, Ron Dodds, told TV station KTVU that "people are running red lights, there is chaos ensuing."

"It's a scary time," Dodds said. "It looks like Armageddon."

[Las Vegas gunman shot security guard minutes before massacre, police say]

Kaiser Permanente evacuated about 130 patients from the Santa Rosa Medical Center by ambulance and private bus early Monday morning, according to Jenny Mack, the health system's public relations director for Northern California. The patients were taken to Kaiser Permanente in San Rafael, in Marin County, and other hospitals and evacuation sites.

Sutter Santa Rosa Regional Hospital also evacuated all of its patients. By Monday afternoon, the hospital had become inaccessible because of road closures.

Will Powers, a Cal Fire representative, said the California Highway Patrol was evacuating some people by helicopter in rural areas of Sonoma, Napa and Lake counties.

The vineyards of Napa and Sonoma counties are the source of some of the country's best wines, and the scores of tasting rooms are among the state's most popular tourism destinations. Witness accounts Monday suggested damage to the industry could be significant, especially if the fires continue to burn in the days ahead.

"It looks like a bombing run," Joe Nielsen, the winemaker at Donelan Family Wines in Sonoma County, said in an interview with SFGate. "Just chimneys and burned-out cars and cooked trees."

Evacuations began at about 11 p.m. Sunday evening and continued through Monday. Some left burning homes for evacuation centers, only to find those evacuation centers threatened by fire a few hours later.

In Rincon Valley, on the northeast outskirts of Santa Rosa, pastor Andy Vomsteeg opened his New Life Vintage Church to those fleeing the fire. By Monday afternoon, more than 400 people, many of them elderly, had taken refuge inside.

"I left without my clothes," said Nell Magnuson, a resident of the luxury retirement home Villa Capri. She wore only a maroon robe.

"We had to get out in a hurry," she said. "When we left, the flames were in the second floor."

[A 'pressure cooker': Trump's frustration and fury rupture alliances, threaten agenda]

Magnuson, who was worried about where she would sleep Monday night, said that "our whole lives have turned upside down. We don't have a clue what's going to happen. It's just losing everything. All the pictures, my whole life."

But before her concerns could be addressed, the fire began to threaten the church.

"You caught us just in time," Magnuson said as she headed for the exit. "We're being evacuated again."

Thick smoke hung over Sonoma County, and ash rained down in some towns. People wore masks on the streets, and businesses shut down.

In Healdsburg, a town nearly circled by fire 16 miles north of Santa Rosa, exhausted evacuees bought supplies, fueled up and looked for a place to stay for the night.

Cindy Luzzi, who was visiting her son and his family in Santa Rosa, said her daughter-in-law got a call from a neighbor at about 2:30 a.m., telling them to evacuate.

"At first we didn't think it was anything to worry about. Then we went downstairs, opened our front door and looked towards the center of town," Luzzi said. "It was just red, nothing but red."

Luzzi and her daughter-in-law and two young grandchildren took refuge at the Francis Ford Coppola Winery in nearby Geyserville from 3 a.m. until 8 a.m., waiting for her son to join them. They were then able to book a room at the Best Western in town. But by 2 p.m., the hotel had filled up.

Shortages of rooms, bottled water and fuel were affecting surrounding towns, as well.

"We're almost out of gas" said Hardeep Gill, who owns a filling station in downtown Healdsburg just off Highway 101.

Gill, who came into work because his employees couldn't get there, said he had lost a commercial building he owned worth about \$9 million.

"I got a call around 3 a.m. because the fire sprinklers were going off," he said. "That's when I knew it was a total loss."

Greenberg reported from Berkeley, Calif., and Kerr from Healdsburg. Wilson and Wong reported from Washington. Mary Hui in Washington also contributed to this report.

Wildfires Kill At Least 10 In California Wine Country

By Marc Vartabedian

[Reuters](#), October 10, 2017

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

The Latest: Cruise Ship Returning After Nate Delay

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

The latest on Nate and Tropical Storm Ophelia (all times local):

2:30 p.m.

A cruise ship stuck at sea because of Hurricane Nate is returning to its port on the Gulf Coast.

The Alabama Cruise Terminal says the Carnival Fantasy is set to dock at 4 p.m. Monday in Mobile, Alabama. It was originally scheduled to return Saturday but couldn't make it back because of the storm.

Officials have to survey the ship channel and make sure navigational markers are in place after a storm. The Coast Guard says it has reopened the Port of Mobile with restrictions.

Ports remain closed in Pensacola, Florida, and the Mississippi cities of Gulfport and Pascagoula.

12:15 p.m.

Passengers aboard a cruise ship are stuck in the Gulf of Mexico because a cruise liner can't make it back to port following Hurricane Nate.

The Carnival Fantasy is two days overdue since the port of Mobile, Alabama, was closed because of the storm. It's unclear when the ship will return.

Some passengers are complaining about the unscheduled delay on social media. Carnival spokeswoman Christine De La Huerta says the ship has plenty of provisions, and it's meandering in the Gulf while awaiting the reopening.

Officials have to survey the ship channel and make sure navigational markers are in place after a storm. A spokeswoman with the Alabama State Docks says the Coast Guard reopened the port with restrictions on Monday.

The ship has a total guest capacity of 2,056 people and carries a crew of 920. The ship departed Mobile on a five-night Caribbean trip on Oct. 2.

11:10 a.m.

Nate caused relatively little damage in Alabama, but it could still take days to deal with the storm's worst effects.

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

Collier says Nate "moved the beachfront on to the roadway," and neither power company nor city water workers can begin repairing damage until the road is clear.

To the east, at Gulf State Park, waves from the storm washed out removable flooring panels on a more than 1,500-foot-long fishing pier that was rebuilt after being destroyed by Hurricane Ivan in 2004. Workers were replacing the panels Monday with a goal of reopening the pier in time for the National Shrimp Festival, which opens Thursday in nearby Gulf Shores.

Alabama Power Co. said only 8,500 homes and businesses remained without electrical service, down from a high of nearly 146,000 customers without power at the worst of the storm.

10:55 a.m.

The U.S. National Hurricane Center in Miami says that a depression in open Atlantic has strengthened to a tropical storm.

The center says Tropical Storm Ophelia is about 860 miles (1,385 kilometers) west-southwest of the Azores and poses no threat to land.

No coastal watches or warnings are in effect as of the hurricane center's 11 a.m. EDT advisory.

10:10 a.m.

A volunteer firefighter clearing debris after storms associated with Tropical Storm Nate died when he was hit by a car in western North Carolina.

The Triple Community Fire Department says firefighters were called to U.S. Highway 70 in Morganton shortly before midnight Sunday when 40-year-old Jason Keith Hensley was struck. The fire department said Hensley was wearing reflective gear.

The North Carolina Highway Patrol says 58-year-old Randall Stewart has been charged with driving while impaired and several other traffic and drug charges. It was not known if he has an attorney yet.

More than 10,000 customers were without electricity. Duke Energy reported the outages were worst on Monday in Polk and Macon counties.

The National Weather Service was working to confirm whether damage was caused by tornadoes.

4:10 a.m.

Nate slogged its way across the U.S. East Coast on Monday, dumping heavy rains and bringing gusty winds to inland states as a tropical depression, a day after Hurricane Nate brought a burst of flooding and power outages to the U.S. Gulf Coast.

Nate spared the region the kind of catastrophic damage left by a series of hurricanes that hit the southern U.S. and Caribbean in recent weeks.

Nate — the first hurricane to make landfall in Mississippi since Katrina in 2005 — quickly lost strength Sunday, with its winds diminishing to a tropical depression as it pushed northward into Alabama and Georgia with heavy rain. It was a Category 1 hurricane when it came ashore outside Biloxi early Sunday, its second landfall after initially hitting southeastern Louisiana on Saturday evening.

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FEMA Says No To Presidential Declaration On Drought

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

North Dakota won't be getting the presidential major disaster declaration it had sought for this summer's drought.

Gov. Doug Burgum lobbied hard for the declaration, which could have unlocked direct disaster payments to farmers and ranchers. He first made it in August, and also asked President Donald Trump directly last month when the president made an appearance at an oil refinery in Mandan.

But Burgum's office announced Monday that the Federal Emergency Management Agency had denied the request. FEMA Administrator Brock Long wrote that direct assistance is "not appropriate" for the drought.

Long also wrote that relief was available through other federal programs and sources.

Burgum says he knew the request was a long shot, especially as hurricanes and wildfires have meant new demands for federal aid.

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Federal Officials Study Crumbling Foundations

[Associated Press](#), October 6, 2017

Federal officials have visited Connecticut to study the mineral blamed for causing foundations to crumble in thousands of homes.

WVIT-TV reports officials with the Federal Emergency Management Agency and the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers finished a two-day visit to the state Thursday.

Democratic Gov. Dannel Malloy says the team will discuss their findings with lawmakers at the end of the month. Malloy says he requested "short order" guidance on standards for quarries and concrete manufacturers.

The federal team says more state assistance would depend on an act of Congress.

Officials have traced the problem to the mineral pyrrhotite. The mineral reacts with oxygen and water, and causes cracks in concrete foundations over time.

State officials estimate up to 30,000 homeowners are affected.

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FEMA HOUSING

Displaced By Hurricane Harvey: Texas Evacuees Without Options

By Abe Louise Young

[Texas Monthly](#), October 9, 2017

At fifty hotels across Austin, continental breakfast lines are bustling. Families wake up early to try to cram in enough Pop Tarts, muffins, cereal, and milk to hold them until the next day.

These are the recipients of vouchers from the Federal Emergency Management Agency, which have given families temporary housing in hotels across Austin after their homes were destroyed by Hurricane Harvey. The first FEMA hotel vouchers were issued on August 30, five days after the disaster declaration was made, but they arrived at different times and dates for everyone—or, in some cases, not at all. Many people who'd been

staying in temporary shelters received vouchers just before the centers closed, but others' applications were still pending, or—even worse—denied.

According to FEMA, as of October 6, 852,744 households have applied for assistance. Only 308,862 applications have been approved, but FEMA couldn't provide numbers on how many are still pending and how many were denied. People are denied FEMA aid for a wide number of reasons, and in some cases, it might seem, for no reason at all. Aid eligibility rests on being able to prove U.S. citizenship and residence at an address rendered unlivable. This might seem easy, but pitfalls abound: people who lived with roommates or family and might not be listed on a lease or a utility bill; people who lived with too many other applicants; people whose homes could be owned by incarcerated spouses or exes; exchange students, foreigners, and undocumented people who cannot offer proof of citizenship; people who lost their identification in the storm, or their landlord's phone number. The list goes on.

Ironically, an application will be denied if the home is inaccessible to the inspector—for example, if it is because it is underwater or there are downed trees blocking the road in. "If the inspector can't get in to review the condition of the property it will be denied because they cannot see it," says Deanna Frazier, FEMA media relations manager for Hurricane Harvey. "People will need to go through the appeal process." But many survivors of the storm aren't aware of the appeal process. And even if they do try again, FEMA appeals can take up to ninety days.

When people apply for FEMA aid, they have to provide an alternate address to be contacted by mail, which presents another problem. "If we went out to check up on them and they weren't there—maybe they moved since that time—that could trigger a denial," Frazier says. "I know it may be a little onerous on the survivor, but we're trying to be good stewards of the taxpayer dollars and make sure that people are who they say they are."

And if an application is denied, FEMA will only communicate the reasons via paper letter, which they mail to the last address registered in their system. That could be a shelter that evacuees have already left, or the house ruined in the disaster. For a transitory population, this method can seem designed to fail.

Even for the people lucky enough to avoid the initial denial, vouchers were only a temporary fix. On Saturday, September 23, one of two recorded phone messages from FEMA was sent to every evacuee using vouchers in the hotels. One said: You are now eligible for an extended hotel voucher. The other: You are not eligible for an extended hotel voucher. One word made all of the difference. And on the recordings, the difference between "not" and "now" was almost indiscernible, leading to confusion and jammed phone lines. The wait to talk to a FEMA representative on the phone was up to seven hours. In the meantime, FEMA's website went completely down.

The first wave of FEMA vouchers expired at 11 a.m. on Tuesday, September 26. Many were extended for fourteen days, but for those without further vouchers, the struggle deepened. Suddenly, they were left with no shelter, no money, and even less to eat. According to Frazier, on September 24, there were 69,185 individuals in 24,440 voucher rooms. Two days later, there were 59,195 individuals in 21,046 rooms. That meant almost ten thousand people had to make new arrangements.

What's happening in Texas right now is a test case for the first wave of homelessness post-disaster. The end of September began the critical first-month juncture when every entity possible must act in order to seal the cracks that vulnerable people can fall right into.

Belinda Salinas was working two jobs when Harvey hit. As a fry cook at Popeye's, who was also training to be a manager at Wendy's, she worked ten hours a day to keep her family in an efficiency apartment. Her wife, Kristi Perez, was pursuing her GED and caring for their sons Erik, 12, and Abram, 10.

Under mandatory evacuation orders, Salinas and Perez packed up and left their apartment in Victoria, which was filling with water. They stayed for three days in a shelter outside the city, in an area that didn't sustain such massive flooding. Then, evacuated Victoria residents were bused to a Red Cross shelter in an Austin high school. They were there for almost a week before that shelter closed, and were then moved to the consolidated Austin megashelter—a huge warehouse room in an industrial park near the Austin airport. The Red Cross anticipated housing 2,000 evacuees from multiple closing shelters there, but only received around 600.

While the family was away from their apartment, their landlord evicted all the tenants in their building, disposed of their belongings, repaired the building, and rented the apartments out. Many renters across flooded regions have experienced eviction or buyouts as property owners seize the opportunity to make repairs and raise rents in a market with dramatically less housing stock. It's so common that Texas Rio Grande Legal Aid distributes fact sheets on renters' legal rights in disasters, including lock-outs.

FEMA inspectors visited and declared the building—which they had been evicted from—habitable, and so claims from Salinas and her neighbors were denied. With the help of Texas Rio Grande Legal Aid, they will file suit against the landlord. But that doesn't solve housing right now.

When Red Cross closed the shelter, the family moved into a \$54 per night room at the Motel 6 with a fourteen-day voucher. On September 25, the one-month anniversary of Harvey's landfall, the family stood outside of the Motel 6 at dusk. Disoriented and surrounded by a tall pile of boxes, bags, and bedding, they looked at the highway, then back at all their stuff.

They had everything they owned at their sides but nowhere to go. A neighbor in the hotel had given them a phone number of a Red Cross volunteer, who passed them to several people willing to help. So on that Monday evening, they were waiting for a stranger, who had texted the couple, promising them beds in someone's home. They'd fostered or put their pets up for adoption, except for Perez's service dog that alerts her to the signs of epileptic seizure. They didn't want to go to an unknown house, but they didn't have another option. They'd never even stayed in a motel before that week, and only had about \$40 between them.

The volunteer arrived, but the prospective host had declined, saying she didn't want to house a lesbian couple. The volunteer took them to eat at Starseeds Diner near the University of Texas at Austin campus while she scrambled to make a new plan. Desperate, the volunteer blasted out Facebook messages to her friends. Who could take in four people and a dog that evening, for as long as possible? Could anyone pay for four more nights in a hotel? Several friends sent funds via Paypal, but the family still had no money for food and supplies.

By 8 p.m., the volunteer had located Mary, the mother of a friend, who agreed to house them. The family transitioned to the two spare rooms in Mary's home, a bungalow with a big garden and three cats in South Austin. Overnight, the first volunteer collected several hundred dollars in donations so Salinas and Perez could repair their cell phones and buy medicine.

"If I hadn't hooked up with those people, we would have been sleeping in my car," Perez says. The family was able to enjoy their beds until Monday, October 2, when Mary had Airbnb guests booked—a six-day respite. After that, Kristi, Belinda, Abram, and Erik had no idea where they would sleep.

"It's hard to live like this; we've never done this," Perez says. "People that are poor—we're trying to survive and make ends meet. We can't afford a nice home or apartment, we have to settle for what we can. But we need something. If we go through another disaster I'm just going to sit it out, ride it out. Then I wouldn't have been kicked out of the house I was in and we would have a place to live."

Stephanie Hayden is the interim director of Public Health at the City of Austin. Hayden's office assigned caseworkers to the people housed in Red Cross shelters, and set up a phone outreach process through which displaced people who contacted 311 for assistance would be referred to her office. Hayden's caseworkers aimed to locate evacuees in the fifty FEMA hotels in Austin, ranging from the four-star Crowne Plaza to the dilapidated Motel 6 where Salinas and Perez landed. Yet only half of the hotels would share information about evacuees staying there.

Hayden's office has the resources to send health workers and counselors out to meet evacuees where they are staying, help replace medicine and broken glasses, assist with FEMA appeals, and connect evacuees to other resources like Austin Disaster Relief Network, a nonprofit mobilizing churches. "We want to make sure every single person is taken care of and connected to the resources that they need," Hayden says.

People in Red Cross shelters are on the radar of the organizations available to help them, but those who didn't come to a shelter—instead going through a system of free Airbnbs offered after Harvey, or who couch surfed or slept in their vehicles—are often unaware of the lifelines available. Few of the people interviewed for this

story were aware of the services offered by Hayden's office.

Another hurdle, which has yet to be resolved, is affordable housing: the one thing evacuees need most.

"We already have an affordability crisis in Austin," Hayden says. "No funds have been identified yet for affordable housing for people from the hurricane." When hotel vouchers run out, families working with a City of Austin caseworker are given the numbers of other nonprofits. If those groups can't assist, the family is directed to go to a homeless shelter. "We do not have transitional housing available for evacuees," Hayden says.

Soft-spoken electrician Larry Garcia, 51, was living in an RV park next to the shoreline in Palacios. His RV was almost paid off. Garcia, who was living on workman's compensation following a serious injury, evacuated from his town of 4,682 people to Austin on August 23. The storm took out much of Palacios.

The week of September 18, he'd driven back to Palacios to meet the FEMA inspector, who declared his RV a total loss. He returned to Austin, where his truck broke down. He spent the Friday in the hotel praying that his voucher would be extended. It wasn't. Larry Garcia

When he got a FEMA representative on the line, they told him that his trailer was livable. He protested: FEMA and the insurance company both claimed it a total loss. But the representative wouldn't budge. "I said, 'What do you want?'" Garcia remembers. "'Are you really telling me now I have to go and live underneath a bridge? You're just going to throw all these families out in the street?'"

Before he received his now-expired voucher, Garcia stayed at the Delco Center, a Red Cross shelter in Austin, arriving before the storm hit. Six days later, he was ejected in the middle of the night from the Delco Center for distributing socks, underwear, bedding, and jackets.

"Children were shivering. They weren't giving nobody clothes," Garcia says. "The lady next to me was sleeping on a towel on the hard floor. So I asked people's sizes and went to Walmart and came back with things for people."

The police, according to Garcia, did not respond well. "They took me in the back and interrogated me for maybe two hours," he says. "They said I should have donated them to the Red Cross so they could distribute it. I told them I haven't had a traffic ticket in thirty years. I'm not

doing anything wrong. I begged them if I could stay to the morning, but they said, 'No, Red Cross wants you gone.' So I was out there in my truck at night, I didn't even know where I was." Several witnesses, both Red Cross volunteers and shelter residents, confirmed Garcia's account.

"FEMA is putting me out, and Red Cross put me out," Garcia says. "Now I'm just out."

Garcia is planning to return to Palacios when he gets the insurance settlement for his trailer. It might take a month or more, during which he's not sure where he can go. When the check comes, he will buy another RV on the shoreline—and move it to higher ground when the next storm is whipping up in the Gulf.

Then there are the evacuees no one sees: undocumented families.

On its Hurricane Harvey website page, FEMA addressed common concerns for undocumented families: "U.S. Immigration and Customs Enforcement (ICE) and U.S. Customs and Border Protection (CBP) have stated that it is not conducting immigration enforcement at relief sites such as shelters or food banks."

Still, to enter the parking lot of the Delco Center shelter in Austin, you had to stop before a bevy of police cars. An officer rolled would roll down the window of a squad car and ask you to state your reason for entering. ICE and FEMA are sibling agencies under the Department of Homeland Security, so the staging had the potential to pose an intimidating situation for undocumented families.

Undocumented people aren't eligible to apply for FEMA; one of the first qualifying questions is U.S. citizenship. If minor children are citizens with Social Security numbers, they may be able to apply, but that is a complex endeavor, especially with a language barrier. Alberto, Isabel, and Isabel's sister, along with six children, arrived at the Delco Center from Baytown and stayed for four nights. During that time, they largely did not have access to Spanish interpreters, and Isabel was unaware that diapers were available for her infant. Circle of Health International, a nonprofit that helps mothers in disasters, came with a Spanish-speaking staff person and diapers and wipes for her.

The last time they were seen by volunteers, the family was packed back into the van without rear seats. The floor was covered foot-deep with clothing, bags, and blankets. Alberto explained that the whole family would sleep there at night,

stretched across the bed of the van, with the smallest children at the head and foot. Donated shoes for evacuees forced from their homes due to flooding.

With the support of an African-American grassroots community group called Counterbalance ATX, the family received clothing, diapers, food, and their first places to sleep. They moved from home to home, arriving at a new location every few days. They were weary. After contacting another community group, they ended up in the spare bedroom of a family they'd never met. Meg and Damon Poeter, their hosts, have four kids—including a newborn baby—in Round Rock. The Poeters agreed to host the Russell family until they found stability.

Meg is a Katrina survivor determined to use her disaster know-how to assist her guests, and wanted to push every relief agency to get the family into an apartment. She spent days on the phone with FEMA. Julie, a Certified Medical Assistant, rushed to get the first job she could; she was hired as a security guard. Jack looked for construction work.

Facing the inevitable need for a chunk of cash to put down on an apartment, and knowing that extended cohabitation would put a strain on the evacuee family, Meg and Damon asked their family in Louisiana to fundraise for Julie and Jack. "I'll even take out a high interest loan if I have to," Meg says.

On Craigslist, the Russells found a rare furnished apartment for \$650 per month in West Campus. Their application was accepted, which was a coup given their low income and credit issues. Meg fundraised the deposit, and they were about wire it by Western Union, expecting the keys to be delivered by FedEx.

They were so close that Julie and Meg pitched the need to Catholic Charities, which was offering some relief, for the last boost of funds. Three days later, Catholic Charities called back and agreed to provide the first month's rent.

Meg's friend Amy Hayes, a realtor volunteering to help evacuees find low-income and Section 8 apartments, was skeptical. She asked the Russells to hold off on going through with the deal, then searched the tax records and the Multiple Listing Service, a database of home listings. She discovered that this "landlord" had downloaded photos from other rental sites and was orchestrating an elaborate scam from

Mississippi. The apartment was owned by someone else and listed for \$1,400.

Erica Danbury and her baby boy, Jojo*, were camping in someone else's FEMA voucher room, hoping their own application would move from "pending" to "approved."

A young woman from Vidor, Danbury arrived in Austin in a 1991 Buick station wagon with a truck camper upside down on top, loaded with cardboard boxes and extra car tires strapped down with rope. She brought her neighbors and their two children, whose truck had taken on floodwater, with her. Danbury came to Austin because she remembered traveling to the capital as a child.

The group didn't go to the Red Cross shelter, but they didn't have a voucher yet either, so they slept in the car. Danbury worried that abuse could take place at the shelter, and that because of the trauma of losing her home, her mental state was too fragile to be around hundreds of people. Instead, she messaged some Hurricane Harvey relief Facebook groups asking for a place to stay.

Then her neighbor's FEMA aid and hotel voucher were approved. But her voucher was still pending. "We lived so close to each other. It doesn't make sense," she says. "I lived in a stilt house next to the reservoir. When they opened the dam, my house went completely underwater." Her frustration made her voice tremble. They all moved into a Holiday Inn double queen room. She slept in the bed with three children, and her neighbors slept in the other bed.

Danbury, who lost her phone in the evacuation, doesn't know how to contact her landlord—or if he's even still in the area. Unable to produce a lease or a utility bill, or pictures of her furnishings, it's unlikely that she will be approved for any aid. A woman she met at the hotel gave her money for a new phone and to pay her phone bill. Besides her food stamps, that's the only money Danbury has had since leaving.

On September 23, her friends got the "not eligible for an extension" voice recording from FEMA, and Danbury began to sob. "I just don't even know what I am going to do. I have nowhere to go. I have nobody." As she nursed Jojo, she began texting the few phone numbers she had to try to find the next place.

With a lead from an acquaintance on September 28, Danbury contacted the owner of a bed and breakfast in San Marcos, a scenic river town south of Austin that hasn't had any business

since the hurricane. Its primary clientele hails from Houston, and the B&B's business has been limited since Harvey. The owner had offered to host a few evacuee families temporarily, and invited Danbury to come meet her. Danbury and Jojo moved in later that night.

Their precarious position will resume again when tourists seeking a respite from the city book the B&B's rooms. But before the travelers start to frequent the bed and breakfast again, Danbury can imagine, for a few more days, that they are in a safe home.

NFIP AND FLOOD MAPS

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

By Anthony Bellano

[Ocean City \(NJ\) Patch](#), October 9, 2017

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.

Coos Bay Sues Over Floodplain

[Eugene \(OR\) Register-Guard](#), October 8, 2017

COOS BAY — The city of Coos Bay has sued the National Marine Fisheries Service in federal court over its recommendation for more restrictive floodplain regulations, which would restrict development in most of downtown.

The suit was filed Thursday objecting to land use restrictions recommended by the fisheries service to the Federal Emergency Management Agency's flood insurance program in an opinion issued last year, *The World* reported.

Damien Schiff, an attorney with the Pacific Legal Foundation which is representing the city, said the biological opinion from the fisheries service is an improper expansion of both FEMA and the agency's authority.

Fisheries is asking FEMA to place high-risk floodplains off-limits to development because it says it will better protect endangered species such as salmon and steelhead.

Floodplains are areas along rivers, stream and shorelines that are regularly inundated with water.

MITIGATION

FEMA Housing Inspectors On Ground In U.S. Virgin Islands Neighborhoods

[Virgin Islands Consortium \(VIR\)](#), October 7, 2017

Housing inspectors from the Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA) are visiting neighborhoods in the Virgin Islands to verify damages caused by hurricanes Irma and Maria, the federal agency announced Friday.

Inspectors will contact survivors who have registered with FEMA. They will first call survivors in advance of the visit to set up an appointment. If they are unable to reach a survivor by phone due to the current communications outages, they may visit a residence without a confirmed appointment.

The Virgin Islands Territorial Emergency Management Agency has asked that survivors place visible plot numbers on their property to ensure inspectors can identify the property.

"A housing inspection is an important early step in the recovery process, as it helps us determine how FEMA and our recovery partners can best assist you," said Federal Coordinating Officer William Vogel. "We urge residents to make themselves as readily available as they can to meet with their housing inspector."

FEMA understands that some Virgin Islanders with property damage may have temporarily relocated off the islands. We are asking family and friends to let them know they should still register for assistance with FEMA and provide their current contact information. We will

reach out to them to coordinate an inspection when it's possible.

Inspections can only be done after survivors register. Those with damage to homes, vehicles, personal property, business or its inventory should register with FEMA. When applying, survivors will be asked to provide their current contact information so that an inspector can reach them.

When inspectors arrive at a home, they will display their official contractor photo identification. If the photo ID is not visible, it is important to ask to see it. This helps prevent fraud. Please be aware that FEMA inspectors do not charge survivors for their services or recommend specific contractors. If someone asks for money to inspect your home or promotes a contractor, it is most likely part of a scam.

Inspectors already have each applicant's nine-digit registration number so there should be no need to ask for it. Survivors will however be asked to provide a valid driver's license or other photo identification.

To speed the FEMA assistance process:

Ensure the house or plot number is clearly visible from the road.

Keep your appointment or notify the inspector if you need to reschedule.

Be reachable. It helps to inform neighbors where you can be reached if your home is uninhabitable.

Survivors who are displaced to other areas or islands may designate a relative, friend or neighbor to allow the inspector onto the property. But the designated person must be 18 years or older.

Provide proof of ownership, such as a tax bill, deed, mortgage payment receipt or insurance policy with the property's address. Renters must show proof of occupancy, such as a lease, rent payment receipt or utility bill.

FEMA will only provide assistance for a primary residence. However, survivors may be eligible for a low-interest disaster loan.

If possible, provide photos of the damage that can supplement the images taken by the inspector.

An inspection generally takes about 15-30 minutes to complete. Keep in mind that inspectors do not determine an applicant's eligibility for assistance. They just enter the information electronically into FEMA computers. Their job is to verify disaster damage, but they do not need to document all damage. They review damage to

structures, major appliances, septic systems and wells.

No need to wait, begin cleaning up now. Survivors should begin cleaning up without worrying about losing out on disaster assistance.

"We understand that residents want to get their hurricane-damaged homes cleaned up as soon as possible," said Vogel. "You don't need to wait for us to get start cleaning up. Just be sure to document the damage."

For those with Communication Needs. Disaster survivors with communication-related disabilities — those who are deaf or hard of hearing, blind or have vision loss and those with speech difficulties — may request accommodations to aid in communication. For instance, survivors may request an American Sign Language interpreter when registering. (They should also verify the accommodation with the inspector when contacted.)

Registration with FEMA can be completed online at www.DisasterAssistance.gov, in Spanish at www.DisasterAssistance.gov/es, or by phone at 800-621-3362 or (TTY) 800-462-7585. Those who use 711-Relay or Video Relay Services may call 800-621-3362.

The toll-free telephone numbers operate from 7 a.m. to 11 p.m. (local time) seven days a week until further notice. Operators are standing by to assist survivors in English, Spanish and many other languages.

Disaster recovery assistance is available without regard to race, color, religion, nationality, sex, age, disability, English proficiency or economic status. If you or someone you know has been discriminated against, call FEMA toll-free at 800-621-3362 (voice, 711/VRS – Video Relay Service) (TTY: 800-462-7585). Multilingual operators are available (press 2 for Spanish).

FEMA's mission is to support our citizens and first responders to ensure that as a nation we work together to build, sustain, and improve our capability to prepare for, protect against, respond to, recover from, and mitigate all hazards.

For official information on the recovery effort following the hurricanes, please visit www.informusvi.com or www.usviupdate.com. Follow us on twitter at twitter.com/femaregion2.

To donate or volunteer, contact the voluntary or charitable organization of your choice through the National Voluntary Agencies Active in Disasters (NVOAD) at www.nvoad.org. For those who wish to help, cash donations offer voluntary

agencies the most flexibility in obtaining the most-needed resources and pumps money into the local economy to help businesses recover. The Community Foundation of the Virgin Islands also has the "Fund for the Virgin Islands" at www.USVIrecovery.org.

Hurricanes Slow Flood Recovery In Butler County

By Christinia Crippes

[Waterloo-Cedar Falls \(IA\) Courier](#), October 9, 2017

ALLISON — The trio of hurricanes — Harvey, Irma and Maria — wreaked havoc across Texas, Florida and Puerto Rico. They also have had impacts far beyond their immediate paths.

That includes in Northeast Iowa, where residents of Butler County are still recovering from the fall floods of 2016.

"I think they kind of feel forgotten. Especially with the hurricanes and everything, that we've been forgotten," said Clarksville Mayor Val Swinton. "Because we're a small town, we kind of feel like we're not important. That's a little frustrating."

"That's a lot frustrating," U.S. Sen. Joni Ernst, R-Iowa, responded.

Ernst, a first-term senator, received an update Monday on Clarksville, Greene and Shell Rock a year after they suffered their second "flood to end all floods" in eight years.

Ernst assured residents funds set aside for home buyouts would not be rerouted to hurricane recovery. But she could offer little else than her shared frustration that 13 months later no homeowner had finished the buyout process. Ernst promised to follow up with the Federal Emergency Management Agency to see why the process has been so slow.

Frustration was the theme throughout the hour-long meeting.

About 270 homes were damaged when the Shell Rock River flooded after Butler County received 12 inches of rain in a short period of time in late September 2016. Many areas in Greene, Clarksville and Shell Rock saw worse flooding than in 2008, said Mitch Nordmeyer, Butler County emergency management coordinator.

About 20 homes qualified for buyouts. More than a year later, none of those homeowners has received an offer. It could take another three to four months.

"Every disaster starts and ends locally. That may be the case, but we need the federal help in the middle," Nordmeyer said.

Nordmeyer and Brian Schoon, of Iowa Northland Regional Council of Governments, told Ernst it's not just the wait that is frustrating. Rules changed since the last major flood eight years ago. And they have to work with new officials every few weeks.

Since the hurricanes, frustration grew. FEMA Region 7 officials were sent to work on recovery in the southeast.

Ernst said after the meeting it's important for FEMA to have uniform rules. But she heard from local officials Monday FEMA employees don't always interpret rules the same way. She said she will ask FEMA about that as well.

"We saw widespread devastation throughout the Southeast, and I do understand that, but again, we have ongoing recovery efforts right here in Region 7 of FEMA, and we have to make sure these families are getting what was told to them they would get," Ernst said. "It's important that they close these actions out before they are jumping into other situations."

No Easy Solutions For Fixing Pensacola's Damaged Docks And Piers

By Joseph Baucum

[Pensacola \(FL\) News Journal](#), October 9, 2017

For those in Northwest Florida with a dock or pier damaged over the weekend by Hurricane Nate, the unfortunate answer is no easy solution exists for finding financial assistance to repair or replace the property.

This especially holds true for individuals hoping to rebuild their docks or piers through homeowners insurance. To most expediently ascertain if their policy covers a dock or pier, Loretta Worters, vice president of media relations at the New York-based Insurance Information Institute, urged those impacted by Nate to first contact their carrier.

"There are all of these different variables that come into play," she said. "That's why you need to speak with your individual insurance provider."

Worters said several details would determine what coverage, if any, would be provided. For example, under Coverage B in a homeowner's insurance policy, damage to other structures such as a dock could be partially covered. But if it is not

attached to the main premises, a provider could require an endorsement of the dock in the policy.

She added some high-end insurers offer all-risk policies for various hazards. Customers would most likely pay additionally for the coverage. However, this too is with caveats.

"If you have other people using the dock, it could be considered commercial," Worters said. "So it really depends on the situation."

Those with flood policies through the Federal Emergency Management Agency's National Flood Insurance Program would not receive assistance for docks or piers. Mike Eddins, vice president of Hiles-McLeod Insurance in Pensacola, explained that generally speaking, the result of such claims would be from flood.

"Even if there's a flood policy enforced, FEMA doesn't provide any coverage for docks," he said.

Finally, private owners of damaged docks and piers should not expect to qualify for individual assistance through FEMA as a result of President Donald Trump's disaster declaration for Florida. FEMA announced on Sunday federal emergency aid would be available to the state after Trump issued the declaration.

But Joy Tsubooka, Escambia County Community and Media Relations division manager, said typically the region would require at least 100 homes significantly impacted by Nate to meet the threshold for the declaration.

"The federal declaration is what would trigger the assistance program, and typically, the programs are for things necessary for your daily life," she said. "For docks, that would need to be something covered under your personal insurance."

Despite the lack of resources available to offer financial assistance, Lisa Rogers, president of the Smugglers Cove Homeowners Association in Gulf Breeze, said the community intends to pay out-of-pocket to replace its pier, which was destroyed by Nate.

Rogers said the dock was one of several amenities the privately owned neighborhood offers to its members. The recreational feature was paid for through the residents' dues to the HOA. She said typically, a homeowner annually pays \$720 in dues.

But the weekend's hurricane obliterated the pier. Rogers said over the past two days, members have pulled debris from the water. Some was wood from their pier, but other pieces

were from piers from different areas of the Santa Rosa Sound.

Prior to its destruction, Rogers estimated the pier extended about 300 feet. At the end of the structure, two built-in benches were available along with a lamp post for lighting and a sink area to help those fishing with cleaning their catch.

She expects the community to replace the pier, which she said could cost as much as \$30,000. It could require until January before the work even commences. The HOA's board will also consider purchasing an insurance policy, with discussion on the topic to take place at its next meeting.

But given that no residents in Smugglers Cove suffered any personal injuries over the weekend and no homes were damaged, Rogers said everyone in the community considers themselves fortunate.

"We had no roofs fly off," she said. "None of our residents were injured. So compared to what has happened in Puerto Rico, we consider this a blessing that we all came out OK."

U.S. FIRE ADMINISTRATION

No stories for this edition

DHS/FEMA GRANTS

No stories for this edition

FIRE GRANTS

FEMA Grant Puts Tyler Firefighters At Odds With City Budget

[Tyler \(TX\) Morning Telegraph](#), October 9, 2017

A grant that FEMA has made available for the Tyler Fire Department has sparked a political brushfire at City Hall.

The \$1.58 million Staffing for Adequate Fire and Emergency Response (SAFER) grant would require significant matching funds from the city during tight budget times.

The matter is slated to be discussed in Wednesday's meeting of the Tyler City Council.

There's some political pressure to accept the grant coming from the Tyler Professional Fire Fighters Association, the AFL-CIO-affiliated firefighter's group.

"The Tyler Fire Department competed against thousands of departments during the

rigorous grant process and was one of only 10 departments selected from Texas," Justin Dominy, president of IAFF Local 883, said in a news release urging the council to accept the grant. "Cooperation between our association and the city made this happen. We are grateful for our community's support of firefighters."

The news release – and the name of the grant itself – suggest the money is needed to provide adequate staffing for the city's fire stations.

"Adequate staffing levels are crucial to ensure the safety of our citizens and firefighters," Dominy said. "The SAFER Grant was created to provide funding directly to fire departments to help add and retain trained, front-line firefighters in their communities. The goal of SAFER is to enhance the local fire departments' ability to comply with staffing response and operational standards established by the National Fire Protection Association. Our city officials understand this."

But the press release was premature, city officials said. The city must provide matching funds – an obligation of nearly \$1 million over the three-year term of the grant – at a time when the city budget is tight. The city has been under a hiring freeze for all but essential positions since sales tax revenues, a large part of the city's budget, started falling three years ago.

"We have been able to maintain very good quality service and we have maintained low ISO (Insurance Services Office) ratings with the current staffing levels," Mayor Martin Heines said. "It is our fiduciary responsibility as a council to carefully consider everything that comes before us. We are the steward for the taxpayers. So that will be something we talk about on Wednesday."

ISO ratings, issued by the Insurance Service Office, evaluate a community's preparedness for fire emergencies. The city of Tyler's ISO rating is Class 2, which is high enough to result in reduced property insurance rates for homeowners and businesses.

The proposed grant covers 12 new positions. That would take staffing from the current 156 authorized firefighter positions to 168.

The grant would cover 75 percent of the cost for the first and second years. FEMA would pay \$640,998 each year, while the city would be responsible for \$213,666 each year.

In the third year, the city would be responsible for 35 percent of the total, or

\$555,532 of the \$854,664 yearly cost. The total for the city would be \$982,864 over the three years.

Fire Chief David Coble, in a memo to the City Council, recommends accepting the grant.

The Tyler City Council meets at 9 a.m. Wednesday at Tyler City Hall, 212 N. Bonner St.

TWITTER: @ tmt_roy

NEWS AROUND THE COUNTRY

HURRICANE RECOVERY

FEMA Housing Inspectors On The Ground In USVI Neighborhoods

[St. Thomas Source](#), October 7, 2017

Housing inspectors from the Federal Emergency Management Agency are visiting neighborhoods in the U.S. Virgin Islands to verify damages caused by hurricanes Irma and Maria.

According to FEMA, inspectors will contact survivors who have registered with FEMA. They will call survivors in advance of the visit to set up an appointment. If they are unable to reach a survivor by phone due to the current communications outages, they may visit a residence without a confirmed appointment.

The V.I. Territorial Emergency Management Agency has asked that survivors place visible plot numbers on their property to ensure inspectors can identify the property.

"A housing inspection is an important early step in the recovery process, as it helps us determine how FEMA and our recovery partners can best assist you," said Federal Coordinating Officer William Vogel. "We urge residents to make themselves as readily available as they can to meet with their housing inspector."

FEMA officials say they understand that some Virgin Islanders with property damage may have temporarily relocated off island. So FEMA is asking family and friends to let them know they should still register for assistance and provide their current contact information. FEMA will reach out to them to coordinate an inspection when it is possible.

Inspections can only be done after survivors register. Those with damage to homes, vehicles, personal property, business or its inventory can register with FEMA. When applying, survivors will

be asked to provide their current contact information so that an inspector can reach them.

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To speed the FEMA assistance process:

- Ensure the house or plot number is clearly visible from the road.
- Keep your appointment or notify the inspector if you need to reschedule.
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Disaster recovery assistance is available without regard to race, color, religion, nationality, sex, age, disability, English proficiency or economic status. If you or someone you know has been discriminated against, call FEMA toll-free at 800-621-3362 (voice, 711/VRS – Video Relay Service) (TTY: 800-462-7585). Multilingual operators are available (press 2 for Spanish).

For official information on the recovery effort following the hurricanes, please visit www.informusvi.com or www.usviupdate.com. Follow us on twitter at twitter.com/femaregion2.

To donate or volunteer, contact the voluntary or charitable organization of your choice through the National Voluntary Agencies Active in Disasters at www.nvoad.org. For those who wish to help, cash donations offer voluntary agencies the most flexibility in obtaining the most-needed resources and pumps money into the local economy to help businesses recover. The Community Foundation of the Virgin Islands also has the "Fund for the Virgin Islands" at www.USVIrecovery.org.

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.

EOC And Army Corps Of Engineers Encourage Residents To Register For Operation Blue Roof

[St. Thomas Source](#), October 8, 2017

The V.I. Emergency Operations Center (EOC) encourages residents with roof damage to register for the Operation Blue Roof program to determine eligibility. Operation Blue Roof, which

assists eligible homeowners with temporary roof repairs, is a program the Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA) tasks the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers (USACE) to implement. It is currently available at no cost to eligible primary homeowners in the U.S. Virgin Islands.

Eligible Virgin Islands homeowners who sustained roof damage from Hurricane Irma and Hurricane Maria may apply. Residents must complete the Right of Entry (ROE) form that allows government employees and contractors on to their property to assess damage and install a temporary covering.

Free assistance with completing the ROE form and registration can be completed seven days a week, unless otherwise stated, at the following locations throughout the territory. In addition, USACE Quality Assurance teams, wearing red USACE shirts, are currently conducting assessments throughout various neighborhoods. If people see the staff in their neighborhood, please inquire about the program and the eligibility of your roof.

St. Croix – Noon to 4 p.m., daily

Sunshine Mall, K-Mart

Department of Public Works, Anna's Hope

St. Thomas – 9 a.m. to 4 p.m., daily

Bordeaux Basketball Court

New H. Company Fire Station at Barbell Plaza

Department of Public Works Locations

St. John – 9 a.m. to 4 p.m., daily

Coral Bay Fire Station

Department of Public Works, Anna's Hope

Extraordinary Communication Methods Employed After U.S. Virgin Islands Hurricanes

[Virgin Islands Consortium \(VIR\)](#), October 9, 2017

As the Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA) and its federal and territorial partners are working hard to restore hurricane-battered communications systems on the U.S. Virgin Islands, the agency recently announced. FEMA says its taking extraordinary steps to ensure survivors receive accurate and timely information on how to stay safe, get basic needs met and start to recover from the storms.

Called into action in only the most extreme circumstances, the Department of Defense's Civil Authorities Information Support Element (CAISE) is helping recovery agencies get vital information

to survivors who lack electricity to power TVs and radios and functioning cell towers to communicate by phone.

Arriving with equipment mounted on heavy trucks, more than 50 CAISE personnel went to work in St. Thomas and St. John shortly after Hurricane Irma wiped out traditional means of communications on those islands. Using old-fashioned methods such as loudspeaker broadcasts and paper handouts – and some not-so-old methods such as mass text messages to cell phones – they were able to reach thousands of survivors.

After a brief pause while Hurricane Maria tore through the islands, the teams sprang back into action. Since arriving CAISE has broadcast dozens of messages via loudspeaker and disseminated more than 26,000 mass text messages – informing survivors about such things as registering with FEMA, locations where water, food and other supplies are being distributed, where to find Wi-Fi hotspots, and how to stay safe and protect their families.

Moreover, these fully equipped teams have also conducted assessments and made repairs to local radio stations, helping to restore some island communications for the long term.

“The CAISE teams have helped all of us make the best of a very dire situation by reaching many people who otherwise would have heard very little about response and recovery efforts on their own,” said FEMA’s Federal Coordinating Officer William Vogel. “As work to restore the islands’ traditional communications systems continues, CAISE messaging has helped fill what could have been an information void.”

US Virgin Islands: The American Citizens Battered By Hurricane Maria – And Forgotten

By Oliver Laughland

[The Guardian \(UK\)](#), October 8, 2017

If Irma hit like a right hook, then Maria was the sucker punch, battering the islanders while they were already down. Almost a month after the first of two deadly hurricanes collided with the US Virgin Islands, the recovery is still in its infancy.

Power lines droop over the main roads in Charlotte Amalie, the territory’s capital. More than half of the roof of Saint Thomas’s commercial airport no longer exists, replaced with sky blue tarps that ripple in the breeze. All the territory’s schools remain closed, with hopes to reopen on

Tuesday. Around 90% of the territory is without power and the vast majority are still without potable water.

While the plight of neighbouring Puerto Rico, hit hard by Maria over two weeks ago, has prompted a national outcry in the face of a slow federal recovery effort, the continuing crisis on the US Virgin Islands, home to 100,000 US citizens, has received less focus.

The White House blamed “difficult logistics” for preventing Donald Trump from stopping here during his trip to Puerto Rico earlier in the week. But on Friday vice-president Mike Pence flew into the American territory’s second island of St Croix, where Maria hit the hardest. He vowed that the administration “will be with you every day until the US Virgin Islands comes all the way back”.

The territory’s governor, Kenneth Mapp, a registered Republican who ran as an independent, backed the sentiment. “There is no country that responds to disasters like the United States of America,” he said.

At around the same time the politicians were speaking, 32-year-old Tamika Francis was sifting through detritus at the Tutu Hi-Rise public housing buildings just outside of Charlotte Amalie, where she lives. Entire facades were blown out – front to back – by Irma. A 38-year-old woman was killed after falling from the building during the winds, one of five fatalities in the territories. When Maria hit, two weeks later, it dumped heavy rainfall onto the partially skeletal building, flooding it once again.

What is left looks like a bomb site. The remnants of residents’ lives – refrigerators, mattresses, pots, pans, toilet seats, books – are strewn out in piles on the hilltop.

Although around 160 of Tutu’s worst-affected families have been relocated to shelters and given vouchers to find new housing; others, less affected, had to remain behind. There is no water or electricity. Francis carries pails collected from the cistern up a steep hill and flights of stairs to supply her apartment.

“We’ve been treated like dogs,” she said. “We have to scavenge for food, for water.”

Velma Samuel, 62, is a retired teacher’s aide and another resident who remained in her apartment. She said she had seen no representatives from the Federal Emergency Management Agency (Fema), the government agency responsible for disaster management, present at the building since Irma hit on 16 September.

She experienced around a foot of flooding in her apartment during Irma and Maria. It floods again whenever it rains. Mould now creeps up the walls.

"As fast as you could clean the mould out, you would find it somewhere else," she said.

Even though the governor has vowed to relocate all of Tutu's residents, Samuel worried she would have to continue paying her rent, which is financed by her social security payments, on the water damaged apartment while she remained there.

In Puerto Rico, the governor passed a blanket moratorium on public rent payment until January 2018. A spokeswoman for the Virgin Islands Territorial Emergency Management Agency [Vitema] said no such arrangement was in place here.

"The least they could have done was give us safe living quarters," Samuel said, reflecting on the horror of the night Irma hit. "You can't just take people and pitch them in a matchbox."

Irma drove through more than the sheetrock walls of Tutu Hi-Rise. It destroyed two floors of Saint Thomas's only hospital. The Roy Lester Schneider hospital can now hold only 23 inpatients. Before Irma destroyed the main medical wards and peeled off the roof membranes, it held 169 beds.

Tina Comissiong, the hospital's chief compliance officer, was one of those wheeling patients down to the lower levels. "It was very intense," she said, walking through an upper ward now covered in mud, dangling wires and pools of water. "The winds and the water were pounding in."

Remarkably, none of the patients were injured. But the hospital has evacuated 300 people to the US. It can no longer conduct significant surgeries, its cancer ward – the only one in the territory – was entirely destroyed, and the majority of dialysis patients are now evacuated too.

When Maria arrived a week later, with the roof already damaged, the hospital was flooded once again. The water has not fully receded and a few inches cover the floor of the cancer center, where Irma's winds destroyed the facility's only MRI scanner. Commissiong said the hospital had received significant federal assistance, but added that it would take an estimated two years to repair the damage.

Fema has begun to roll out inspection teams. But, said agency spokeswoman Renee Baffles, it had been "very difficult" to reach all the island's remote communities, many of which have no formal addresses. More than 14,600 islanders have so far registered for assistance with Fema, but there are undoubtedly many thousands more in need of aid.

With no access to the internet and no working radio or TV, Velma Samuel and Tamika Francis had no idea how to contact Fema and apply for assistance. Although the pair had given up hope for their government, they had not given up on the island itself.

"I love my island," said Francis. "I was born and raised here. So no matter what we go through here, I will never feel like leaving."

She turned back towards the rubble and continued clearing it, piece by piece.

This piece was corrected on 8 October 2017. It initially referred to Saint Martin. It should have said Saint Thomas.

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."

Army Takes Supplies To Arecibo, Puerto Rico For Hurricane Relief

[Miami Herald](#), October 9, 2017

Coast Guard Investigative Service Agents, Coast Guard Law Enforcement teams, Federal Emergency Management Agency crews, Red Cross crews, Puerto Rico Emergency Management Agency crews and Puerto Rico police officers distribute 3,000 meals and 4,500 liters of water Sept. 27, 2017, in Humacao, Puerto Rico. The Coast Guard continues to work with FEMA, the Red Cross and other federal and local partners to distribute relief across Puerto Rico. (Coast Guard video)

Puerto Ricans In Miami Urge Bill Nelson To Support Changes To The Jones Act

By David Smiley

[Miami Herald](#), October 6, 2017

Puerto Rican business boosters and community leaders urged Bill Nelson to support changes to the Jones Act but received no response during a Friday sit-down called by the U.S. senator at a Miami health center.

Nelson, who gathered a panel of speakers for about an hour at the Midtown Boring Medical Centers of Miami-Dade, visited Miami as part of a brief feedback tour to hear about Puerto Rico's needs following Hurricane Maria. He was asked to help waive restrictions posed by the 1920 law, which requires ships transporting goods within the country to be built, owned and operated by U.S. citizens or permanent residents.

The law is intended to protect the domestic shipping industry. But critics say its restrictions have hindered the shipping of goods to Puerto Rico, making products on the island more expensive.

"The Jones Act has created some real economic problems for Puerto Rico for many years," said Luis De Rosa, president of the Puerto Rican Chamber of Commerce of South Florida. "It has made it difficult to make ends meet. That's un-American."

Southwest Ranches Town Clerk Russell Muñiz, one of the panel members, urged Nelson to support legislation that would automatically lift the Jones Act upon a presidential declaration of emergency. After Hurricane Maria hit the island, President Donald Trump waited eight days before waiving the law.

De Rosa told Nelson he'd get plenty of support from Puerto Ricans, many of whom are displaced and headed to Florida as the island recovers from the storm. Nelson, a Democrat, is up for reelection in 2018, and is expected to face a challenge from Republican Gov. Rick Scott.

But the Jones Act is profitable for Florida's shipping industry. And Nelson, the highest-ranking Democrat on the Senate Transportation Committee, has been a long-time proponent of the law. When someone brought up Sen. John McCain's legislation to exempt Puerto Rico from the Jones Act, Nelson pivoted.

"Ok. I want to hear some more from you all," he said, turning and asking a different section of the room to speak up.

Nelson did speak about a bill he filed this week to lift a policy that requires displaced Puerto Ricans and residents of the U.S. Virgin Islands to spend 30 days on the mainland before receiving supplemental Social Security income payments. He hopes Trump will make the change administratively, since passing a bill would take too long to be effective.

"The administration can tee off of that and go ahead and do it administratively and help people in need coming from the island," Nelson said.

McClatchy reporter Alex Daugherty contributed to this report.

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.

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.

How The FEMA Recovery Efforts In Puerto Rico Are Actually Working

By Stephen Owsinski

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

The Federal Emergency Management Agency handling all emergency aid operations in and around Puerto Rico is akin to a world-class chess player chronically analyzing what's on the board and anticipating pros/cons of the next maneuver. All moving parts in and en route to Puerto Rico are controlled by the Department of Homeland Security's FEMA professionals and their program called NIMS.

As cross-sections of parties pertinent to the ongoing search, rescue, and recovery effort in Puerto Rico fire shots across each other's bows, the monumental blueprint managed by FEMA known as the National Incident Management System optimizes every single person and each piece of equipment while reassessments and response amendments are made.

As defined by FEMA, "NIMS is a comprehensive, national approach to incident management that is applicable at all jurisdictional levels and across functional disciplines" while addressing "a full spectrum of potential incidents, hazards and impacts, regardless of size, location or complexity."

Effectively, NIMS is an all-inclusive disaster-response program employing people while deploying apparatus and humanitarian provisions to sustain life and re-establish a safe environment.

Before Sept. 11, I had never heard of NIMS. Frankly, FEMA was not in my vocabulary either.

But the World Trade Centers buckling and cascading to rubble opened up the door to how inexplicable national crises require fastidious controls and troubleshooting, and this now-former street cop took a hard lesson.

U.S. Sen. Ron Johnson Defends FEMA After Puerto Rico Visit, Says Electrical Grid Repairs Are "No. 1 Priority"

By Theo Kieth

[WITI-TV Milwaukee](#), October 8, 2017

U.S. Senator Ron Johnson is defending the federal government's response in Puerto Rico after visiting the hurricane-ravaged island over the weekend, but warns of a crisis if the electrical grid isn't repaired.

Johnson was part of a 10-member delegation of Republicans and Democrats who spend Saturday, October 7th in the U.S. territory assessing the damage after Hurricane Maria ripped through in late September.

The lawmakers got briefings from Federal Emergency Management Administration officials and local elected leaders. Only 11 percent of the island has power, lawmakers said.

"All of our efforts have got to be to stand up that electrical grid, or else what you will see is a growing crisis," Johnson said on a conference call with reporters on Sunday.

Hospitals are running on generators and long lines have formed for ice and other necessities.

But Johnson said he was expecting to see worse during his visit, which included an aerial tour. He said 70 percent of the island's grocery stores and gas stations are open, and roads to all 78 municipalities are open.

"I was very relieved to see that it wasn't as devastated as I thought it would be," Johnson said. "I think that's first and foremost important to the people of Puerto Rico, to realize that we will not ignore the situation."

Meanwhile, San Juan Mayor Carmen Yulin Cruz continued to blast President Donald Trump's administration's response to the crisis.

"Increasingly painful to understand the American people want to help and the U.S. government does not want to help. We need water!" Yulin Cruz tweeted Sunday.

FEMA's Acting Director Brock Long responded by telling ABC News, "We filtered out the mayor a long time ago" and called her complaints "political noise."

During Sunday's conference call, Johnson was asked about the back-and-forth, and he defended FEMA and Long.

"He's got a big job and he's got to tune out all the bickering, because there's a lot of political bickering from all corners, and he's just got to concentrate on the task at hand," Johnson said.

By Sunday night, President Trump had taken notice of the frustration on the island.

"Nobody could have done what I've done for Puerto Rico with so little appreciation," the president tweeted. "So much work!"

Johnson said House Speaker Paul Ryan would soon visit the U.S. territory.

One of the Democratic senators on the trip said Congress needed to develop a long-term plan for Puerto Rico's debt crisis, which would've come to a head without the storm. But the hurricane only made the finance problem worse because of the costs of rebuilding.

"We are on the verge of failing Puerto Rico," said U.S. Sen. Richard Blumenthal, D-Connecticut. "My feeling is, Americans are failing fellow Americans."

EPA Clarifies Earlier FEMA Statement On Texas Toxic Sites

By Michael Biesecker

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

The Environmental Protection Agency said Sunday it has recovered 517 containers filled with unidentified, potentially hazardous material found floating in or washed up along Texas waterways after the devastating floods from Hurricane Harvey receded.

The agency's statement sought to clarify an earlier media release saying the containers were recovered from highly contaminated toxic waste sites. EPA said that statement issued Friday night by the Federal Emergency Management Agency created confusion by conflating two separate issues. (Story continued below...)

The FEMA media release summarizing the federal response Harvey's historic floods said EPA had "conducted assessments of 43 Superfund sites and recovered 517 containers of unidentified, potentially hazardous material."

The Associated Press reported about the statement Saturday afternoon, after EPA's press office did not respond to questions sent by email to top staffers the night before.

"EPA and our response partners have been collecting containers orphaned after the

hurricane," David Gray, a spokesman for EPA's regional headquarters in Texas, said in an email to AP on Sunday. "These are not related to Superfund clean ups."

Gray did not respond to questions about why he and other EPA press staff had not sought to clarify the issue for more than 44 hours. Also left unanswered are questions about the results of EPA's assessments at two highly contaminated Houston-area Superfund sites flooded by Harvey's record shattering rains.

EPA has not responded to more than a dozen calls and emails from AP over the last two weeks.

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6 Investigates: FEMA Denies Disaster Assistance Because Home Is Habitable

By Jessica Savage

[KRIS-TV Corpus Christi \(TX\)](#), October 9, 2017

For Dwayne Porter, just getting out of his house is a struggle these days.

Hurricane Harvey badly damaged the handicap ramp to his front door.

That path is now unsafe for Porter, who is legally blind and doesn't have home insurance to repair the damage.

"I've fell off this porch twice because I can't judge the distance," Porter said.

Days after Hurricane Harvey, he applied for FEMA assistance to fix the ramp. A few days later, FEMA sent someone to look at the damage.

Porter's denial story is one of several FEMA denials 6 Investigates has received calls about since Hurricane Harvey. FEMA could not provide the number of claims denied because that information is not readily available, said Rita Egan, FEMA public information officer.

6 Investigates has filed a Freedom of Information request for that information.

Porter, like many who contacted KRIS 6 News, explained how he was denied assistance.

Three days after he applied, he checked on his claim status to learn he was denied because his home is considered habitable.

Local attorney Tracy Figueroa who specializes in FEMA denials gave her opinion on the matter.

"A ramp that is the way that someone gets in and out of their home seems to me it would affect habitability," Figueroa said, attorney with nonprofit Texas RioGrande Legal Aid.

Porter's denial is based on FEMA standards, and those standards are confusing for many.

"It's uninhabitable if it is unsafe, unsanitary or not functional, Figueroa said. "And then you go: What does that mean?"

Figueroa works for nonprofit Texas RioGrande Legal Aid, which has sued FEMA in the past because of the standards it uses to deny claims during disaster events.

Earlier this year, a federal judge ordered FEMA to stop using "secret standards" it used during hurricane dolly to deny claims.

"FEMA gets to pick what the standards are," Figueroa said. "We just want them to be transparent about it."

There are no secret standards being used, Egan said.

"In this case, no," she said, referencing Porter's claim. "We have not heard of it. Can I guarantee that every inspector is top notch? No. I can't guarantee that about every human being."

The most common reason people are denied assistance, Egan said, is because the application wasn't filled out correctly. If someone is denied assistance and believes it to be a mistake, Egan encouraged those affected to seek out a FEMA mobile location and try to sort out what went wrong.

As for Porter, he can't drive because of his visual impairment. Egan confirmed the agency is looking into why Porter's claim was denied.

"We're going to advance this case to our disability integration advisor, so they can review any special needs," Egan said.

Nursing Home Where 12 Died After Irma Lays Off 245 Employees

By Elizabeth Koh And Monique O. Madan
[Miami Herald](#), October 7, 2017

After several of its residents sweltered to death after Hurricane Irma, the Rehabilitation Center at Hollywood Hills laid off 245 employees last month, according to a notice it sent to the state dated Sept. 27.

Employees at the Hollywood nursing home where several residents died after Hurricane Irma were laid off when its license was suspended by the state, the facility said in a notice last week.

The 245 employees — including five doctors, 79 certified nursing assistants, 37 licensed practical nurses, 23 occupational or physical therapists, 18 registered nurses, 10 administrative assistants, 25 environmental or laundry workers and other staffers who worked in engineering, supplies and other upkeep tasks — were let go Sept. 20, according to the Sun Sentinel.

The nursing home's license was revoked the same day by the state Agency for Health Care Administration, which cited several residents' deaths from respiratory or cardiac distress and administrators' efforts to revise patients' medical records after the fact.

According to the Sun Sentinel, the notice of the layoffs was in response to the Worker Adjustment and Restraining Notification Act of 1988, which requires employers to provide advance notice of mass layoffs by 60 days. In a letter dated Sept. 27, Carolina Pena, the center's human resources director, wrote the facility was unable to notify the state of the layoffs sooner "due to unforeseen business circumstances that occurred after the impact of Hurricane Irma," the paper reported.

When the hurricane hit South Florida on Sept. 10, one of the nursing home's transformers powering its cooling system went down. Nursing home officials at the facility set up portable coolers and fans in response, and reached out to Florida Power & Light and called the governor's cellphone in the next two days.

But despite the rising heat inside, no one at the facility called 911 until early in the morning on Sept. 13, when some of its residents began to pass out with symptoms of respiratory and cardiac distress.

About 140 residents were eventually evacuated that morning after nurses became alarmed at the conditions of the residents. Many of those evacuated were carried out in wheelchairs or stretchers, police said.

Eight residents would be dead by the end of the day, and four more would die in the weeks that followed.

Officials have since questioned how conditions at the nursing home could have deteriorated, despite the fact that Memorial Regional Hospital was located just steps away. Gov. Rick Scott approved an emergency order last month that would require all nursing homes to obtain generators and adequate fuel for their air conditioning systems by next month, though the

Florida Health Care Association, the state industry trade group, has countered that the requirement is not feasible in that timeframe.

Both the Hollywood police and the Florida Department of Law Enforcement are investigating the deaths as part of a criminal investigation.

Second Floor Was Deadliest At Nursing Home With No Air Conditioning

By Erika Pesantes, Megan O'Matz, Susannah Bryan, Paula McMahon

[South Florida Sun Sentinel](#), October 6, 2017

They were mostly very old and sickly. But at least 10 of the 12 residents of the Hollywood nursing home who died after Hurricane Irma had another factor in common — they lived on the building's top floor, where the heat was the worst and most windows were left unopened.

It wasn't until the morning of Sept. 13, shortly before dawn, that staff at the rehabilitation center contacted the director of nursing at her home and told her people were deteriorating and dying. She immediately told them to move the residents from the second floor downstairs, where it was cooler, according to the nursing home.

By then it was too late.

"A lot of them died in an 'oven,'" said attorney Gary M. Cohen of Boca Raton, who is handling five negligence cases against the Rehabilitation Center at Hollywood Hills on behalf of survivors and families of the dead. "It's not the way to go. This is not how it's supposed to happen in a nursing home in the 21st Century."

Hurricane Irma knocked out a transformer that powered the central air conditioning at the 152-bed facility on Sept. 10, leaving residents for days to cope in suffocating heat.

As bodies were pulled out of the nursing home three days later, Hollywood Police Chief Tomas Sanchez told reporters the building was "extremely hot" on the second floor. He would not say then whether all of the victims lived on the second floor, citing a newly launched criminal investigation.

Now, the Sun Sentinel has confirmed through friends and family of the dead that all eight who died on Sept. 13 had lived on the top floor. Two of the four people who died in later days also had lived on the second floor.

The second floor housed the sickest, long-term care residents, some with dementia and others who were bedridden or receiving hospice

care. Downstairs, the nursing home cared for a mix of people, including those who might eventually go home again after recuperating from a stroke, joint replacement or other setback.

Before the storm hit, the nursing home told residents and their families they would not be moved and would be safe there. Studies show that evacuating very old people from nursing homes poses its own dangers: increasing the risk of hospitalization and death. But the Hollywood facility, like many others, had no generator to run the air conditioner in a power failure. The state does not require it.

During the three days the air conditioning was inoperable, no staff ordered the building emptied or the residents moved across the street to Memorial Regional Hospital, only steps away, which had air conditioning, power and medical care. When rescuers began to discover the dead in room-to-room checks, it was clear that the people in the most critical condition were on the second floor.

"We have a Signal 7 in Room 229," Hollywood Fire Rescue units said of 92-year-old Miguel Antonio Franco, using their code for a deceased person, according to emergency radio calls provided by the audio streaming website Broadcastify.

Another paramedic announced there "is going to be medical triage on the second floor."

Shortly before 7 a.m. came the radio call of another body: "We have an additional Signal 7 in Room 226." A few seconds later, emergency crews radioed another death and then an official said: "You're going to need to keep track of these."

At one point a rescuer announces: "All patients accounted for on the first floor, green," signaling that they were all alive on the lower floor.

Some of those from the second floor had body temperatures, before or at death, ranging from 107 to 109.9 degrees, according to state regulators. Normal body temperature is considered to be 98.6.

Workers at the nursing home had placed some residents in wheelchairs or in beds in cooler hallways, but kept others in their rooms with fans. Larger fans were placed in hallways. The nursing home also borrowed spot chillers — portable air conditioners — that were "distributed evenly on the first and second floors of the building," according to a lawsuit filed by the nursing home, challenging its closing by the state.

The second floor of a two-story building with a failed cooling system would almost always be hotter than the lower floor, especially in Florida, said Todd Washam, director of industry and external relations at the Air Conditioning Contractors of America, a group based in Arlington, Va., that represents 4,000 companies nationwide.

How much hotter is hard to say. "There's just so much to consider — how big are the windows, what's the insulation like, whether there is tree covering," Washam said.

Sanchez, the Hollywood Police chief, was asked at the Sept. 13 news conference how hot it was in the building. "I'm not going to release those figures, but I can tell you it was very hot on the second floor."

Some windows at the nursing home were open, Sanchez said, but investigators were going to look at "how many windows cannot be opened."

The nursing home shares the same building as a mental hospital, called Larkin Community Hospital Behavioral Health Services. During the air conditioning outage, the hospital's nursing director wrote an email to a Broward County commissioner Sept. 11 asking for help fixing the air conditioning. He explained that "because we are a psych crisis unit we cannot have open windows." The hospital does not want its patients to escape or to jump and get hurt.

Reporters Stephen Hobbs and John Maines contributed to this report.

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FLOODS

Flood-damaged Counties To Receive Federal Aid

[WISC-TV Madison \(WI\)](#), October 9, 2017

Gov. Scott Walker on Monday declared the July flooding in western Wisconsin a major disaster Monday, a statement that makes federal aid available for the state.

The Federal Emergency Management Agency provides a range of federal assistance programs and funds for state and local governments that feel they are unable to adequately respond to the damage a natural disaster has caused.

Walker announced that the damage to Buffalo, Crawford, Grant, Iowa, Jackson, La

Crosse, Lafayette, Monroe, Richland, Trempealeau and Vernon counties by the flooding qualifies for FEMA aid.

"I would like to thank President Trump and FEMA for providing this assistance. It will help many communities as they continue to repair roads and bridges left damaged by the flash floods," Walker said in a statement.

The July storm that caused heavy flooding in 11 counties caused more than \$10 million in damage to public infrastructure, according to FEMA.

TORNADOES

No stories for this edition

WILDFIRES

FEMA Fire Management Assistance Grants For Seven California Wildfires

[YubaNet \(CA\)](#), October 9, 2017

The U.S. Department of Homeland Security's Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA) has authorized the use of federal funds to assist the State of California to combat the Atlas, Tubbs, Cascade, Lobo, LaPorte, Potter and Nuns fires burning in six northern California counties.

On October 9, 2017, the State of California submitted several requests for Fire Management Assistance Declarations for the following named fires:

Atlas in Napa and Solano counties,
Tubbs in Napa and Sonoma counties,
Cascade in Butte and Yuba counties,
Lobo in Nevada County,
LaPorte in Butte County,
Potter in Mendocino County, and
Nuns in Sonoma County.

At the time of the requests, the fires threatened more than 14,000 homes, 100 businesses, a post office, 3 fire stations, 2 schools, and a state hospital. Critical infrastructure including a water pumping station, a hydro-electric facility, cell towers and electrical transmission lines are threatened or have been damaged.

Mandatory evacuations are taking place for approximately 19,000 people, with the potential for a 9,000 additional evacuations. The fire started on October 8, and has burned in excess of 45,000 acres of State and private land.

The FEMA Regional Administrator determined the fires threatened such destruction

as would constitute a major disaster. There are 16 large fires burning uncontrolled within the State.

Fire Management Assistance Grants (FMAGs) provide federal funding for up to 75 percent of eligible firefighting costs. The Disaster Relief Fund provides funding for FMAGs through FEMA to assist in fighting fires that threaten to cause major disasters. Eligible costs covered by FMAGs can include expenses for field camps, equipment use, materials, supplies and mobilization, and demobilization activities attributed to fighting the fire.

With growing fire threats in California and firefighting operations and evacuations underway due to the fires, FEMA activated today its Regional Response Coordination Center in Oakland, California to ensure effective support to the State of California, local and tribal emergency management officials.

FEMA has also deployed an Incident Management Assistance Team to coordinate directly with the California Governor's Office of Emergency Services at the state emergency operations center in Sacramento.

WINTER STORMS

No stories for this edition

OTHER NATURAL DISASTERS

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OTHER FEMA NEWS

EMERGENCY PREPAREDNESS

Audit Warned Florida Emergency Managers That They Had Inadequate Supplies

By Mary Ellen Klas

[Miami Herald](#), October 9, 2017

Long before Florida entered the deadliest hurricane season in a decade, auditors at the state's Division of Emergency Management sent out a warning: the state was ill-prepared for a major disaster.

A 23-page annual audit completed in December 2016 by the agency's inspector general detailed a lengthy list of deficiencies needed to prepare and respond to a hurricane. Among them:

- Food and water supplies at the distribution center in Orlando were inadequate.
- Contracts with companies that would supply cots to shelters had expired.
- The agreements many trucking companies had signed with the state's emergency management agency to distribute supplies had lapsed.
- The agency was using "a spreadsheet created in the 1980s to help predict the amount of supplies and equipment that may be needed after a storm makes landfall," as the state's giant storage facility remained half empty.

The division's ability to respond to disasters may be impaired.

Inspector general's report

What's worse, auditors warned, the state's emergency managers didn't know what they didn't know.

"Action is needed to determine the requirements of the state for supplies and equipment in the event of a disaster in order to ensure that adequate types and quantities of disaster supplies and equipment are available, inspectors said.

The report concluded: "The division's ability to respond to disasters may be impaired."

The audit findings were delivered to Bryan Koon, at the time secretary of the Division of Emergency Management, and his chief of staff, along with their deputies. They agreed with the criticisms and vowed to improve.

They said they would contact the Federal Emergency Management Agency to get advice on how to improve the state's stockpile of provisions. They said they would renew contracts and renegotiate others. They also gave themselves a deadline: March 2018 — 18 months after the audit report and four months after the end of the 2017 hurricane season.

But when Irma looked like it was going to assault the length of Florida's peninsula as a Category 4 hurricane, state emergency officials went into full scramble mode to make up for lost time.

"Shelter supplies that were not stockpiled" were obtained "through emergency order or provided by FEMA," said Alberto Moscoso, spokesperson for the Division of Emergency Management.

"Before Irma made landfall, the division oversaw the largest evacuation in Florida's

history,” said Wesley Maul, interim secretary of the department who replaced Koon last month.

He said the state opened a record of more than 600 shelters and delivered fuel and supplies and personnel to critical areas. “No county requests or needs went unmet during the preparation or response,” he said.

DEM reports directly to the governor’s office and has since 2011, when Scott dismantled the Department of Community Affairs, which had previously housed the state’s emergency operations. Unlike Koon, who had a career in emergency management, Maul, 29, a former travel aide in Scott’s 2014 campaign, has one year of experience.

No one can say if the shortages of supplies and the expired contracts hampered the ability of emergency managers to prepare Florida for Hurricane Irma or delayed its recovery.

However, in the days leading up to the storm, there were anecdotal accounts of supply shortages and transportation lapses.

Emergency shelters in Miami-Dade County were delayed in opening because staff and supplies didn’t show up. In many of them, there were no cots for the elderly and disabled and others awaited delivery of food from the National Guard. At South Dade Middle School there were only 600 meals for the 2,500 people staying at the shelter a day before the storm hit.

Koon told the Herald/Times at the time that it was county’s job to open shelters and that they didn’t need to be stocked with all the supplies in order to open.

“It is not vital that all of those things be in place,” he said on Sept. 8, as Miami’s shelters were filling to capacity. “The vital thing is they are in a hardened storm shelter.”

At Cross City in Dixie County, 90 miles southeast of Tallahassee, June Richardson, 61, an elementary school cafeteria worker, took refuge in a middle-school shelter in one of the poorest communities in the state after power had been out in her home for more than four days. But the shelter had no food.

“They gave you a bottle of water and a bag of potato chips,” Richardson told the Herald/Times.

Collier County opened 28 shelters before the storm made landfall in Florida, but at Gulf Coast High School in Naples on Sept. 10 there were no cots or beds for evacuees, “just seats,” BuzzFeed reported.

This wasn’t supposed to happen. After the hurricanes of 2004 and 2005, the Florida Legislature “found that improved logistical staging and warehouse capacity for supplies and equipment would help ensure adequate supplies and equipment would be available and accessible for responding to disasters,” the December 2016 audit explained.

So the state built the State Logistics Response Center, the SLRC, in Orlando and used it to stockpile supplies and equipment needed in a disaster. But in audit after audit in recent years, inspectors warned that haphazard management of supplies, poor record keeping and inadequate preparation threatened the state’s ability to respond to a natural disaster.

Although FEMA provides assistance to Florida in response to a hurricane, “FEMA expects Florida to be self-sufficient for the first 72 hours,” the report said.

Auditors discovered that the warehouse was not only short of supplies, it was wasting money. More than half — 58 percent — of the warehouse space remained empty, while only 14 of the 27 office spaces were regularly used, the audit said. Auditors estimated the unused space was costing taxpayers \$1.6 million a year.

Moscoco said that fast-tracking purchases the state was able to gather enough stockpile before Irma hit Florida.

“We could not fit any more supplies,” he said. “Many counties returned large quantities of these items to both FEMA and the State of Florida.”

The auditors, however, spelled out other problems:

- **Shelters:** Auditors found an inadequate stockpile of food, water and cots needed for emergency shelters. While the state relies on the American Red Cross and Salvation Army to manage and provide supplies to shelters, auditors found “these entities may not have enough resources to support a large disaster.”

“While it is unclear whether the Division is expected to provide shelter supplies, the Division has a stockpile of shelter supplies,” the audit said.

There was no sign that emergency managers considered the stockpile sufficient, it said. “The Division recently had a contract in place to obtain additional cots if needed in a disaster, but that contract has expired.”

- **Equipment:** The contract with forklift operators to unload supplies from trucks at the

distribution centers had “expired and has not been renewed.”

- Water: The state has a contract with vendors to supply water and ice to the logistics center in Orlando, but it “lacks specific terms requiring delivery within 24 hours.” A backup contract from a vendor to deliver water and ice “was not renewed.” As of May 2016, the logistics center had stored only enough water for 215,633 people for three days, but auditors said FEMA recommends each survivor of a disaster must have one gallon of water every day.

- Meals: The state has a contract with a vendor to supply 333,334 meal kits, containing three meals per kit. But an inspection in May 2016 found there were no kits on hand. After inspectors conducted a surprise review, one truckload of food kits was delivered.

- Transportation: Counties rely on the state to transport supplies to points of distribution within 12 to 24 hours after the storm, but auditors found “the Division does not currently have trucks on hand” and the state’s contract for delivery of supplies and equipment stored at the logistics center “has not been renewed.”

The Division of Emergency Management was unable to answer how much more the last-minute supplies cost the state through emergency contracts and FEMA purchases than it would have had the state stockpiled more supplies before the storm. Auditors said the agency lacked an analysis that showed which approach was the most cost-efficient option.

Auditors also noted the lack of clear direction and oversight, saying they were “unable to identify clear expectations of the division to provide supplies and equipment to shelters.” They also questioned the wisdom of the state relying on vendors to supply water after a disaster, instead of ordering it and stockpiling it in advance.

This was not the first time auditors warned of deficiencies and sloppy record keeping.

In a January 2014 audit, the agency’s inspector general found “the Division had not established written policies and procedures specifically governing the management of the disaster supplies and equipment warehoused at the SLRC.”

It said supplies could disappear and there would be no accounting.

“Without a completed accountable property form, it may not be possible to enforce

accountability for damaged, lost or stolen property,” auditors wrote.

DEM responded by blaming staff shortages. “Division management stated that, because of limited staff, policies and procedures governing the management of disaster supplies and equipment had not been established,” the 2014 audit stated.

Auditors made a similar complaint a year later when a February 2015 audit of inventory found no documentation of some supplies and, when items went missing, the division did not consistently report it “or file reports with the appropriate law enforcement agency.”

“Without a completed accountable property form, it may not be possible to enforce accountability for damaged, lost or stolen property,” auditors wrote.

Another audit, completed June 28, 2017, found inadequate oversight of a program that allows DEM to hire temporary employees to aid in recovery efforts. The so-called “reservists” are paid \$16 to \$18 an hour, with overtime paid at a rate of one-and-a-half times the regular rate. They are required to complete a five-part online training source provided by FEMA and learn how to use a special credit card given to employees while traveling during the emergency.

Auditors found that some reservists trained but never showed up when called to duty. Others “lost equipment and had equipment destroyed” and were never held accountable. A better arrangement, auditors said, would be to better coordinate with volunteer organizations.

Ryan Cragun, a Tampa resident who volunteered with his wife at a Hillsborough County school that was used as a shelter, wrote about that lack of organization in a Sept. 14 letter to the editor of the Tampa Bay Times.

“The principal and her staff did what they could, but the volunteers were put in charge of registering people who showed up. They had virtually no training but were suddenly told they were responsible for an entire shelter,” he said, adding: “Having shelters was right. Not having trained people to staff the shelters was wrong.”

Moscoso said DEM is working to “utilize resources appropriately to improve the quality of reservist sent out into the field.” It is also “collaborating with FEMA to create an analysis to determine if new requirements for the stockpile are needed.” After the Herald/Times inquiry, the

agency says it will now have the analysis completed by December 2017.

NATIONAL PREPAREDNESS MONTH

No stories for this edition

AMERICA'S PREPAREATHON!

No stories for this edition

FEMA CORPS

No stories for this edition

PRIVATE SECTOR

No stories for this edition

CITIZEN CORPS

No stories for this edition

POLITICAL COMMENTARY, COLUMNS AND EDITORIALS

Irma Debris Pickup Will Extend Into 2018

By Tim Aten

[Naples \(FL\) Daily News](#), October 9, 2017

Q: You would be doing a great service to all Collier County residents if you would find out if there is a proposed schedule of when yard debris will be removed from neighborhoods. It would be helpful to know approximately when it will be picked up. Maybe there is a website that residents can access to search their particular area?

— Carolee Steelman, North Naples

A: Collier County's utility billing call center is getting thousands of calls a day inquiring about a pickup schedule for Hurricane Irma debris, but the answer is not what callers want to hear.

"Everybody is asking the same question, looking for a schedule. We just don't have that schedule at this point," said Margie Hapke, interim supervisor of Utilities Ordinance Education and Compliance for the Collier County Public Utilities Department.

While it's not available yet, a daily public schedule and map of where trucks are being

deployed may be available soon from the county and its contractors. Another proposed online map may be able to show residents where first passes and pickups have been made.

"That's what I'm trying to get them to do," Hapke said.

Residents living behind debris stacked high along area roads are anxious to have the piles disappear, but it could be as long as six months before the last of the downed trees and brush are hauled away.

"There's just so much more out there than what we've experienced before. It's going to take a long time," Hapke said. "We are looking at four to six months before everything is picked up."

Not only is the initial estimate of 4 million to 5 million cubic yards of debris from Irma about four times the 1.2 million cubic yards dealt with when Hurricane Wilma tore through the area in 2005, the trucks and manpower to handle it are more difficult to obtain, Hapke said.

"Most counties in Florida were affected (by Irma), and a lot of resources were already sent to areas impacted by (Hurricane) Harvey," she said. "This time we are having to beg for resources. They need debris-removal equipment and crews all over Florida."

Of course, Hurricane Nate making landfall on the Gulf Coast over the weekend most likely will mean an additional depletion of resources.

As of the end of business Thursday, nearly 250,000 cubic yards of debris have been picked up in Collier since AshBritt Inc., the county's disaster recovery contractor, began Sept. 22 working 7 a.m. to 7 p.m. daily to collect Irma-related yard debris.

That means at least 15 times more debris — an excess of 4 million cubic yards — is still piled along roads. Visualize 1 cubic yard as roughly the size of a residential washing machine.

The process takes longer than expected because every step has to be painstakingly documented in the field by Tetra Tech, a monitoring contractor certified by the Federal Emergency Management Agency. The detailed checks-and-balances procedure is required so that the county will be fully reimbursed by FEMA for picking up storm-related debris.

"FEMA has very specific rules for what can be picked up and how it can be picked up," Hapke said. "We were extremely successful for reimbursement after Hurricane Wilma."

FEMA doesn't regularly allow the collection of debris in gated communities or off private roads, so the county filed an appeal last week to permit an exception from the federal agency.

"We were successful with that after Wilma, so we are expected to get that appeal granted again," Hapke said.

While it doesn't mean the county will not pick up debris in gated communities, it makes a difference for reimbursement from FEMA, which believes gated communities should first rely on insurance to handle debris removal. At any rate, gated communities will be among the last areas to be picked up.

The contractor, working with county staff to decide where crews are sent, started on the hardest hit areas first. Debris pickup began in Everglades City, Goodland, Copeland, Chokoloskee and Immokalee, where a lot of buildings were damaged.

Nearly 125 units are working in the county to try to get the vegetative debris off the ground first because it's the most dangerous and bulkiest.

"The goal is to do one first pass to pick up as much as they can throughout the county," Hapke said. "After the vegetative debris, then they will go back through to pick up the bulky items."

None of the material will end up being buried in a Collier County landfill. It's all being hauled out of the county, Hapke said. After Wilma, a lot of the debris went to a sugar plant to be burned as fuel, she said.

Because debris is picked up by a grapple truck, which uses a large claw-like device, piles have to be separated because they are picked up separately. Residents can help expedite the process by not mixing household debris and trash with piles of vegetation.

"Just please be patient and please be safe. We have a lot of people putting debris where they shouldn't," Hapke said. "Debris is obstructing views when they are trying to pull out of their driveway or their community."

Make sure the stacks of debris are in the right-of-way between the sidewalk and the road or between the ditch and the road, but not on roads or sidewalk or in ditches. Provide Have a local question? Email it with your name and city of residence to intheknow@naplesnews.com. Tim Aten's "In the Know" is published every Monday and Wednesday. Like In the Know on Facebook now at [facebook.com/timaten.intheknow](https://www.facebook.com/timaten.intheknow).

SOCIAL MEDIA

No stories for this edition

SPANISH MEDIA

Fuertes Lluvias Provocadas Por El Huracán "Nate" Llegan A Louisiana

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

Aguaceros del huracán Nate fustigaron el sureste de Louisiana el sábado por la tarde a medida que la tormenta se aproximaba a tocar tierra en las primeras horas de la noche y los residentes de áreas bajas huyeron.

El meteoro se ubicaba a unos 170 kilómetros al sur de la desembocadura del Mississippi el sábado por la tarde. Aún era un huracán de categoría 1, pero se espera que alcance la categoría 2 antes de tocar tierra. Nate dejó al menos 21 muertos al pasar junto a Centroamérica días antes.

En Estados Unidos, las autoridades declararon el estado de emergencia en Louisiana, Mississippi y Alabama, y anunciaron órdenes de evacuación en zonas bajas y la apertura de albergues para quienes los necesiten. Los residentes en Nueva Orleans se preocupaban por una red de drenaje en la que se detectaron debilidades durante inundaciones repentinas ocurridas a mediados de año.

Las áreas costeras de Nueva Orleans lejos del sistema de diques de la ciudad estaban bajo una orden de evacuación. Unas 2 mil personas resultaron afectadas, pero no todas accedieron a irse.

El presidente Donald Trump aprobó una declaración de emergencia para una amplia zona de Louisiana y ordenó el envío de ayuda federal a ese estado sureño.

En declaración el sábado temprano, la Casa Blanca indicó que el presidente autorizó a la Agencia Federal para el Manejo de Emergencias (FEMA, por sus siglas en inglés) y al Departamento de Seguridad Nacional que coordinen todos los esfuerzos federales de socorro en casos de desastre.

Agregó que la medida pretende acelerar la ayuda, salvar vidas y proteger la propiedad y la seguridad pública en la región. Se identificaron específicamente 17 distritos, muchos en la costa.

En algunas plataformas petrolíferas del Golfo de México se realizaron evacuaciones.

El gobernador de Louisiana, John Bel Edwards, dijo que habló con Trump por la mañana.

"Él me aseguró que la ciudad tendría toda la asistencia que necesitamos cuando nos preparamos para Nate", dijo en Twitter.

El gobernador de Mississippi, Phil Bryant, declaró el estado de emergencia en los seis condados sureños.

El gobierno de ese estado anunció la apertura de 11 centros de evacuación en zonas alejadas de la costa, con autobuses disponibles para los que no pudieran conducir.

Nate podría elevar el nivel del mar entre 1.2 y 2.1 metros en la zona entre Morgan City, Louisiana, y el límite entre Alabama y Florida, según el Centro Nacional de Huracanes.

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'Nate' Se Degrada A Depresión Tropical En Su Paso Por EU

[AFP](#), October 8, 2017

Nate se debilitó durante la mañana de este domingo y pasó de tormenta a depresión tropical mientras avanza tierra adentro por el sur de Estados Unidos, adonde había llegado como huracán tras dejar un rastro de muerte y destrucción en Centroamérica.

En la costa sur estadounidense, Nate hace sentir su poder ocasionando inundaciones y masivos cortes de energía, que podrían extenderse hasta por una semana. Se trata del tercer ciclón en afectar la zona en los últimos dos meses, como parte de una temporada de huracanes especialmente activa.

TE RECOMENDAMOS: Levantan alertas en Quintana Roo tras paso de 'Nate'

Más de 100 mil personas se encontraban sin servicio eléctrico por los efectos de Nate, que antes de ser rebajado a tormenta tropical tocó dos veces tierra en el sur de Estados Unidos: primero en Luisiana en la noche del sábado y horas después en la costa de Mississippi.

El Centro Nacional de Huracanes (NHC) con sede en Miami informó a las 11H00 locales (15H00 GMT) la tormenta tenía vientos máximos de solo 35 kilómetros por hora en dirección noreste y se acercaba a Birmingham, Alabama, a una velocidad de 24 millas por hora (37 km/h aproximadamente).

Lo peor quedó atrás

Sin embargo, el centro había alertado que "la combinación de una peligrosa tormenta y la marea causarán crecientes inundaciones en las áreas normalmente secas de la costa hacia zonas del interior"

Algunas zonas sufrieron inundaciones de unos 2.5 metros y se esperaba que la tormenta produjera hasta 25.4 centímetros de lluvia, según el NHC.

En Alabama, el alcalde de Dauphin Island, Jeff Collier dijo que aparentemente la gran mayoría de los residentes decidieron pasar la tormenta en casa.

"Tuvimos algunas casas inundadas, numerosos vehículos también, cosas de esa naturaleza... pero no creemos que hayamos tenido ningún tipo de heridos", dijo a CNN.

"Afortunadamente, puedo decir que en la última hora creo que ya dejamos lo peor atrás", añadió.

La gobernadora de Alabama, Kay Ivey, tuiteó que había pedido al presidente Donald Trump emitir una declaración de emergencia "para asegurar tener a la disposición todos los recursos posibles para responder" a Nate.

Trump liberó ayuda federal para ayudar a mitigar el impacto de la tormenta en Luisiana y Mississippi, en caso de que fuera necesaria.

Pero Nueva Orleans, que había sido devastada por el huracán Katrina en 2005, que dejó mil 800 muertos, parece haber escapado de la furia de Nate.

TE RECOMENDAMOS: 'Nate' se fortalece cerca de México; avanza hacia EU

La oficina del alcalde levantó el toque de queda impuesto como medida de prevención, señalando que el alerta de huracán para la ciudad había quedado sin efecto.

Preparación más simple

Mientras la tormenta se acercaba fueron dispuestos refugios para personas evacuadas de áreas con riesgo de inundaciones y las autoridades llamaron a los residentes a almacenar comida y agua para varios días.

Juanita Stoval, de 57 años, adquirió algunas conservas pero dijo contar con lo esencial: "tengo antorchas y una radio a pilas, tengo también velas y juegos", aseguró.

Según las autoridades, los otros potentes huracanes que azotaron recientemente la región, ayudaron a que la preparación para Nate fuera más simple porque tanto los oficiales como la población ya estaban preparados.

Nueva Orleans ha mejorado sus sistemas de contención tras el devastador Katrina, pero los responsables gubernamentales advierten que ello no ha eliminado el riesgo de inundaciones.

Fuerte temporada

A su paso por Centroamérica, Nate dejó una estela mortal: al menos 16 personas fallecieron en Nicaragua, 10 en Costa Rica, tres en Honduras y dos en El Salvador.

En la región, aún se contabilizaban daños, se intentaba ubicar a personas desaparecidas y restablecer contacto con comunidades aisladas tras la caída de puentes y la inundación de caminos.

Nate es el último de una serie de tormentas letales que golpea el Caribe en esta especialmente fuerte temporada de huracanes, que suele durar de junio a noviembre.

El sureste de Estados Unidos fue duramente azotado en agosto por dos huracanes: Harvey, que provocó más de 70 muertos y considerables daños materiales, e Irma, que tras pasar por las Antillas alcanzó la categoría 5 y provocó 12 muertos en Florida.

Otra poderosa tormenta, el huracán María, devastó el Caribe a fines de septiembre, incluyendo a Dominica y Puerto Rico, territorio estadounidense.

Contrario a Harvey, que dejó caer cantidades récord de lluvias sobre Texas por una semana, el pasaje de Nate se espera que sea rápido.

Sin embargo, el gobernador de Luisiana, John Bel Edwards, no descartó que también podría causar daños y había pedido a la población abandonar las zonas de riesgo.

Además, plataformas petroleras y gasíferas en el Golfo de México, fueron evacuadas ante la llegada del ciclón.

'Nate' Toca Tierra En EU Tras Dejar 30 Muertos En Centroamérica

[El Financiero \(MEX\)](#), October 7, 2017

'Nate' tocó tierra el sábado en Estados Unidos como un huracán de categoría 1, amenazando partes de Mississippi, Luisiana y Alabama con lluvias torrenciales tras dejar al menos 30 muertos en su paso por América Central.

'Nate', la cuarta gran tormenta que alcanza a Estados Unidos en menos de dos meses, avanzaba en dirección nor-noroeste a una velocidad de 37 kilómetros por hora tras tocar tierra cerca de la desembocadura del río Misisipi,

de acuerdo al Centro Nacional de Huracanes (CNH) de Estados Unidos.

Los principales puertos del Golfo de México fueron cerrados mientras 'Nate' se intensificaba, con un embate que se espera genere una subida del nivel del agua de hasta 3.74 metros en la desembocadura del río Mississippi.

La Guardia Costera de Estados Unidos ordenó los cierres en Nueva Orleans; Gulfport y Pascagoula, Mississippi; Mobile, Alabama, y Pensacola y Panama City, Florida.

Ante la llegada de 'Nate', Nueva Orleans, la ciudad más grande de Luisiana, evacuó a algunos habitantes de áreas situadas fuera de su sistema de esclusas.

Los vientos podrían provocar importantes cortes de energía en Nueva Orleans y el nivel del agua podría subir entre 1.8 y 2.7 metros, señaló el alcalde, Mitch Landrieu.

"Hemos pasado por esto muchas, muchas veces. No es necesario entrar en pánico", afirmó en una conferencia de prensa en la que recordó al poderoso huracán 'Katrina', que provocó graves inundaciones en la ciudad y acabó con la vida de cientos de personas en agosto de 2005.

En tanto, el Servicio Meteorológico Nacional informó que el fenómeno se encuentra lejos de México y no hay peligro para territorio nacional.

Como tormenta tropical, 'Nate' arrasó en Centroamérica con carreteras y pueblos, desbordó ríos y derribó árboles, dejando a su paso al menos 30 muertos en Nicaragua, Costa Rica, Honduras y El Salvador, según autoridades de protección civil. En Centroamérica también calculan una treintena de desaparecidos en la región.

En Costa Rica y en Nicaragua hay unos 25 mil damnificados por las inundaciones y varias zonas de ambos países permanecen incomunicadas por vía terrestre debido a los aludes.

'Nate' provocó lluvias y oleaje alto el viernes sobre la península mexicana de Yucatán, que alberga a centros turísticos como Cancún y Playa del Carmen, sin reportes inmediatos de daños de importancia.

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).

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.

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 Rosselló anunciaba que el balance de muertos aumentaba a 34.

Gobierno De Puerto Rico Requisó 15 Contenedores De Alimentos Para Entregarlos A Los Damnificados Del Huracán María

[Univision](#), October 6, 2017

Gobierno de Puerto Rico requisó 15 contenedores de alimentos para entregarlos a los damnificados del huracán María

Las autoridades examinan los manifiestos de las empresas marítimas que transportaron los contenedores y pagarán a sus dueños el valor declarado de las mismas.

El gobierno de Puerto Rico requisó 15 contenedores de alimentos no reclamados por sus dueños ubicados en los puertos de la isla y ya distribuyó su contenido entre las personas que más lo necesitan, dijo el secretario de asuntos públicos, Ramón Rosario Cortés.

El funcionario no reveló a cuánto asciende el costo de las provisiones requisadas pero aseguró que las autoridades examinan los manifiestos de las empresas marítimas Tote y Crowley, que

transportaron los contenedores, y pagarán a sus dueños el valor declarado de las mismas.

“Se está trabajando con los manifiestos (...) estamos trabajando manualmente, los sistemas de (Departamento de Hacienda) no están registrados como usualmente se tienen, por el problema de comunicación. Pero lo que se le pidió a los navieros como Tote, que manejaban estos contenedores, sus respectivos manifiestos para ver el precio que se le puso en el manifiesto a ese artículo y poder reembolsarle a esos comerciantes la carga que trajeron y estaban inhabilitados de recoger”, detalló el funcionario.

Se desconoce a qué empresas se les requisó la mercancía.

Hace una semana el gobernador Ricardo Rosselló advirtió a los importadores que debían recoger su mercancía del puerto de San Juan y distribuirla, o el gobierno se incautaría de la misma y la distribuiría como parte de sus esfuerzos por aliviar el hambre en la isla tras el paso del huracán, que mantiene sin electricidad y comunicaciones a la mayor parte de la población, y numerosas comunidades aisladas a dos semanas del evento atmosférico.

Muchas de estas empresas que no reclamaban su mercancía estaban inoperantes y no tenían la capacidad para encargar a los transportistas a recogerla, almacenarla y distribuirla en las tiendas, igualmente inoperantes por la falta de energía eléctrica.

El gobernador tomó su decisión también para abrir espacio en los muelles para los productos de primera necesidad que están en camino.

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 a cuestas. 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”.

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".

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.

Trump Elogia Contribuciones De Hispanos, Pero Evade Espinoso Tema De Los "Dreamers"

By María Peña

[El Diario \(NY\)](#), October 6, 2017

WASHINGTON.- En su primera celebración en la Casa Blanca por el "Mes de la Herencia Hispana", el presidente Donald Trump elogió este viernes las contribuciones de los hispanos a la economía y defensa de EEUU, pero evadió por completo su polémica política de deportaciones y el futuro limbo legal de los Dreamers.

"Nuestras increíbles comunidades hispanoamericanas encarnan nuestros grandes valores estadounidenses de fe, y familia, y seguridad, y trabajo duro, y libertad... no importa quiénes somos o de dónde venimos, somos todos estadounidenses unidos por nuestro amor a este país y su bandera, y de uno al otro", dijo Trump,

acompañado de la Primera Dama, Melania, durante una ceremonia en el Salón Este de la Casa Blanca.

Con la ayuda de un TelePrompter colocado a un extremo del salón, Trump leyó un discurso de aproximadamente 15 minutos sin novedades y en el que mezcló asuntos de su política nacional y exterior, como el apoyo de EEUU a las tareas de recuperación por el terremoto en México y el huracán en Puerto Rico, y la reciente masacre en Las Vegas (Nevada).

Así por ejemplo, mencionó lo "maravilloso" que es el presidente mexicano, Enrique Peña Nieto, y repitió sus conocidos ataques contra los regímenes en Cuba y Venezuela, y su apoyo a la democracia en ambos países.

Trump reiteró su tristeza por las víctimas por la masacre en Las Vegas, en la que murieron 59 personas, y el heroísmo de la policía y los equipos de emergencia para ayudar a las víctimas, pero nuevamente evadió hablar de un mayor control de las armas en EEUU.

"No hay maldad en la Tierra que pueda ser más poderosa que el amor y el valor del pueblo estadounidense"; dijo.

Al destacar que más de 250,000 hispanos prestan servicio en las Fuerzas Armadas y que 60 han recibido la "Medalla de Honor del Congreso", Trump interrumpió su discurso para precisamente saludar a uno de ellos en el salón.

De nueva cuenta, Trump elogió los esfuerzos de su Administración para las tareas de recuperación en Puerto Rico, país que pronunció con acento exagerado, y destacó la resiliencia del pueblo puertorriqueño. EEUU tiene ahora sobre el terreno a 15,000 agentes del gobierno federal, indicó.

"Estamos dirigiendo todo recurso federal a nuestra disposición... no descansaremos hasta concluir esa labor", afirmó Trump, quien se ha mantenido a la defensiva ante críticas de la lenta respuesta inicial a la crisis humanitaria en la isla.

De hecho, la Administración Federal para la Gestión de Emergencias (FEMA), eliminó de su página web la referencia de que el 95% de la población sigue sin luz eléctrica en Puerto Rico.

En su discurso, el mandatario también promovió su plan de recortes de impuestos, aunque la audiencia no respondió con gran entusiasmo.

Trump hizo esas declaraciones ante una audiencia de más de 200 líderes cívicos, religiosos, comunitarios y empresariales, y

miembros hispanos de su Administración, como el secretario del Trabajo, Alex Acosta, la tesorera de EEUU, Jovita Carranza, la asesora de comunicaciones, Mercedes Schlapp, y la asesora afroamericana, Omarosa Manigault.

Entre el público también figuraron el congresista republicano de Florida, Carlos Curbelo, la exrepresentante estatal de Nuevo Hampshire, Marilinda García, el empresario Danny Vargas, y el presidente de la Liga de Ciudadanos Latinoamericanos Unidos (LULAC) Roger Rocha.

Entre los hispanos conservadores invitados al evento figuraron Alfonso Aguilar, presidente de la Alianza Hispana para Principios Conservadores, y Daniel Garza, de "LIBRE Initiative".

Mientras, Fredy Burgos, un republicano de Virginia, mantuvo en alto una gorra roja con el mensaje de "construir el muro", una de las promesas electorales de Trump en 2016. Fredy Burgos, un republicano de Virginia, lució una gorra roja con el mensaje "Construye el muro". Foto: cortesía de periodistas de la Casa Blanca.

El Departamento de Seguridad Nacional (DHS) dijo recientemente que ya comenzó la construcción de prototipos del muro fronterizo en el sector de San Diego (California), y esta semana el comité de Seguridad Nacional de la Cámara de Representantes aprobó un paquete de seguridad fronteriza por \$10,000 millones, que incluye fondos para el muro.

Pregunta sobre la omisión de Trump a asuntos como la eliminación de "DACA", la portavoz de la Casa Blanca, Sara Huckabee Sanders, dijo que "no hay razón para que reiterara la misma postura que él (Trump) ha tenido", para que el Congreso actúe sobre una solución permanente.

"En los días venideros, él presentará su reforma migratoria responsable", afirmó.

La ceremonia estuvo amenizada por la cantante Julissa Arce Rivera, nacida en Chicago (Illinois) de padres puertorriqueños, quien dedicó una canción, "Tierra Bendita", para Puerto Rico a raíz del huracán "María", y otra también bilingüe y de carácter religioso, "Nosotros Creemos" ("We Believe").

La orquesta juvenil "Y.E.S Movement", fundada en Miami (Florida) por César Rangel, un inmigrante venezolano, también participó en el evento.

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, Jenniffer 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", recalcó 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 égidias y las bombas de agua, que son acueductos, esas deben ser una prioridad y va a ser una de las cosas 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 rápido.

¿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.

¿Habrá 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.

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.

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.

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).

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.

“La Isla Necesita Una Invasión Humanitaria”

[El Nuevo Día \(PRI\)](#), October 8, 2017

Orlando, Florida – No pasan muchos días sin que Darren Soto, congresista boricua por el estado de la Florida, aparezca en noticiarios nacionales, periódicos y en las redes sociales dramatizando de forma intensa la tragedia de Puerto Rico a causa del huracán María.

En inglés, que es su idioma principal, y a veces en un español con barreras, clama con tono urgente por ayuda para el país donde nació su padre. Y ha sido puntual en levantar su dedo acusador hacia la Casa Blanca por la lentitud y poca prioridad que ha dado a la emergencia que atraviesa la isla luego que la mañana del 20 de septiembre, el poderoso ciclón lanzara a Borinquen en solo horas en un viaje al pasado, a la época en que la gente se alumbraba con velas, lavaba su ropa en los ríos y cocinaba al fogón.

¿Siente que han escuchado sus denuncias?

—Sí, me han escuchado en el Congreso, pero he tenido una respuesta lenta de la administración Trump. Mi mensaje ha sido simple: todas las historias de la tragedia en Puerto Rico son ciertas. No hay electricidad, no hay servicio de celulares; las filas para comprar comida son inmensas. El agua es aún difícil de hallar. Mi mensaje a la administración Trump es que necesitamos más ayuda aérea, helicópteros que lleguen a estas zonas aisladas llevando ayuda. Con el Congreso, la situación ha sido más positiva. Esperamos aprobar un paquete de \$29,000 millones que tendrá \$10,000 millones para Puerto Rico. Lo demás es para Texas, Florida e Islas Vírgenes que también fueron afectados.

En el reporte que usted preparó luego de su viaje a Puerto Rico documenta la lentitud de FEMA; de oficiales que llegaron a la isla de otros estados para ayudar, pero que estuvieron días sin hacer nada porque no recibían instrucciones; y señala los problemas de coordinación. ¿Cómo interpreta estas observaciones?

—Que no hay una voluntad del presidente Trump para que las cosas se hagan con la urgencia que amerita. Vi cientos de contenedores en el puerto y a oficiales federales diciendo que no podían entregar la ayuda porque las carreteras estaban averiadas. Sin embargo, el gobierno de

Estados Unidos ha estado en otras instancias en las que ha despachado ayuda con gran rapidez, como cuando tuvimos una guerra en Yugoslavia y en Irak, hacia donde simplemente mandábamos brigadas para construir puentes rápidamente; enviamos suministros en helicópteros y teníamos militares cuidando esos suministros mientras se llevaban a su destino. La isla necesita una invasión humanitaria y yo solo veo esta lentitud que me da un mensaje claro de que los oficiales de FEMA están haciendo lo mejor que pueden, pero no han recibido motivación ni apoyo de la Casa Blanca para hacer lo necesario y llevar esos suministros a las áreas más necesitadas de la isla.

Lee más entrevistas

¿Y por qué cree que Casa Blanca no los está motivando a llevaresta ayuda con urgencia?

—¿Sabes? Es muy difícil saber qué hay en la mente del presidente Trump, pero creo que tanto él como muchos oficiales en la Casa Blanca han subestimado la magnitud de los daños que ha sufrido la isla. Su viaje se concentró en San Juan y áreas cercanas, pero si hubiera ido a Guajataca o a Utuado hubiera visto áreas que han sido golpeadas y devueltas al Siglo 19. Sin ATH, supermercados cerrados, carreteras cerradas...

Es difícil creer que Trump no supiera sobre los daños en Puerto Rico. Es difícil creer que el presidente se quedó en el área metropolitana porque no supiera.

—Y esa es la gran pregunta. Solo sé que he sido vocal sobre lo que he visto y por eso fui tan crítico en ese reporte. Por eso es que denuncié la lenta y desmotivada respuesta de la Casa Blanca. En contraste, el Congreso ha tomado seriamente esta devastación y por eso es que estamos hablando de una gran asignación para ayudar a reconstruir a Puerto Rico

¿Tener al Congreso motivado, como usted dice, y no a la Casa Blanca es suficiente para ayudar a la isla?

—No. No es suficiente. Y por esto temo que el número de muertos irá aumentando en los próximos meses en la medida que sigamos analizando esta crisis. No puedes tener ancianos dependiendo de equipo médico que prende y apaga porque se acaba el combustible de un generador, y no puedes tener gente sin agua y comida por tanto tiempo sin que empieces a ver consecuencias terribles.

Ha dicho que lo ocurrido en Puerto Rico fue otro Katrina.

—Y no he sido el único que lo ha dicho. El congresista de Luisiana, Cedric Richmons, dijo que estaba preocupado al ver que la devastación en la isla se estaba convirtiendo en un segundo Katrina.

¿Podiera ser peor que Katrina por el hecho de que Puerto Rico una isla y literalmente estamos aislados?

—Tenemos que enfocarnos en llevar los suministros allí. No es si es peor o no que Katrina, es que hay que hacer el trabajo y eso no está ocurriendo.

En el reporte que preparó habla de un viaje en helicóptero, ¿qué imágenes le impactaron más?

—Cuando despegamos vimos en San Juan como en algunas comunidades ya el agua empezaba a bajar y era claro que mientras más pobre es la comunidad, peor fue el impacto. Cuando empezamos a viajar al área de los bosques, ya no había hojas en los árboles, y los árboles parecían palillos de fósforos todos doblados. En el centro de la isla, empecé a ver plantaciones destruidas, granjas de las que solo quedaba el esqueleto de estructuras. Pueblo tras pueblo, vi viviendas sin techo y no vi los toldos azules de FEMA, porque no han llegado y me preocupé que ocurriera una inundación. Luego fuimos a Utuado. Escogimos aterrizar allí pues es uno de los pueblos más grandes de Puerto Rico pero está aislado y pensé que si veíamos lo que pasaba ahí tendríamos una imagen clara de cómo es la situación en el resto de la zona montañosa. Allí todo estaba lleno de fango, arboles tirados, puentes y carreteras rotas. Allí, un anciano se me acercó y me preguntó si yo era de FEMA. Le expliqué que no, que era un congresista puertorriqueño que representaba a Florida. Me dijo que nadie de FEMA había llegado. En el pueblo, no había ninguna actividad, solo en un cafetín donde me tomé un café. Allí, me confirmaron que no había llegado ninguna ayuda. Que no podían comprar pues no había ATH. Escaseaba el agua. Por suerte, el hospital tenía un generador. Ahí constaté que en muchos lugares pasarán muchos meses antes que se pueda restablecer la electricidad. Y por eso mi trabajo es decirle la verdad al Congreso y eso fue lo que hice. Por eso preparé un informe formal y le agregué fotos para que vieran porque, aunque han visto los reportes noticiosos, ellos quieren

tener un informe de primera mano. Es crítico que los miembros del Congreso tengan esta información. Y FEMA también vio ese reporte.

¿Y tuvo alguna reacción de FEMA?

—Me reuní con ellos al día siguiente que regresé de Puerto Rico. Le dije a los funcionarios de FEMA que necesitamos apoyo aéreo para llevar los suministros. Ese ha sido el gran punto ciego en esta operación de emergencia.

Esta situación ha llevado a la isla a no poder sostenerse económicamente y mucho menos podrá pensar en pagar su deuda con sus acreedores. ¿Cómo ve a Puerto Rico en ese aspecto?

—Soy parte del Comité de Recursos Naturales y del subcomité de Asuntos Indígenas, Insulares y Nativos de Alaska, así que estoy en un comité con jurisdicción directa con Puerto Rico. Me reuní esta semana con el presidente del comité como parte de la discusión del paquete para FEMA para atender la emergencia. Los fondos para la emergencia no se pueden usar para pagar a acreedores.

En la isla hay 3.4 millones de ciudadanos americanos y en ellos sí se han pensado cuando hay una guerra y se necesitan efectivos militares.

—Mi mensaje al Congreso ha sido que los puertorriqueños son americanos que han reafirmado su compromiso con la bandera americana que pagan impuestos, que han peleado en la milicia. Y el gobierno federal, con su respuesta lenta, le ha fallado en este momento de gran necesidad.

Hay quien dice que en futuras elecciones, los puertorriqueños en la diáspora recordaran quiénes ayudaron o no ayudaron a la isla en esta crisis y usarán su voto para castigar. ¿Qué cree?

—En la Florida Central recordaremos quién ayudó y quién olvidó a la isla. Lo recordaremos ahora y en el futuro. Y ya estamos usando nuestro poder político lo mejor que podemos. Yo represento un distrito que es mayoritariamente anglosajón, pero como votamos como un bloque mayor en el que se unen anglos y negros, me siento aquí como una persona que representa también a los puertorriqueños.

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 Chapel 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, tálamos 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.

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 jayuanos.

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 vocécita de la Donahue. ¿Recuerdan su voz? Dios sabe que nunca la creí.

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.

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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.

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.

Probado El Gran Valor Y Compromiso De La Policía

[El Nuevo Día \(PRI\)](#), October 9, 2017

La valía y el compromiso de los miembros de la Policía de Puerto Rico ha quedado demostrado y con creces a raíz de la catástrofe causada por el huracán María, el evento ciclónico de mayor poder destructor en un siglo.

El estado paupérrimo en que han quedado decenas de cuarteles, así como los daños a la flota de patrullas y otros vehículos oficiales no ha desalentado a los agentes, quienes siguen dando el máximo por mantener el orden en el estado de emergencia en que nos encontramos.

La regulación del tránsito en las vías públicas, ahora carentes de iluminación y parcialmente obstruidas por escombros, representan un gran reto diario para los policías, sobre todo por el alterado flujo vehicular que en las noches es de altísimo riesgo para conductores, pasajeros o peatones y sobre todo para los agentes que incluso con poca luz tienen la encomienda de controlar el movimiento en calles o avenidas.

Desde el paso letal del temporal se ha registrado al menos una decena de muertes de tránsito, por lo que nuestro llamado es a ejercer máxima precaución y paciencia en las carreteras y cooperar con los agentes asignados a dirigir el flujo vehicular.

En este difícil periodo, las actuaciones heroicas de efectivos policíacos antes durante y después del golpe ciclónico son dignas de reconocimiento. Los ejemplos más dramáticos conocidos dan cuenta de la disposición del

cumplimiento del deber, no importa las condiciones.

Está el caso de 19 agentes que quedaron atrapados en el cuartel de Corozal durante el criminal azote del temporal, debido a la crecida del río Cibuco, que arrasó las instalaciones policíacas y sus equipos, además de comercios y hasta el centro gubernamental municipal.

Los policías lucharon como mejor pudieron contra la corriente hasta subir al techo del segundo piso de la estructura, donde enfrentaron los fuertes vientos y lluvias. Resolvieron pasar el ciclón en el cuartel con miras a estar listos para salir a patrullar y atender situaciones de emergencia cuando amainaran las ráfagas. Sin embargo, estuvieron a punto de perecer ahogados. Y fueron sus buenas relaciones con la comunidad lo que llevó a los vecinos de un residencial cercano a rescatarlos con apoyo de los bomberos.

Tristemente en Aguadilla, los agentes estatales Héctor Luis Matías y Ángel Lorenzo González no corrieron igual suerte. Después de días trabajando, ambos se dirigían en sus vehículos privados de vuelta a sus hogares cuando el río Culebrinas, convertido en fiera, fuera de su cauce, los arrastró y los uniformados perecieron.

Al igual que miles de miembros de la Policía estos agentes cumplían con sus labores en el momento histórico de mayor riesgo que ha vivido Puerto Rico en décadas. Dieron y dan cátedra de lo que es una vocación inquebrantable al servicio público en momentos de extrema dificultad.

Muchos agentes también han perdido sus casas y otros bienes, pero, aun así, cumplen de sol a sol en complicadas tareas de seguridad.

Tal encomienda al presente incluye el respaldo a los esfuerzos del Ejército, la Agencia Federal para el Manejo de Emergencias (FEMA), así como las dependencias del gobierno estatal en esta etapa del desastre, descrito por el curtido teniente general Jeffrey Buchanan, a cargo de las operaciones militares de emergencia, como “lo peor que he visto nunca”.

Ante la crisis, cooperar con los agentes adquiere un cariz de deber y necesidad ciudadana. Mientras, urge rehabilitar la infraestructura policíaca, con énfasis en su sistema de telecomunicaciones, para que puedan realizar con mayor efectividad sus importantes labores de vigilancia, prevención de robos y saqueos e investigar actos delictivos de

desalmados maleantes que han aprovechado la crisis para realizar escalamientos y apropiaciones ilegales en comercios, casas u otros lugares.

El trabajo de los policías implica arriesgar sus vidas para salvar la de los demás y, como ocurre al presente, luchar por restablecer la seguridad del pueblo, que con su crucial apoyo trabaja con firmeza por la reconstrucción de Puerto Rico.

EU Agradece A México Apoyo Para Afectados Por Huracán

[El Universal \(MEX\)](#), October 6, 2017

El Gobierno de Estados Unidos agradeció el ofrecimiento de México de ayuda a las víctimas del huracán María en Puerto Rico y las Islas Vírgenes.

La embajada de Estados Unidos señaló que las autoridades mexicanas trabajan con las contrapartes adecuadas de la Agencia Federal para el Manejo de Emergencias (FEMA) para proporcionar apoyo y hay personal técnico de México en Puerto Rico.

La representación diplomática agradeció al pueblo mexicano por su generosa expresión de buena voluntad y apoyo.

Ambos gobiernos han expresado su continua solidaridad ante los desastres naturales que han azotado a los dos países y han acordado trabajar de manera cooperativa para restablecer las comunidades afectadas lo antes posible, agregó.

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.

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.

Alcalde De Caguas Reclama Que Lleguen Los Toldos

[El Vocero de Puerto Rico](#), October 6, 2017

El alcalde de Caguas, William Miranda Torres, indicó que por más de doce días ha solicitado al gobierno central y la Agencia Federal

para el Manejo de Emergencias (FEMA, por sus siglas en inglés) que canalice la entrega de toldos para las familias que perdieron total o parcialmente sus techos y aun no se ha producido respuesta alguna.

“Personalmente y asumiendo la responsabilidad que tengo de reclamar la ayuda para los ciudadanos de Caguas he asistido al Centro de Operaciones de Emergencias del Gobierno Central en el Centro de Convenciones, además de funcionarios de mi equipo de trabajo, para solicitar que se suplan necesidades apremiantes de mi pueblo. Una de esas peticiones ha sido que se entreguen los toldos para las familias que perdieron total o parcialmente los techos de sus casas”, expresó Miranda Torres.

El primer ejecutivo municipal informó que en Caguas 1,129 familias perdieron totalmente el techo de su casa y otras 1,501 lo perdieron de forma parcial.

“Inmediatamente después del paso del fenómeno atmosférico, mi equipo de trabajo compuesto por hombres y mujeres comprometidos, nos tiramos a la calle a abrir brecha para llegar a las comunidades y brindar la ayuda necesaria. Caguas tiene un alcalde y una administración municipal en pie de lucha en la calle”, agregó el alcalde.

Severamente Afectados Los Servicios De Salud En Adjuntas

[El Vocero de Puerto Rico](#), October 6, 2017

El presidente de la Cámara de Representantes, Carlos ‘Johnny’ Méndez Núñez, se comprometió con el alcalde de Adjuntas, Jaime Barlucea Maldonado, en ayudar a mejorar los servicios que brinda la única sala de urgencia en el municipio, los cuales se vieron severamente afectados tras el impacto del huracán María.

Durante una visita realizada ayer a este pueblo de la montaña, en compañía del presidente del Senado, Thomas Rivera Schatz, el líder cameral encontró que el Centro de Diagnóstico y Tratamiento (CDT) no cuenta con el servicio de aire acondicionado desde el día que María azotó a Puerto Rico. Tampoco tiene servicio de un médico las 24 horas y escasean los medicamentos.

“Este CDT es la única línea de ayuda que tienen los residentes de Adjuntas en caso de una emergencia. Ahora mismo está operando con abanicos porque el aire acondicionado colapsó el

día del huracán. Como se sabe, en esta área no hay energía eléctrica, así que dicha facilidad opera con un generador de energía que utiliza diésel cada cuatro días y se ha hecho toda una odisea conseguirlo, lo que agudiza la precaria situación. Definitivamente que esta será una de nuestras prioridades. Vamos a darle la mano al alcalde en este asunto”, señaló Méndez Núñez luego de un recorrido por la facilidad, la cual ubica en el casco urbano de Adjuntas.

“El asunto de contar con un médico las 24 horas del día es prioritario. De noche no hay nadie en turno y de ocurrir una emergencia, la persona o personas tendrían que ser trasladadas a Ponce por una carretera con serios derrumbes y sin ningún tipo de alumbrado eléctrico que permita la visibilidad. Es una condición crítica que vamos a trabajarla, así como rehabilitar parte de la planta física del CDT. Hay plafones en el piso y áreas que necesitan mucha atención, pues sufrieron con el golpe de María”, agregó el líder legislativo.

Otro asunto que Méndez Núñez aseguró se trabajará es la falta de ambulancias. Actualmente solamente existe una ambulancia para atender a una población que ronda en los 19,500 habitantes. Cuando la misma está en uso, transportando algún paciente, cualquier otra emergencia que ocurra tiene que esperar horas en que regrese el mencionado vehículo, colocando en riesgo la salud del pueblo.

Durante la visita, Barlucea Maldonado también le recalcó al presidente de la Cámara la necesidad de que la Agencia Federal para el Manejo de Emergencias (FEMA, por sus siglas en inglés) agilice la entrega de toldos de resguardo ya que, según sus datos, unas 2,300 viviendas, de un inventario de sobre 12 mil, perdieron parcial o completamente sus techos, y no ha llegado esa ayuda.

En el recorrido estuvieron presentes los senadores por el Distrito de Ponce, Luis Berdiel Rivera y Nelson Cruz Santiago, así como personal de la Cámara y el Senado.

El pasado lunes, el presidente cameral llevó a Adjuntas ayuda humanitaria incluyendo alimentos, medicamentos y toldos para resguardar viviendas que pidieron el techo.

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