

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”.

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## **Estados Unidos Militariza Esfuerzo De Asistencia En Puerto Rico Tras Problemas De Distribución**

By Tim Johnson

[McClatchy](#), October 9, 2017

Mientras soldados norteamericanos entregaban el domingo cajas de alimentos y agua en esta localidad costera, un funcionario federal dijo que está satisfecho con lo que se ha logrado hasta ahora.

“Parecen estar contentos en este momento. Creo que va muy bien”, dijo Patrick Hernández, administrador adjunto de operaciones de la Agencia Federal para el Manejo de Emergencias (FEMA).

A poca distancia, mirando hacia la operación de distribución a través de una cerca, Serafin Román ofreció una versión radicalmente diferente de la situación: “Es algo terrible. La gente está desesperada. No tienen agua. Algunos están pasando hambre”.

Las dos opiniones radicalmente opuestas no hacen sino señalar el abismo que hay entre el punto de vista oficial sobre los esfuerzos de recuperación tras el devastador paso del huracán María y lo que piensa el hombre de a pie. En algunas partes de Puerto Rico, al entrar en la tercera semana de los esfuerzos de recuperación, algunos puertorriqueños dicen sentirse olvidados y vulnerables. A menudo, los vecinos y los funcionarios locales cuentan versiones drásticamente diferentes sobre la frecuencia de distribución de los alimentos.

Como respuesta ante la grave crisis, los militares estadounidenses explicaron el domingo la forma en la que cambiará la distribución de alimentos, agua y gasolina en muchas de las 78 municipalidades de la isla: van a militarizar las labores de asistencia de una manera significativa después que algunos alcaldes no pudieron con el esfuerzo.

Antes de este fin de semana, se entregaban suministros en 10 áreas regionales de la isla, y entonces los alcaldes eran responsables de organizar la recogida y la distribución.

Pero el general José J. Reyes, jefe adjunto de la Guardia Nacional de Puerto Rico, dijo en una entrevista que se puso en marcha una nueva estrategia para situar entre 10 y 20 soldados en cada municipalidad, dándoles vehículos y apoyo logístico, con la tarea de entregar los suministros en cada barrio.

“Necesitamos entrar directamente a cada barrio para asegurar que todos reciben suministros”, dijo Reyes. “Tendrán vehículos, comunicaciones por radio y apoyo logístico... Van a vivir ahí. Van a operar 24/7”.

En las 10 ciudades más grandes de Puerto Rico, cada una con una población mayor de 150,000 habitantes, los ayuntamientos seguirán administrando la distribución, dijo Reyes, pero no en localidades más pequeñas.

El jefe de los servicios de asistencia, el teniente general del Ejército Jeffrey S. Buchanan, reconoció que la distribución de ayuda a nivel municipal no siempre se ha hecho de manera efectiva.

“Hemos trabajado duro para identificar cuellos de botella”, dijo Buchanan en un aeropuerto de San Juan antes de subir a un helicóptero con rumbo a Aguadilla, unas 80 millas al oeste de la capital.

“No debemos pretender que va a ser un proceso perfecto”, dijo, señalando que los alcaldes tienen retos a la hora de distribuir la ayuda, como carreteras dañadas, falta de vehículos, malas comunicaciones y áreas grandes con poca población.

El descontento era evidente el domingo en un centro de distribución de agua y alimentos en Aguadilla. Sin embargo, esa frustración no se ve en todas partes. Algunas municipalidades están organizando las labores de asistencia y recuperación mejor que otras. Entre las zonas más azotadas por la catastrófica tormenta del 20 de septiembre, algunas están tan alejadas que es necesario entregar la ayuda en helicóptero porque las carreteras están intransitables.

“Hay personas que viven en áreas montañosas en la región central y allí es más difícil llegar, pero estamos tratando de llegar a todos”, dijo Hernández. Los equipos de militares “están haciendo una labor fenomenal limpiando y despejando las vías de acceso”.

Hernández le restó importancia a la ira expresada por algunos vecinos, afirmando que los sobrevivientes de un desastre de esta magnitud quieren que la vida regrese a la normalidad.

“Todos los sobrevivientes de una catástrofe semejante se sienten así”, dijo.

Sheila Lenox, de 29 años, dijo que la caja de comida que recibió el domingo es la primera comida importante que ha visto desde el huracán.

“Esta es la primera vez que nos dan una caja llena de comida”, dijo Lenox, quien está desempleada. “Hemos estado comiendo lo que nos daban los vecinos”.

Cuando se le preguntó cómo habían sobrevivido, Jetson Samot, pareja de Lenox, respondió: “Con salchichas y galletas”. “No podemos comprar nada. Los supermercados han subido los precios de todo. Es muy difícil encontrar algo de comer. Tenemos un lugar donde vivir, pero nada para alimentarnos”, dijo Lenox.

Otra vecina, Carmen Santiago, retirada de 67 años, dijo que deseaba que hubiera más disciplina y lógica en la distribución para evitar que algunos vecinos reciban mucho y otros nada.

Cuando se le dijo que algunos vecinos se quejaron de que eran los primeros alimentos y agua que recibían, el alcalde Carlos Méndez puso en duda esa afirmación.

“Ya habían recibido alimentos antes. He venido aquí tres o cuatro veces y puedo atestiguarlo”, dijo Méndez.

Méndez dijo que las labores de asistencia “empezaron con lentitud pero ahora van bien”.

“Todo el mundo tiene sed, todo el mundo tiene hambre porque no reciben comida todos los días. Pero por lo menos reciben cada cuatro o cinco días”.

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## **Aseguran Que Lluvias En Puerto Rico Dificultan Entrega De Ayuda Tras “María”**

[El Universal \(MEX\)](#), October 9, 2017

Las fuertes lluvias que se registran en Puerto Rico dificultan la entrega de suministros a los damnificados por el huracán María, que devastó las infraestructuras de electricidad y telecomunicaciones de la isla caribeña.

La Agencia Federal para el Manejo de Emergencias (Fema) informó hoy a través de un comunicado de que debido a las lluvias torrenciales y la saturación del terreno puede que las aeronaves que llevan la ayuda a la población no puedan aterrizar, por lo que se advierte de que la carga podría lanzarse desde el aire.

El comunicado subraya que, una vez que el tiempo mejore, las aeronaves volverán a depositar los suministros, principalmente agua y comida, en tierra, tal y como se ha hecho durante los últimos días.

El Servicio Nacional de Meteorología en San Juan emitió una advertencia de inundaciones para más de 20 municipios ante las fuertes lluvias y tormentas que se esperan durante las próximas horas, en especial para áreas del interior, el este y la capital, San Juan.

La agencia federal ha emitido además una vigilancia de inundaciones repentinas para todo Puerto Rico hasta la tarde del miércoles por la presencia en la región de una onda tropical que se unirá a una vaguada ya estacionada al norte de la isla caribeña.

La previsión de fuertes lluvias durante los dos próximos días sigue a las inundaciones registradas el domingo, que afectaron con especial virulencia al área metropolitana de San Juan.

Durante el domingo en algunas partes de la capital se registraron hasta cuatro pulgadas de lluvia, lo que provocó la inundación de calles, en especial en el distrito sanjuanero de Santurce.

Corrimientos de tierras y cortes de carreteras se registraron en los municipios de San Juan, Carolina y Vega Baja, en la costa norte.

El riesgo para hoy es grande, ya que las lluvias se registrarán sobre los suelos ya saturados y en áreas donde permanecen gran cantidad de escombros acumulados tras el pase del huracán María por la isla hace casi tres semanas.

El gobernador de Puerto Rico, Ricardo Rosselló, denunció hoy que la alta acumulación de escombros en las calles de la capital facilitó las inundaciones en San Juan, que obligaron a la intervención de los Bomberos y otras agencias federales que ayudan en la labor de reconstrucción tras el paso del huracán María.

Rosselló sostuvo que a diferencia de lo que pasa en San Juan, en otros municipios de la isla sí se han retirado los escombros que obstruyen el paso del agua por los desagües.

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## **Lo Que Discutirá Jenniffer González Con El Vicepresidente Mike Pence**

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

El Second Air Force con el vicepresidente de Estados Unidos, Mike Pence, aterrizó esta tarde en Puerto Rico para constatar de primera mano la crítica situación de isla tras el catastrófico paso del huracán María por la isla.

Pence llegó al país acompañado de la comisionada residente en Washington, 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 égidas 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.

¿Habrán más?

-Ya el vicepresidente dijo que este no va a ser el único paquete de fondos federales, que vienen otros.

El recorrido en la Isla incluye Country Club y la Iglesia de Santa Bernardita, que es un ministerio amplio de ayuda para suplir las necesidades de los que no tienen y que está bien organizado. De hecho, es de las pocas iglesias que abre las 24 horas y la que González visita con frecuencia, especialmente en horas de la noche.

La comisionada residente en Washington tiene la intención de movilizar a la isla la mayor cantidad de congresistas a Puerto Rico para entiendan el nivel de devastación y de necesidad que hay. De hecho, mañana tiene en agenda otro viaje con un grupo de legisladores federales.

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### **Ponceños No Quieren Quedar En El Olvido**

[El Nuevo Día \(PRI\)](#), October 9, 2017

Ponce – “Que se acuerden de nosotros, de la zona rural, que también existimos”.

Con estas palabras, Gerardo Albizu Torres, de 37 años, resumió el sentir de muchos residentes de la zona montañosa de este municipio que, según contaron, no han recibido “ningún tipo de ayuda” a casi tres semanas del paso del huracán María.

Señalaron, incluso, que la alcaldesa María “Mayita” Meléndez es “la gran ausente” en la ruralía ponceña, donde tampoco se observan los toldos azules de la Agencia Federal para el Manejo de Emergencias (FEMA, en inglés). Estos toldos son la única opción que ciudadanos como Albizu Torres tienen para proteger “lo poco que nos queda”.

Albizu Torres perdió la casa que compró en 2001 en el barrio Real Anón. La estructura de madera y zinc se quedó sin techo y todo lo que había en su interior se dañó por la lluvia, que ha seguido cayendo. Ahora, en el espacio de la sala y cocina, el agua empozada es un criadero de mosquitos.

“Sería bueno que vengan las ayudas, pero a los campos no llegan. Está lloviendo todas las tardes y, como todavía no tenemos los toldos de FEMA, todo se sigue mojando”, agregó.

Como el resto de los puertorriqueños, Albizu Torres pasa largas horas en filas para adquirir agua embotellada, alimentos, hielo y gasolina, entre otros bienes de primera necesidad. Mientras la ayuda para restaurar su hogar llega, pernocta en la casa de su padre, de cemento, también en el barrio Real Anón.

“No ha venido nadie para acá, nadie”, dijo, y justo después su hija Geraldine, de 6 años, soltó: “una crisis”.

“No se ha visto por aquí”

“¿Dónde está ‘Mayita’? ‘Mayita’ no se ha visto por aquí para nada”, comentó, por su parte, Michael Guzmán Marrero, de 45 años, mientras se bañaba en el río Inabón, en la colindancia de los barrios Real Anón y Coto Laurel.

Según contó, “en todo Ponce” hay necesidad, pero lo más que urge es agua embotellada. Dijo que recientemente fue hasta Cayey buscando agua y solo pudo comprar un galón, “porque los estaban racionando”.

Historias similares narraron los vecinos del barrio San Patricio, que viajan a Utuado, Jayuya o Adjuntas para buscar suministros. Estos tres pueblos les quedan más cerca que el casco ponceño.

Luis Vélez Bianchi, de 65 años y quien perdió parte del techo de la segunda planta de su casa, declaró que “nadie del gobierno (estatal) ha pasado por aquí y la alcaldesa se ha olvidado del barrio”.

Vélez Bianchi tiene servicio de agua potable, pero no de electricidad. Sobre este último, dijo – entre risas– que espera recobrarlo antes de las navidades del año 2019. En 1998, tras el paso del huracán Georges, estuvo tres meses sin luz, “pero este huracán (María) no tiene comparación”.

“Ustedes (El Nuevo Día) son los primeros que pasan por acá”, indicó, entretanto, Myrna Ríos Mejía, de 48 años, quien vive junto a su madre, de 78 años; hermana, de 50; y cuatro hijos. Los siete pasaron el huracán en los bajos de la residencia, que perdió el techo del baño y los cuartos quedaron “inundados” por la lluvia.

Relató que no ha podido comprar alimentos, ni agua embotellada. Como no tiene electricidad, no ha podido darse las terapias para su condición de asma. A su madre se le están agotando los medicamentos para el dolor.

“No tenemos con quien ir a ningún lado. Los carros que tenemos aquí no sirven. Estamos a fuerza de los guineos del mismo patio. Pero necesitamos ayuda. Los políticos, que siempre pasan buscando votos en época de elecciones, todavía no se han dado la vuelta por aquí”, aseveró Ríos Mejía.

Los esposos Charito Oliveras Collazo y Edwin Laboy Millán, de 31 y 48 años, respectivamente, también se sienten “olvidados” en el sector La Yuca del barrio Machuelo Arriba, donde ellos y otros residentes “abrimos camino” para no quedarse incomunicados.

“Es mentira que la ayuda está llegando. Acá arriba no ha venido nadie. Ni la basura están recogiendo y se están formando muchos vertederos clandestinos”, contó Oliveras Collazo, quien recoge agua en una pluma que los propios vecinos instalaron en una iglesia de la comunidad.

Ninguno de los entrevistados con daños en sus hogares había iniciado formalmente su reclamación ante FEMA.

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### **Cuerpo De Ingenieros Da Primer Contrato Para Reparar Sistema Eléctrico**

[El Nuevo Día \(PRI\)](#), October 9, 2017

El Cuerpo de Ingenieros del Ejército de los Estados Unidos (USACE) concedió hoy, lunes, un contrato ascendente a \$35.1 millones a la empresa Weston Solutions para la restauración del sistema eléctrico de Puerto Rico.

Este es el primero de una serie de contratos que concederá el USACE como parte del proceso para restaurar el servicio energético que colapsó tras el azote del huracán María. El 80% del sistema de transmisión y distribución quedó en el piso y el gran reto de la Autoridad de Energía Eléctrica (AEE) -en coordinación con el USACE- es satisfacer la gran demanda de luz del norte de la Isla cuando la generación en su mayoría se produce en el sur.

Hoy, el gobernador Ricardo Rosselló informó que 15% de los abonados de la AEE ya cuenta con servicio. Además, recalcó que “paralelo” al restablecimiento de la luz se trabaja con dar paso en un futuro cercano a un nuevo sistema energético.



“Nuestro objetivo no es solamente levantar el mismo sistema que teníamos antes. Levantar el mismo sistema que teníamos antes nos pone en la misma posición de vulnerabilidad. Invertimos un montón de chavos para estar sujetos a que venga otra tormenta y que nos rebase nuevamente. Nuestro objetivo es -paralelo esto- investigar y ver cuál es el mejor sistema que podamos tener en Puerto Rico en términos de generación, que sea moderno y nos permita una real oportunidad para hacer cambios transformativos en el sistema eléctrico en Puerto Rico”, puntualizó Rosselló.

Weston Solutions, una empresa con sede en Pennsylvania, tendrá la misión de proveer generación eléctrica a la planta de generatriz de Palo Seco, en San Juan. Traerá un generador de 50 megavatios que llegará a “Puerto Rico muy pronto”, informó en comunicado de prensa Diana Holland, comandante de la División del Sur del Atlántico del USACE.

La idea es que al proporcionarle generación de emergencia a Palo Seco, más clientes de la AEE recibirán electricidad en lo que se completan las reparaciones a las líneas de transmisión que se conectan a Palo Seco.

“Este es un paso importante en nuestros esfuerzos para restaurar la electricidad a los ciudadanos de Puerto Rico”, dijo Holland.

La reparación del sistema eléctrico incluye cuatro pasos, de acuerdo con el USACE. La primera fase es proveer energía y generación temporera a lugares críticos. La segunda es asegurar una generación adecuada en las centrales eléctricas para luego reinstalar y reparar las líneas de transmisión. Por último, es preciso restaurar y reparar las líneas de distribución.

Tanto los directivos de la USACE como de la Agencia federal para el Manejo de Emergencias (FEMA, en inglés) han dicho que el restablecimiento total del servicio eléctrico demorará meses.

El director de Operaciones de Contingencia y Seguridad Nacional del USACE, José Sánchez, dijo en entrevista con este diario que la misión que le ha dado FEMA es solo reparar “de emergencia” el sistema eléctrico. Pero ha recalcado que es imperativo evolucionar a un sistema más fuerte.

Ha advertido que ve “difícil” que el restablecimiento de la luz en su totalidad se produzca al cabo de seis a siete meses, parámetro que se ha usado recientemente como referente pues fue el tiempo que tomó hacerlo tras el azote del huracán Georges en 1998. Sin embargo, Sánchez dijo que trabajan a toda capacidad y con contratistas para acelerar el proceso.

Sin embargo, la cantidad de brigadas que posee la AEE, unas 230 -cada una de tres a cuatro personas- no menos que las que había en el pasado. Por eso y ante la emergencia se hacen las contrataciones que la USACE estima serán más de 2,000.

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## **En Espera Por Un Plan De Reconstrucción Para La Isla**

[El Nuevo Día \(PRI\)](#), October 9, 2017

WASHINGTON — El Senado estadounidense aguardaría por las recomendaciones de la Junta de Supervisión Fiscal a cargo de las finanzas públicas de Puerto Rico y del gobernador Ricardo Rosselló antes de diseñar un plan que encamine la reconstrucción de la isla.

Tras la devastación causada por el huracán María, ya no parece haber debate sobre la necesidad de algún tipo de rescate financiero del gobierno federal para revivir la economía de Puerto Rico, la cual el ciclón acabó de hundir.

Lo que aún no está claro es qué cosas formarán parte de ese plan, que los demócratas quieren se asemeje al concepto del Plan Marshall con el cual se impulsó la reconstrucción de Europa central después de la Segunda Guerra Mundial, por medio de medidas para modernizar su economía.

“Queremos que se rinda cuentas sobre hacia donde ese dinero va a ir”, advirtió ayer el senador republicano Ron Johnson (Wisconsin), presidente del Comité de Seguridad Interna y Asuntos de Gobierno, en una conferencia telefónica de los cinco senadores que estuvieron el sábado observando los daños causados por el huracán María en Puerto Rico.

Desde antes del huracán, economistas, grupos de estudio y sindicatos habían reclamado que aun después de autorizar la reestructuración de la deuda pública, por medio de un nuevo sistema judicial de bancarrota territorial, Puerto Rico necesitaría medidas que ayuden a la economía.

Ahora, demócratas del Senado dicen que eso es inevitable. “Se necesita un plan financiero inmediato”, dijo el senador demócrata Richard Blumenthal (Connecticut), quien dijo desde el punto de vista del Senado su contenido debe salir de conversaciones entre la Junta, el gobernador Rosselló y el Comité de Finanzas, que maneja los temas referentes al Tesoro, Medicaid, y temas contributivos.

El gobernador Rosselló –quien ha estado en conversaciones con el Tesoro–, dijo ayer que requiere una inyección inicial de \$4,600 millones y ha advertido que a finales de este mes el gobierno de Puerto Rico puede quedarse sin dinero en efectivo.

El senador Blumenthal dijo que entendía que la “tormenta financiera” ocurriría a finales de año.

El gobierno de Rosselló ha discutido en Washington, entre otras cosas, la posibilidad de que el Tesoro garantice un préstamo del gobierno de Puerto Rico o que la Reserva federal compre bonos de la isla.

En la conferencia telefónica, la demócrata Kirsten Gillibrand (Nueva York) dijo que “se necesita un plan tipo Plan Marshall no importa lo que tome”. “Se requiere un Plan Marshall no para reparar temporalmente, sino para la recuperación y resiliencia a largo plazo”, sostuvo Blumenthal.

Los republicanos han sido menos contundentes, pero reconocen que se requiere apoyo federal a un plan dirigido a revivir la economía. “Queremos trabajar con el Senado para presentar algo que atienda las necesidades a corto y largo plazo”, indicó el republicano Cory Gardner, presidente del subcomité de Energía de la Comisión de Energía y Recursos Naturales.

Los senadores coincidieron que todo el proceso de reestructuración comienza por restablecer la red eléctrica, para poder facilitar el funcionamiento de los pilares de la economía de Puerto Rico, como la manufactura y el turismo.

“(La red eléctrica) era débil antes de la tormenta, ahora está muy devastada”, sostuvo Johnson.

Esta semana, el Congreso debe aprobar la asignación de \$12,770 millones para volver a llenar las arcas del fondo para atender desastres de la Agencia federal para el Manejo de Emergencias (FEMA).

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## **Llega Un Generador A Culebra Para Un Centro De Salud**

[El Nuevo Día \(PRI\)](#), October 9, 2017

El generador tenía escrito diversos mensajes con tiza en solidaridad con el pueblo de Culebra.

“Dios los bendiga y los mejores deseos (de la) Guardia Nacional de Puerto Rico”, leía uno de los mensajes.

Un generador de 30 kilovatios, y cuyo peso es de 1,927 libras, aguardaba ayer, domingo, en el interior de un helicóptero de carga Boeing CH-47 Chinook de Pennsylvania, aeronave necesaria para transportar un objeto de dicho tamaño y peso.

Precisamente esa fue una de las razones para que el generador, que debió llegar a la isla municipio antes del paso cercano del huracán María, aún aguardase en la base de Isla Grande. Su destino es el centro de salud HealthproMed 330 ubicado en Culebra.

El coronel de la Guardia Nacional de Puerto Rico, Jorge Galoff, dijo que se enteraron de la urgencia de llevar el generador a Culebra a través de la Agencia Federal para el Manejo de Emergencias (FEMA). Ivonne Rivera, administradora del centro de salud, se vio en la necesidad de abordar a funcionarios de la agencia luego de pedirle ayuda al secretario de Salud, Rafael Rodríguez Mercado, para llevar el generador a Culebra.

“Nunca recibí respuesta”, dijo la mujer que estaba feliz de poder recibir la asistencia de la Guardia Nacional.

“Desde el sábado después de María, todas las mañanas yo llegaba al Centro de Mando del Gobierno a buscar apoyo, para ver cómo podíamos transportar esta planta a Culebra. Y no recibía absolutamente ninguna contestación”, narró Rivera.

Tras varios intentos, no fue posible conseguir a Rodríguez Mercado.

Rivera, entretanto, destacó que el centro de salud no había podido dar servicios desde el azote de Culebra. El lugar, creado hace 14 años y que da servicio diariamente a aproximadamente 15 personas, es subvencionado con fondos federales. Además, ofrece servicios de dentista, pediatría, obstetricia y ginecología, médico de familia, internista, optómetra, trabajador social y nutricionista.

Rivera agradeció no solo al coronel Galoff sino también al coronel Ricardo Garratón, también de la Guardia Nacional, quien fue su primer contacto en la milicia para así llevar el generador a Culebra.

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### **Comprometida La Capacidad De Abasto Del País**

[El Nuevo Día \(PRI\)](#), October 8, 2017

Enormes cantidades de sedimentos se movieron hacia los embalses a consecuencia de las copiosas lluvias del huracán María, reduciendo potencialmente su capacidad de almacenamiento y amenazando, a su vez, con crear un problema de disponibilidad de agua en el país, advirtieron expertos.

La mayoría de los embalses ya están altamente sedimentados, y el panorama se complica aún más con el hecho de que María también causó una gran devastación forestal.

Sin vegetación en las montañas, se pierde la capacidad de amortiguamiento o retención de sedimentos, lo que facilita su entrada a los cuerpos de agua durante eventos de lluvia.

“En Puerto Rico, la capacidad de los embalses para recibir agua es cada vez menos, y ahora va a haber mucha más sedimentación entrado. Cuando a un embalse le queda el 20% de su capacidad, está anulado para todo efecto práctico”, sostuvo el exdirector de la Agencia Federal

de Protección Ambiental (EPA, por sus siglas en inglés) en Puerto Rico y el Caribe, Carl Soderberg.

Mencionó, por ejemplo, que los embalses Carraízo, en Trujillo Alto, y Dos Bocas, en Utuado, están sedimentados en 40% y 63%, respectivamente, y “es posible que ahora pierdan otro por ciento adicional”.

Cuestionado al respecto, el presidente ejecutivo de la Autoridad de Acueductos y Alcantarillados (AAA), Elí Díaz Atienza, indicó que, una vez se “normalice” el servicio de agua potable, la corporación pública iniciará un “análisis de la sedimentación” en los embalses causada por el huracán, que tocó suelo boricua el pasado 20 de septiembre.

“Reconocemos los retos de las represas. Estos sistemas traen muchos sedimentos y nos pueden haber afectado las reservas de agua. Tan pronto resolvamos el asunto de suplir agua a las comunidades, haremos la evaluación”, dijo.

Contó que, desde antes que María azotara la isla, la AAA está “trabajando” con el experto en manejo de reservas de agua y consultor internacional en hidrología, Greg Morris, para “buscar opciones para bajar un poco los sedimentos” en los embalses.

Preliminarmente, Díaz Atienza señaló que algunas de esas opciones incluyen dragados continuos (equipo permanente en los embalses), dragados dirigidos (embalses particulares) y mover los sedimentos hacia el mar a través de la apertura controlada de compuertas.

“Estaremos mirando los efectos de cada opción y calculando cuál es la mejor. Reclamaremos a través de la Agencia Federal para el Manejo de Emergencias (FEMA, por sus siglas en inglés) los costos necesarios para remover los sedimentos que se recibieron con el huracán y posterior a eso por no tener la forestación necesaria”, dijo el funcionario.

Más costoso

Aparte de sedimentos, los ríos y embalses están recibiendo ahora más hojas y ramas, lo que aumentará el costo de tratamiento del agua para que su consumo sea seguro, expuso el doctor en ecología y catedrático asociado de la Universidad de Carolina del Norte en Chapell Hill, Javier Arce Nazario.

Advirtió, incluso, que la descomposición de este material resultará en mayor cantidad de carbono disuelto en el agua que, cuando se mezcla con cloro, crea compuestos carcinógenos.

“Estos compuestos orgánicos y el sinnúmero de otros contaminantes que deben estar llegando a los ríos, resultará en un aumento en costo en el tratamiento del agua por parte de la AAA”, dijo Arce Nazario.

“La AAA va a recibir agua con un nivel de turbiedad bien alto y tendrá que lavar más a menudo sus filtros. Producir agua potable va a ser más duro y, por ende, más costoso”, agregó Soderberg.

Para este año fiscal, la AAA cuenta con un presupuesto de \$594 millones para costear su programa de operación y mantenimiento de sistemas de acueductos y alcantarillados.

Infraestructura vieja

El huracán María sacó a relucir la situación de vulnerabilidad de algunas de represas. Ejemplo de ello es lo que en principio se reportó como una rotura de 24 pulgadas en la represa Guajataca, y luego se dijo que se trataba de erosión en la parte del vertedor de concreto. El gobierno mantuvo bajo riesgo inminente de inundación a comunidades de Quebradillas, Isabela y San Sebastián, y cientos de familias fueron desalojadas.

“Típicamente, las represas se diseñan para una vida útil de 50 a 60 años. En Puerto Rico, muchas represas ya pasaron su vida útil, y lo que requieren ahora es una reevaluación y reacondicionamiento de sus estructuras”, afirmó el presidente del Colegio de Ingenieros y

Agrimensores de Puerto Rico, Pablo Vázquez Ruiz, quien recordó que la represa Guajataca se construyó entre 1919 y 1928.

Contó que, a excepción de las represas Cerrillos y Portugués, ambas en Ponce, las demás son “más vulnerables” a eventos como huracanes, porque no están diseñadas con la última tecnología.

“Las represas más modernas tienen mucha instrumentación que permite detectar cualquier indicio de falla. También cuentan con mecanismos de seguridad que no permiten que haya un desbordamiento. Pero en Puerto Rico, por el tiempo de construcción que tienen las represas, ya es necesario que haya una reevaluación y reacondicionamiento de todas estas estructuras. Necesitamos personal experto en el país que pueda realizar esto”, recalcó.

Sobre el aumento en sedimentación, Vázquez Ruiz dijo que es un problema que no supone un riesgo de seguridad para los embalses, pero hace que “vayan perdiendo su utilidad”.

Díaz Atienza, por su parte, descartó que la coyuntura actual se preste para impulsar la construcción de más represas. Aparte de que los “lugares idóneos” para nuevos embalses escasean en la isla, la AAA pretende “atacar la necesidad de más agua” con iniciativas para reducir las pérdidas en producción.

Al momento, la AAA pierde –física y comercialmente– el 60% del agua que produce.

Efecto en corales

Soderberg, entretanto, dijo que el flujo de sedimentos y la devastación forestal también tendrán “efecto directo” sobre los arrecifes de coral.

“Cuando les llegue esa sedimentación (a través de los ríos), los va a liquidar. Los sedimentos son veneno para los corales”, aseveró.

Datos del Centro para la Ecología Tropical Aplicada y Conservación (CATEC) de la Universidad de Puerto Rico, Recinto de Río Piedras, apuntan a que el 80% de los arrecifes de coral, a menos de 100 pies de profundidad, ya muestran señales de mortandad asociada al evento de blanqueamiento de 2005. Ese evento se relaciona, a su vez, al aumento en la temperatura del mar debido al cambio climático.

Arce Nazario añadió que, después de un huracán, los estuarios se tornan menos salados y la turbidez aumenta, lo que afecta a las especies que allí habitan.

No se descarta, por lo tanto, una merma en la actividad pesquera.

Más inundaciones

Mientras, la directora del CATEC, Elvira Cuevas, expuso que, a corto plazo, otro efecto de la devastación forestal causada por María serán más inundaciones.

“Las inundaciones serían mayores al no tener la cobertura vegetal necesaria para reducir la escorrentía”, dijo.

Con ella coincidió el ambientalista y urbanista Ramón Cruz, miembro de la Junta de Directores del Sierra Club en Estados Unidos, quien señaló que la pérdida de áreas de mangle también aumenta el riesgo de inundaciones.

Arce Nazario fue más comedido, al indicar que la incidencia de inundaciones dependerá de la condición del terreno antes y después del huracán.

“El huracán no destruye toda la vegetación y no crea una superficie impermeable. Nosotros, los humanos, talamos un bosque y hacemos estacionamientos por donde el agua no penetra. Dentro de los bosques destruidos por el huracán hay mucha vida que podrá tener funciones importantes como, por ejemplo, retener la lluvia y crear fricción para que el agua no llegue rápidamente al río”, expresó.

El análisis preliminar del impacto de María en las áreas custodiadas por el Departamento de Recursos Naturales y Ambientales (DRNA) arrojó que el 98% de los árboles adultos está “en el piso”, indicó en días recientes la secretaria Tania Vázquez. El 80% de los árboles juveniles sobrevivió el azote del huracán, lo que ayudaría a adelantar la reforestación de las áreas naturales.

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## **En Precario La Salud Mental Tras El Paso Del Ciclón Por La Isla**

[El Nuevo Día \(PRI\)](#), October 10, 2017

JAYUYA. – Nilda Méndez Mercado se cuestiona a diario por qué sigue viva. Llegó hace poco más de un mes a Puerto Rico, desde el estado de Nueva Jersey, para estar “tranquila”. Pero el huracán María le cambió los planes.

El ciclón destruyó su casa en el sector Alturas Pisá del barrio Collores, en este municipio. Ni una pared quedó intacta. La vivienda se había construido con los ahorros “de toda una vida”.

Méndez Mercado quería regresar con su esposo, Francisco Soto Zamora, a quien dejó en las montañas jayuyanas mientras atendía su salud en Estados Unidos. Es paciente de cáncer, diabética y le dio un derrame cerebral que paralizó la mitad de su cuerpo.

“Pero ahora tengo depresión. Estoy mala de los nervios. Pasé el huracán aquí y fue terrible. Se llevó todo lo que me quedaba. Todo era nuevo y se lo llevó”, dijo llorosa la mujer de 70 años.

Desde el pasado 20 de septiembre, cuando María tocó suelo boricua, Méndez Mercado está “refugiada en un cuarto” en la casa de su suegra, de cemento. Sus problemas de movilidad le impiden salir a buscar ayuda. Tampoco ha llegado nadie a ofrecérsela.

“No he recibido ninguna ayuda, ni agua siquiera. Pasan y siguen. No nos han dado nada. No existimos en este lado. Todo se queda en el pueblo. Vienen los helicópteros con comida y agua, pero como yo no puedo ir... Necesito pañales, medicamentos y, cuanto antes, una vivienda, porque yo no puedo vivir así”, esbozó.

Méndez Mercado contó que pasa los días “llorando y llorando”, y que varias noches –en las últimas semanas– “me he acostado a dormir con hambre porque no nos han dado nada”.

Señaló que, debido a las irregularidades en el servicio postal, sus hijos no han podido enviarle ayuda desde los estados de Nueva Jersey, Illinois y Florida. “La correspondencia no llega”, dijo.

Dijo que, “tan pronto tenga unos dólares” y se normalice el tráfico aéreo, regresará a Estados Unidos.

“Nos viró la vida”

Wanda Sepúlveda Torres y Belinda Maldonado Medina, de 53 y 27 años, respectivamente, son vecinas de Méndez Mercado y también se expresaron deprimidas.

Denunciaron, además, que ninguna agencia municipal, estatal o federal ha visitado el sector Alturas Pisá para ofrecer servicios de salud mental.

“Porque los necesitamos. Este huracán nos viró la vida a todo el mundo”, dijo Sepúlveda Torres, quien perdió el techo de su casa y decenas de pertenencias, y ahora duerme en una caseta de campaña en el patio.

Lo menos que reclaman es un toldo de la Agencia Federal para el Manejo de Emergencias (FEMA, en inglés), “para que la lluvia no siga mojando lo poco que nos quedó”.

500 familias

El administrador municipal de Jayuya, Alexis Bennett, indicó que 500 familias perdieron sus casas parcial o totalmente debido al paso de María, incluyendo algunas de cemento.

El huracán, asimismo, cobró la vida de un hombre cuando un alud derrumbó su vivienda, en el sector Caricaboa.

“No tenemos agua embotellada, pero la que está saliendo por el grifo es potable y lo podemos garantizar. También necesitamos combustible, tanto para nuestra flota como para alguna infraestructura del gobierno estatal”, dijo Bennett, tras precisar que el 33% del municipio tiene el servicio de la Autoridad de Acueductos y Alcantarillados (AAA).

A casi tres semanas del paso de María, las brigadas siguen “abriendo camino”. Las carreteras, de hecho, aún exhiben grandes cantidades de lodo y algunos tramos están inundados por las lluvias que continúan. En el sector Hoyos Planes, unas 25 familias solo tienen acceso a pie, porque la carretera PR-531 colapsó.

Bennett reconoció que la falta de combustible ha limitado la repartición de agua y comida en los barrios jayuyanos.

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## **Efluvios De La Donahue**

By Mayra Montero

[El Nuevo Día \(PRI\)](#), October 8, 2017

La noticia de que el gobernador no tiene “un Plan B” para atender el desastre causado por el huracán, siendo su única alternativa los fondos que le otorgue el Congreso y la administración del presidente Trump, no puede sorprender a nadie. Es más, ni siquiera es noticia.

¿Quién tiene un Plan B de cara a este desastre? A ver, ¿de dónde va a sacarse nada para comenzar siquiera a darle forma a esto?

La presencia del Ejército de los Estados Unidos va para largo, y oí decir que empezaban a ocuparse ellos mismos de la entrega de alimentos y otros artículos de primera necesidad, en vista de que habían surgido indicios de que en la ruta entre el centro de acopio y los municipios, se “esfumaban” paquetes de medicinas y otros productos.

También oí que había quejas de los militares, porque en algunos residenciales y otros sectores del interior de la Isla, los llamados “bichotes” obstaculizaban su trabajo.

Bienvenidos al club.

Eso lo sufren aquí, a diario, cientos de instituciones cívicas o religiosas, que deben pasarle la manita al capo y contar con su autorización para poder asomar la cara en las comunidades que viven bajo un cacicazgo de origen criminal, y en las que el trapicheo es cosa seria. Los del ejército, sin embargo, creo que no son propensos a pasarle la manita a nadie. El día que tengan que entrar en un residencial, un barrio remoto o lo que sea, y tengan órdenes concretas de no andarse con contemplaciones, se abrirán paso por donde tengan que abrirlo. Aunque no hayan venido en son de guerra, ese tipo de movilización es un inconveniente para el bajo mundo, algo que, unido a los problemas tácticos que dejó el huracán, arruina en parte lo que es la válvula de escape de mucha gente que depende de la economía informal. Puede haber “roces”, claro que sí.

Es sabido que los huracanes entorpecen el movimiento clandestino de los cargamentos. La mar está picada, los vuelos son escasos y las carreteras quedan intransitables. Si a eso se le añade una fuerza militar que llega a controlar las vías públicas y con la que es difícil establecer “alianzas” para que se hagan de la vista larga o custodien el trasiego, la situación puede tomarse tensa. Debe tenerse en cuenta, sin embargo, que el día en que le inflijan un rasguño a uno de esos

militares, arderá Troya. Los que van a entrar a buscar a los culpables no serán agentes locales ni simples investigadores, sino oficiales del ejército, con sus métodos un poco más enérgicos.

El problema sigue siendo la falta de electricidad.

Cada vez que uno lee que han tenido que mandar a buscar especialistas mexicanos en tendido eléctrico, a los que FEMA pagará su sueldo, es imposible no acordarse de los millones que se dilapidaron en Lisa Donahue y su compañía. A la par que la gran estafa que resultó el trazado y construcción de la llamada Vía Verde, está este otro fiasco de la contratación de la reina madre —se movía como una reina madre—, afectada y ladina, que cargó con cientos de millones, ella y sus compinches. Una mujer que nada adelantaba, que pedía prórrogas y más prórrogas a su contrato vergonzoso, y que no hizo otra cosa en Puerto Rico que no fuera lucrarse y marearnos con la “colonizadora” de que ella podía resolverlo todo.

Aquí tenemos las consecuencias. La Donahue en capilla ardiente, sin que le falte ni una bombillita, y nosotros ahogados en la incertidumbre, con cientos de negocios cerrados, miles de empleados en la calle, sin trabajo y sin sueldo.

Ésa es otra. Hay una diferencia entre la gente que está en su casa, cobrando salarios del gobierno, y los que han recibido un portazo en las narices, porque los comercios y las pequeñas empresas ignoran cuándo podrán reanudar operaciones. Los verdaderos sacrificados son esos, los que están ahora mismo esperando que llegue la luz, alimentando la esperanza de que el patrono no cierre para siempre.

Por eso choca tanto que, cobrando su salario entero, algunos se dediquen a “filosofar” sobre el Plan B y el Plan C, y hasta el Plan Z que debería tener el gobernador.

Desengañense, no hay más ninguno: esperar un rescate económico y echar hacia adelante con lo que nos caiga, con espíritu de sacrificio y austeridad. Sí, austeridad, esa palabra que tanto mortifica a los patriotas de balcón.

En cuanto a la visita del vicepresidente Pence, que se puso en plan Miss Simpatía y aseguró que el coquí iba a “cantar más alto”, confieso que prefiero los gruñidos del otro. Los papeloallazos del otro. La descarnada brutalidad del otro. Lo prefiero incluso antes que la vocecita de la Donahue. ¿Recuerdan su voz? Dios sabe que nunca la creí.

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## **OPINIÓN: “Lo Que Vi En Puerto Rico”**

[El Tiempo Latino](#), October 10, 2017

Ponce, PUERTO RICO – Esta semana pude ser testigo de la peor devastación que he presenciado en mi vida. He ido muchas veces a la Isla del Encanto, tengo familia allá. Sin embargo este viaje no fue como ningún otro.

Pasé la mayor parte del tiempo en Ponce, en la parte sur de la isla. Ponce es la segunda ciudad más poblada de Puerto Rico. Allí estuve junto al gobernador Ricardo Roselló, la alcaldesa María Meléndez y una delegación de demócratas de la Florida entregando insumos a quienes más lo necesitaban luego de sobrevivir la destrucción del huracán María. Vimos un colchón de tamaño matrimonial enredado en un poste de cableado telefónico. Las líneas de comunicación están tan afectadas que ni siquiera pudimos utilizar un teléfono satelital para comunicarnos con el mundo exterior.

La isla que conozco ya no existe, ha sido destruida por uno de los huracanes más feroces en la historia de Estados Unidos. Lo que no fue destruido y aún sigue intacto es la identidad



estadounidense de Puerto Rico. De hecho, tan sólo a pasos de casas destruidas por la tormenta, aún estaba en pie una bandera estadounidense con sus estrellas y rayas ondeando en el viento.

Los 3.5 millones de personas en Puerto Rico son ciudadanos estadounidenses. Ellos merecen un trato justo e igualitario como cualquier otro ciudadano estadounidense. Desafortunadamente, tenemos un presidente que ha mostrado una perturbadora indiferencia por el bienestar de estos conciudadanos. El presidente Trump esperó más de una semana luego del huracán para levantar las restricciones del Jones Act, a pesar de haberlas levantado para Florida y Texas incluso antes de que el huracán Irma tocara tierra. No hay excusa para el retraso de Trump, que sólo ha causado más sufrimiento al impedir que las naves puedan entregar insumos de manera más rápida. Es más, la agencia FEMA aún no ha autorizado todas las herramientas de asistencia que tienen a su disposición.

Mientras millones esperaban recibir ayuda el fin de semana pasado, Trump decidió iniciar una pelea a través de Twitter con la alcaldesa de San Juan, Carmen Yulin Cruz, quien en ese momento iba puerta por puerta buscando salvar vidas mientras Trump estaba en su campo de golf y le dedicaba sólo una hora a Puerto Rico. Representantes de su administración llamaron la devastación en la isla como una “historia de buenas noticias”.

Incluso cuando el presidente Trump visitó Puerto Rico el martes, dejó en claro que él considera que el esfuerzo de rescate de nuestro gobierno era una inconveniencia en vez de una responsabilidad nacional. “Ustedes descontrolaron nuestro presupuesto” le dijo al pueblo de Puerto Rico, un sentimiento que estuvo curiosamente ausente de sus respuestas a desastres en Texas y Florida.

Responder a un desastre natural es un problema complejo. Sin embargo, el problema aquí no es con las personas en el terreno o con los trabajadores de carrera que dedican sus vidas a situaciones como esta. El problema es con la persona a la cabeza de las decisiones.

Los puertos de Puerto Rico están abiertos. Los aeropuertos están abiertos. Con todo y esto, el general de tres estrellas nombrado por el Pentágono para liderar los esfuerzos de alivio dijo la semana pasada que no está ni cerca de tener la cantidad de tropas o equipos que necesita.

Trump encabeza el poder ejecutivo. ¿Por qué no actúa como tal? ¿Por qué no está canalizando la inmensa cantidad de recursos a su disposición para traer la ayuda que la gente necesita desesperadamente? ¿Y, por qué es que sigue felicitándose a sí mismo por un trabajo que está lejos de terminarse?

La situación en Puerto Rico no es una “historia de buenas noticias”. Es una emergencia y necesitamos manos a la obra. Las muertes han incrementado en un doble desde la visita de Trump. La gente necesita agua, comida, insumos básicos. Ellos necesitan que FEMA tenga una presencia en lugares como Ponce, donde más de un millón de personas están desesperadas por ayuda federal. Ellos necesitan la fuerza completa y todos los recursos del gobierno de los Estados Unidos.

Proveer al pueblo de Puerto Rico con la asistencia que necesitan no debería ser un tema partidista. No se puede fijar un precio para la vida, ya sea en Florida, Texas o Puerto Rico. No sólo resulta inhumano tratar a nuestros hermanos puertorriqueños como ciudadanos de segunda clase, es también algo profundamente anti-estadounidense.

No hay nada como ser testigo de primera mano, caminar por esas comunidades devastadas y hablar con las personas que lo han pedido todo, menos lo que llevan puesto y la esperanza de sus corazones. Ellos no se dan por vencidos, ellos saldrán adelante, pero no pueden hacerlo solos. Necesitamos estar allí para nuestros hermanos boricuas.

Es el momento de que el presidente Trump deje de actuar como que esto es una “misión cumplida”. Nuestra tarea apenas comienza.

Esta pieza fue publicada inicialmente en inglés en el U.S. News & World Report.

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### **Supervisión Para Que La Ayuda Llegue Rápido A Los Necesitados**

[El Nuevo Día \(PRI\)](#), October 9, 2017

Aguadilla – No faltaban brazos para pasar de mano en mano las cajas con agua y las que contenían comida.

De esa forma, los militares -de la Guardia Nacional, de la Reserva del Ejército de los Estados Unidos y los State Guard (voluntarios activados por el gobernador)- hacían llegar a las manos de cientos de puertorriqueños afectados por el huracán María los suministros proporcionados por la Agencia Federal para el Manejo de Emergencias (FEMA, por sus siglas en inglés).

Alrededor de 500 familias de los residenciales Stanford y Agustín Stahl, en Aguadilla, hicieron una larga cola tan pronto vieron los tres camiones militares con su distintivo color crema. En menos de una hora, tiempo en que todos recibieron ayuda, no dudaron en tomarse fotos con los militares y decirles en inglés y español, gracias.

“Esto me ayuda con el nene y eso”, dijo Marilyn Valentín tras recibir una caja con tres galones de agua y otra con comida lista para consumo. Con la ayuda de los militares cargó los suministros en el coche donde llevaba a su niño de cuatro años.

Lo mismo hizo Raicha Guerra, quien llevaba a su hijo 2 años.

“Los que han venido son el Army y la Cruz Roja”, comentó la joven de 22 años cuando este diario le preguntó por la ayuda recibida.

A pasos de ella estaba el alcalde de Aguadilla, Carlos Méndez, quien previamente se había reunido en las instalaciones de la Guardia Nacional en Aguadilla con el teniente general Jeffrey S. Buchanan, encargado de las operaciones militares en Puerto Rico.

Buchanan, al igual que el comandante dual de tropas (Dual Status Commander), el general José Reyes, viajó desde San Juan hasta el pueblo costero de Aguadilla para ver de cerca la nueva logística implementada por el general de tres estrellas. En vez de que los alcaldes de los 78 municipios lleguen a los centros de distribución de alimento y agua, serán los militares los que lleguen a cada municipio.

Esa fue la logística que anunció la semana pasada el propio Buchanan para asegurarse de que la ayuda llegue a la gente afectada por el huracán María, luego de quejas por la tardanza en la entrega o por la poca cantidad que reciben.

Para ello, se crearon cuatro áreas de apoyo logístico (logistic support area) que deben llevar los suministros a 68 pueblos. Estas áreas consisten de casetas repletas de militares ubicadas en la antigua base Roosevelt Roads, en Ceiba; el Fuerte Buchanan, en Guaynabo; en la base Ramey, en Aguadilla; y en el Campamento Santiago, en Salinas. En cada una debe haber entre 2,000 a 3,000 militares.

“Esto nos ayuda a descentralizar”, explicó Buchanan, quien no dudó en descargar camiones y entregar suministros.

Cada una de estas áreas tiene un apoyo de ingeniería, otro de seguridad y uno de personal médico. Así que, en conjunto, cada área no solo se destina para la distribución de agua y alimentos sino que también brinda seguridad, limpia vías de acceso y provee servicios médicos donde sea necesario, dijo Reyes.

Estas cuatro áreas se unen a 10 municipios, para así cubrir los 78 municipios, que recibirán suministros de los militares y que también sus respectivos alcaldes pueden buscar la ayuda.

Se trata de municipios grandes que pueden hacer este tipo de tarea o que sufrieron gran devastación tras la embestida del huracán, dijo Reyes en referencia a Carolina, San Juan, Bayamón, Guaynabo, Arecibo, Ponce, Mayagüez, Humacao, Utuado y Guayama.

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## **Urge La Necesidad De Contar Con Más Camiones Cisterna En Morovis**

[El Nuevo Día \(PRI\)](#), October 8, 2017

MOROVIS – La alcaldesa de Morovis, Carmen Maldonado, indicó que el municipio continúa esfuerzos diarios para llevar agua y alimentos a las comunidades afectadas, al tiempo que reconoció que si no fuera por organizaciones privadas y la Agencia Federal para el Manejo de Emergencias (FEMA), los suministros, especialmente el agua, no llegarían a donde se necesitan.

“El reto mayor, y lo que estoy enfrentando ahora mismo, son los camiones cisterna. Morovis no tiene agua. Tenemos muchísimas personas encamadas y en este municipio solo cuento con un camión cisterna. Le hice la petición a FEMA de que me enviaran cuatro camiones cisterna adicionales porque Acueductos solamente me envió uno de 2,000 galones”, dijo Maldonado.

La alcaldesa adelantó que coordinará un viaje a los Estados Unidos para gestionar dos camiones cisterna adicionales.

“Hay mucha necesidad de agua y alimentos, y para mí eso es primordial, antes que cualquier cosa material”, enfatizó la ejecutiva municipal.

Por su parte, el Comisionado de Seguridad del municipio, Francisco Rosado Correa, explicó que el ayuntamiento está en la etapa de recuperación y remoción de escombros. Del mismo modo, añadió que esperan identificar varias escuelas que puedan servir como centros de distribución.

“Estamos llevándole alimento y agua a la comunidad como prioridad. Una vez logremos estabilizar el problema del alimento y el agua, vamos a establecer unos centros de distribución, posiblemente vamos a utilizar escuelas en los distintos barrios para poder llevar la comida y el agua. Por ahora lo estaremos llevando directamente a las casas”, sostuvo Rosado Correa.

A más de 20 días del paso del temporal por Puerto Rico, las comunidades Vaga, Pasto y San Lorenzo permanecen incomunicadas debido al colapso del puente que daba paso a Morovis. El único acceso, actualmente, es a través del municipio vecino de Orocovis.

“Lo que nos tomaba 15 minutos, ahora nos está tomando casi hora y cuarto. A esos barrios estamos llevando doctores, transportación a pacientes que tienen algún tipo de condición como diálisis o personas que reciben algún tipo de tratamiento”, dijo Rosado.

La petición del ayuntamiento es que el gobierno central coordine la instalación de un puente provisional para restablecer el acceso a dichas comunidades.

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## **Más De La Mitad Del País Tiene Agua**

By Yaritza Rivera Clemente

[El Vocero de Puerto Rico](#), October 7, 2017

El gobernador Ricardo Rosselló informó que 695 mil clientes cuentan con el servicio de agua, lo que equivale al 55.5% de los abonados, mientras que solo un 10.7% de la población está conectado al sistema de energía eléctrica.

Según la Autoridad de Acueductos y Alcantarillados (AAA), el servicio por zonas se encuentra en 64% para el área metro, 69% para el oeste, 69% para el sur y 63% para el este. El norte cuenta con un 28% de servicio.

También se informó que los generadores eléctricos en la represa de Carraízo están en funcionamiento lo que permitió restablecer el servicio en la urbanización Fairview y el barrio Saint Just de Trujillo Alto, para añadir 12 mil nuevos clientes.

“Reconocemos que muchos clientes no están recibiendo los servicios de agua y luz por lo que he ordenado a las dos corporaciones públicas a detener el envío de facturas. A las personas que se les haya enviado facturas por periodos en los que no tuvo el servicio, no tendrán que pagarlo y no se le discontinuará el servicio. Una vez tengamos los servicios de medición operacionales solo se le cobrará la tarifa de consumo a los clientes que hayan recibido servicios”, dijo Rosselló.

Respecto a la situación en la represa Guajataca, Rosselló indicó que aún se encuentra en “estado crítico”, y mencionó que el Cuerpo de Ingenieros y el Departamento de Defensa de Estados Unidos laboran para establecer en el lugar barreras de concreto para mitigar cualquier emergencia. Recalcó que esa iniciativa busca prevenir el impacto que pudieran tener las lluvias que se esperan en la zona noroeste en los próximos días.

Por su parte, el director ejecutivo de la Autoridad de Energía Eléctrica (AEE), Ricardo Ramos, informó que se está trabajando para energizar la represa de La Plata. Señaló que los trabajos se interrumpieron el jueves por causa de los rayos que acompañaron la intensa lluvia que cayó en la tarde. Espera que la represa pueda entrar en funciones este fin de semana.

#### Aumentan las muertes

De otro lado, el primer ejecutivo confirmó que con dos muertes reportadas en los municipios de Patillas y San Germán aumentó a 36 el número de víctimas fatales relacionado al huracán.

En el caso de Patillas, se informó que se trata de una persona que fue encontrada entre escombros, y en San Germán, otra que presuntamente fue golpeada por un árbol.

Rosselló dijo que espera tener un cuadro más claro sobre las muertes vinculadas al potente ciclón y mencionó que el director del Departamento de Seguridad Pública, Héctor Pesquera, está a cargo de recabar la información a las agencias pertinentes.

Además, se comunicó que la Agencia Federal para el Manejo de Emergencias (Fema, por sus siglas en inglés) entregó ayer 160,259 litros de agua y 262,800 comidas de los Centros de Distribución.

De igual forma, se dijo que se le suplió combustible a once instalaciones médicas. Se esperaba que ayer se entregaran más camiones de combustible a otros municipios y se espera llegar con igual ayuda a Vieques y a Culebra.

De otro lado, la Junta Reglamentadora de Telecomunicaciones notificó que 42% de los clientes cuentan con servicio celular. Debido a un corte de fibra en Ponce, se afectaron 70,000 abonados.

Hay 14 Cell on Wings (COW) de AT&T instalados; cada uno tiene cobertura de servicios de un radio de 3 millas y permite hacer llamadas y enviar mensajes de texto desde los celulares. El COW de Arecibo tiene una cobertura de servicio de 4 millas.

Pagan horas extras a Policía

La Policía de Puerto Rico recibió por medio de FEMA \$950,000 para el pago de horas extras trabajadas durante el huracán Irma y ya se hizo la solicitud de las primeras dos semanas de María.

Además, se restableció el servicio de la red de radio central para Arecibo, Mayagüez y Aguadilla, además del servicio con el que ya cuenta San Juan, Bayamón, Carolina y Caguas. Las demás regiones tienen comunicaciones a nivel regional.

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## **Bajo Lupa La Distribución De Agua Y Alimentos**

By Laura M. Quintero

[El Vocero de Puerto Rico](#), October 9, 2017

El gobernador Ricardo Rosselló informó ayer que ante las continuas querellas de que el agua y la comida no llegan a los sectores en necesidad, ha solicitado a la Fiscalía federal y al Departamento de Justicia realizar una investigación que permita identificar cuáles son los problemas de distribución.

“Hemos decidido tomar una serie de acciones para evitar el mal manejo de la comida... He ordenado a la Guardia Nacional que vaya a los municipios y esté observando y participando en la distribución de los alimentos que están llevando”, comentó en relación a las ayudas de la Agencia Federal para el Manejo de Emergencias (FEMA), la Oficina de la Primera Dama y de otras entidades a los damnificados del huracán María.

La determinación del gobernador surge luego de denuncias de que empleados gubernamentales se estaban apropiando de los suministros, según la vicepresidenta de la Asociación de Productos de Puerto Rico, Marilú Otero. Reclamos similares hizo el pastor Jorge Raschke, quien se topó con que habían robado en los muelles parte de la ayuda traída por Pentecostales Unidos por Puerto Rico.

Rosselló pidió que se investiguen las querellas “para ver si en efecto es una cuestión de mal manejo y si en efecto se ha hecho algo de manera equivocada, consideren todo el procesamiento de la ley”.

Algunos municipios como Cayey se movieron a crear estructuras de base comunitaria para identificar a encamados, niños o personas con necesidades de salud a ser atendidos con prioridad, de modo que la propia comunidad se apodere de la recuperación. El alcalde cayeyano, Rolando Ortiz, informó que se distribuirá el agua y los alimentos de acuerdo con ese censo comunitario y se organizarán también comedores comunitarios.

“Le planteé al gobernador que para nosotros enfrentar una crisis, necesitamos una estructura local con autoridad”, contó el también presidente de la Asociación de Alcaldes a EL VOCERO.

En la calle los auditores

Por otro lado, los agentes de auditoría fiscal del Departamento de Hacienda y auditores de la Oficina del Contralor estarán contabilizando y monitoreando “todo lo que se está entregando” en los municipios. El secretario de Hacienda, Raúl Maldonado, comentó a este diario que entre ambas entidades hay 500 agentes disponibles para esta tarea.

Abordado sobre por qué demoró tanto el gobierno en establecer este sistema, Maldonado mencionó que la distribución estaba en manos de los municipios. “Los alcaldes tenían un sistema interno de finanzas, lo que pasa es que con la destrucción que hubo se les hizo bien difícil y queremos darles un apoyo adicional”, contestó.

El gobernador reconoció, además, que se han recibido querellas de comercios que han estado cobrando el Impuesto sobre Ventas y Uso (IVU) y gasolineras que han desobedecido la orden de congelación del margen de ganancias del Departamento de Asuntos del Consumidor (DACO).

El secretario del DACO, Michael Pierluisi, confirmó a la prensa que recibirá empleados de otras agencias que se capacitarán para salir a la calle a inspeccionar el cumplimiento con las órdenes administrativas de congelación de precios. Las multas oscilarán entre \$5,000 a \$10,000 por cada transacción ilegal.

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## **A Quince Días De María**

[El Vocero de Puerto Rico](#), October 6, 2017

Sin lugar a dudas el huracán María ha dejado una huella dolorosa en Puerto Rico. Su furia nos golpeó de una manera tan violenta que nos deja en ascuas de cara a nuestro futuro.

Definitivamente, ni nosotros, ni nadie, podía estar 100% preparado para un desastre de esta magnitud.

Las acciones del gobierno previas al paso del huracán fueron puntuales para evitar mayor cantidad de muertes.

Las autoridades locales movieron sus limitados recursos bastante rápido luego del paso del fenómeno atmosférico y lograron abrir accesos en una buena parte de la Isla.

Pero la respuesta de la Agencia Federal para el Manejo de Emergencias (FEMA) y de otras instituciones federales desafortunadamente no fue, ni es, tan rápida como se necesitaba.

Entendemos que ser una isla complica mucho el panorama, pero no justifica la dilación en las entregas de suministros, como agua y alimentos, y tampoco en la entrega de los famosos toldos azules para proteger las casas que perdieron sus techos.

No nos malinterpreten; agradecemos la ayuda de FEMA y otras agencias federales, pero debe acelerarse el proceso, sobre todo en la montaña.

Aunque vivimos una era digital, en que las comunicaciones son más rápidas y el Internet se convierte en un aliado para apoyar las soluciones, no nos sirve de nada cuando no hay energía eléctrica, y parte del proceso burocrático para coordinar las ayudas ha descansado en la herramienta digital, probablemente convirtiendo el proceso en uno más lento.

Ya han pasado dos semanas y al día de ayer teníamos muchos signos positivos.

El Aeropuerto Internacional Luis Muñoz Marín está abierto en un 100%, lo que facilitará el movimiento de pasajeros varados aquí, la llegada de más personal de apoyo y el reencuentro de familias.

Las estaciones de gasolina continúan operando con bastante normalidad y, al día de ayer, casi 900 de estos establecimientos estaban abiertos.

Hay 64 hospitales en funciones y ya 25 de ellos están operando con energía suplida por la Autoridad de Energía Eléctrica (AEE).

En cuanto a los bancos, las sucursales abiertas superaban las 175 y los cajeros automáticos o ATM están operando en un 79%.

El agua del sistema de la Autoridad de Acueductos y Alcantarillados (AAA) continúa fluyendo a buen ritmo desde hace días, alcanzando ya el 55% de la Isla.

Las señales celulares también reportan una mejoría significativa, alcanzando ya en la Isla un 45% de los clientes.

Desafortunadamente, la energía eléctrica todavía sigue siendo el talón de Aquiles del proceso de recuperación, pero debemos recordar que el sistema ya se encontraba frágil antes de María. Casi un 10% de los clientes de la AEE está recibiendo electricidad.

Todo esto lo vemos como señales positivas que deben empezar a generar más esperanza en la ruta hacia la nueva normalidad.

El presidente Donald Trump estuvo en visita oficial de cuatro horas en Puerto Rico y pudo comprobar que realmente somos una zona de desastre. Mientras él cumplía con sus compromisos, su equipo se reunió con el gobernador y tuvieron la oportunidad de discutir en profundidad la crisis energética.

La visita programada durante el día de hoy del vicepresidente de Estados Unidos, Mike Pence, puede ser quizás un indicio de que, aparte de los \$29,000 millones solicitados para los afectados por los huracanes Irma, María y Harvey en distintas jurisdicciones, puedan recibirse otras ayudas y más apoyo del gobierno federal.

Y realmente necesitamos que sea revisada la situación de Puerto Rico porque, de acuerdo con los estimados preliminares, entre los daños directos y el impacto en la actividad económica, de una forma u otra las pérdidas ascienden a más de \$95,000 millones.

La mejoría es lenta, pero constante, y por ello debemos mirar el futuro con esperanza.

Lo que sí tiene que cambiar radicalmente es el apoyo a las comunidades más impactadas, sobre todo las de la zona montañosa.

Hacemos un llamado a los directivos de FEMA para que agilicen la entrega de agua, provisiones y toldos a esta parte de la población.

A quince días del impacto de María podríamos estar mejor, sin lugar a dudas, si los recursos se asignan y manejan con mayor prontitud.

También ayudaría mucho a que estemos mejor si todos, como ciudadanos, ejercemos la paciencia y elevamos la vara de la tolerancia en medio de una de las crisis económicas y sociales más difíciles de nuestra historia.

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## **OPINION**

### **Christie Was Right Not To Allow Building On Flood-Prone Areas. Why The Change? | Opinion**

By John A. Miller and Samantha Medlock

[Star-Ledger](#), October 9, 2017

For over a month, many of us have been riveted to the Weather Channel and news outlets, watching the heroic rescue efforts in Texas during Hurricane Harvey, as well as the massive evacuation of Florida and devastating impacts of Hurricane Irma on that state and the Leeward Islands, plus the outright devastation of Puerto Rico and other Caribbean Islands by Hurricane Maria.

It's been a stark reminder that New Jersey has its own vulnerabilities, with hundreds of thousands of residents living in areas that are prone to flooding and at risk from severe storms and sea level rise.

But instead of working to make us safer, the Christie administration is rushing to adopt rule changes that will put more of the state's people and businesses and infrastructure in harm's way.

In 2013, Gov. Chris Christie wisely vetoed legislation that would allow new residential and commercial development to occur in our state's coastal high hazard areas on piers or platforms over oceans or rivers.

Developers were pressuring to build in Atlantic City and along the Hudson River Waterfront, and the governor rightly prevented such high risk development from occurring in these flood-prone areas. Not only would such risky new development endanger the people and property perched over waterways, but it would put first responders in harm's way. And even if developers factor in the cost of private flood insurance under today's prices -- and find buyers who are willing and able to pay them -- those insurance costs will likely increase over time.

Now in its final months, the administration seems to have flip-flopped, and the Department of Environmental Protection has proposed altering the rules to allow developers to build in the places that are most exposed to the threats of the new powerful storms that our future certainly holds.

The proposed rule amendments fail to make mention of climate change or sea level rise, an omission that should be considered a slap in the face to the New Jerseyans already dealing with chronic flooding during high tides. New Jersey's coast is likely to experience up to two feet of sea level rise by 2050. And towns along the shore are already experiencing nuisance (really chronic) flooding - climate change effects are already here.

### Risking Human Lives

Perhaps of most concern is that residential and retail buildings built out over the water will put first responders' lives at risk. We have seen in recent days the valor and courage of those in Texas, Florida, and the Caribbean who have worked so hard to secure others' safety, including many who defied evacuation orders. New Jersey's coastal high hazard area is the area of greatest risk and defined by three foot and greater waves during a storm event - conditions that are sure to make rescue efforts difficult and potentially deadly. There is no way to know where the pier or platform ends when it is under several feet of turbulent water. And as many who called for rescue in the recent storms learned the hard way, emergency services may not be available during the worst of the storm.

This means that the occupants of new homes built on piers could have to ride out future storms on their own, likely without electricity, drinkable water, communications, or emergency assistance. When rescue becomes available after the storm has passed, it will still be risky to first responders and residents and extremely costly to public budgets. Further, we know all too well from Hurricanes Sandy and Harvey that floodwaters are often contaminated and contact can lead to sickness. We need to reduce disaster risks and costs, not needlessly and wastefully increase vulnerability in new construction.

### Risking Property



The National Flood Insurance Program (NFIP) operates as a quid pro quo, making federally-backed flood insurance available in communities that agree to manage development against the risk of flooding. From 1978 to August 2017, New Jersey had the third-highest payouts from the federal program, amounting to nearly \$6 billion, including claims from Hurricane Sandy. Development on waterway sites would jeopardize the ability of homeowners and business owners to insure their assets from future storm or flooding damage. Under federal law, the availability of flood insurance under the NFIP is contingent upon land use control measures coupled with consistent enforcement.

If a municipality were to approve this type of development, they would be in danger of being removed from the NFIP. Anyone in the town looking to purchase flood insurance, including businesses, residents, or the municipality itself, could find themselves unable to do access federally-backed flood insurance through the NFIP. As Governor Christie himself noted when he rejected the idea in 2013, allowing such risky development endangers policyholders' access to federally-backed flood insurance as well as the community's standing under the NFIP. New Jerseyans who do not live in floodplains will be affected, too: If a community is kicked out of the NFIP for failing to adequately manage floodplain development, then every family and business throughout the community becomes ineligible for certain forms of federal assistance in a presidentially declared disaster.

### Risking Economic Prosperity

As a laboratory for innovation, New Jersey should be working to understand the nature of the risk it faces, and what kinds of steps are needed to assure it will remain a safe, vibrant and inclusive place and better prepared for the natural disaster risks it is likely to face in the future. The state should work to attract investment in sustainable and strong new projects that provide the housing, infrastructure, and workplaces of the future. These must be properly sited and designed to last their full expected life, using modern planning and building codes, taking into account sea-level rise, extreme precipitation, and storm-surge impacts. New Jersey's leaders need to learn what storms like Sandy, Harvey, and Irma have to teach, to position the state to compete for new commercial investment driven by access to an educated, vibrant, and resilient workforce.

The comment period for the proposed changes to the rules ended September 15. Both gubernatorial candidates should call for an extension of the comment period and seek additional input from voters on this risky scheme, especially in light of Hurricanes Harvey, Irma and Maria and future storms that may hit on his or her watch.

*John A. Miller, P.E., CFM, CSM, of Lambertville is a water resources engineer and a United States Senate fellow.*

*Samantha Medlock, CFM, of Alexandria, Virginia, is a former senior adviser for preparedness and resilience in the Obama White House.*

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# FEMA

## Media Monitoring Report

### October 10, 2017

#### FEMA Region 2

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

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## HURRICANE MARIA PUERTO RICO

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

By Deborah Barfield Berry

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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



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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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### **Embarking On A Puerto Rican FEMA Aid Mission (VIDEO)**

[CNN](#), October 7, 2017

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

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### **FEMA Chief: Political Disputes Hurting Puerto Rico Relief**

By Luis Alonso Lugo

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

“That is a lesson learned,” Long said.

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

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

By Laura King

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

By Jenna Johnson

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

By Jessica Kwong

[Newsweek](#), October 9, 2017

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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## **Most Of Puerto Rico Remains Dark Nearly Three Weeks After Storm**

By Mark Chediak

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

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

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

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

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

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## **Minus Electrical Grid, Puerto Rico Becomes Generator Island**

By Richard Fausset, Frances Robles and Deborah Acosta

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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## **Big Tech Has Big Plans To Help Reconnect Puerto Rico**

By Matt O'Brien

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

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

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

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

**BATTERY POWER**

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

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

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

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

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

#### VAGUE PROMISES

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

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

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

But there are limitations, she said Saturday.

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

#### COLLABORATIVE EFFORTS

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

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

#### SMALLER ORGANIZATIONS

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

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



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

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

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

By Oren Dorell

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

Another trucker, José Vasquez, 46, of Toa Baja, described how he took a container last week from San Juan to 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.

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

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

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

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### **FEMA Still Planning Additional Influx Of Federal Personnel In Puerto Rico**

By Eric Katz

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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## **OTHER PUERTO RICO NEWS**

### **Puerto Rico Pharmaceutical Manufacturing Slowed By Hurricane Maria**

By Laura Kelly

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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## **HURRICANE MARIA USVI**

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

By Ernice Gilbert

Virgin Islands Consortium, October 10, 2017

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

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

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

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

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

Virgin Islands Consortium, October 10, 2017

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

### **ELECTRIC SYSTEM**

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

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

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

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

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

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

## POTABLE WATER SYSTEM

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

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

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

## GENERAL INFORMATION

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

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

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

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## **New Viya Network Supporting Wireless Connections on Island**

By James Gardner

St. Thomas Source, October 9, 2017

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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



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

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

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

By Ashley Scotland

Virgin Islands Consortium, October 9, 2017

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

By Darren Sands

[BuzzFeed](#), October 9, 2017

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

Waste must be separated into the following four categories:

Whites: appliances such as stoves, refrigerators and microwaves

Electronics: such as radios, computers and TVs

Vegetation: such as trees, branches, grass and plants

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

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## **NEW YORK CITY**

### **NYCHA Construction Begins Five Years After Sandy**

By Nathan Weiser

Red Hook Star Revue, October 9, 2017

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

The fourth stage will include an overall site restoration.

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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## **Making Rooms: Tour Brooklyn's Slick Disaster House**

By Lauren Gill

Brooklyn Daily, October 10, 2017

Get a peek at sweet relief.

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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## **OTHER NEW YORK NEWS**

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

By Nikki M. Mascali

Metro, October 10, 2017

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

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

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

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

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



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

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

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

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

L train options are out there

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

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

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

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

A Chariot awaits

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

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

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

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

New Yorkers can “found” a Chariot route by going to [Chariot.com/routes](http://Chariot.com/routes).

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### **Jewish Facilities In Queens Get Federal Funds To Improve Security**

By Gina Martinez

*Times Ledger*, October 10, 2017

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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## **OTHER NEW JERSEY NEWS**

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

The SandPaper, October 9, 2017

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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## **HURRICANE SEASON**

### **Nate Remnants Drench Northeast; Most Power Back On In South**

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

Dramatic scene as storm surge floods Biloxi casino car park

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

NEW ORLEANS —

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

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

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

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

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

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## **INSURANCE and LEGAL**

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

By Anthony Bellano

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

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

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

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

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

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

By Alison Spann

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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### **SPANISH**

#### **FEMA Ha Desembolsado \$27.4 Millones A Los Damnificados**

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

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

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

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

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

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

Al momento, Fema ha recibido 203,111 solicitudes y ha desembolsado \$27.4 millones como parte del programa de asistencia pública (a los municipios).

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#### **Precisa FEMA La Forma De Inscribirse Para Solicitar Asistencia Por Desastre**

[El Vocero de Puerto Rico](#), October 7, 2017

La Agencia Federal para el Manejo de Emergencias (FEMA) sugirió hoy los procedimientos que deben seguir los ciudadanos que han sufrido daños o pérdidas materiales causados directamente por el huracán María.

La entidad federal sugirió que se puede solicitar asistencia por desastre, incluso si tiene un seguro, pues es posible que haya ayuda disponible para los daños no asegurados o con seguro insuficiente y si las reclamaciones no se liquidan rápidamente.

Hasta la fecha, indicó FEMA, se han inscrito más de 280,000 sobrevivientes del desastre para solicitar asistencia.

La asistencia federal para dueños de viviendas e inquilinos puede incluir subvenciones para alquiler, vivienda temporal, reparaciones a la vivienda en residencias primarias, así como otras necesidades relacionadas con el desastre.

La ayuda que FEMA proporciona es para las necesidades básicas de los sobrevivientes y es el primer paso para la recuperación relacionada con el huracán María, que golpeó a Puerto Rico el pasado 20 de septiembre.

La Agencia Federal para el Desarrollo de la Pequeña Empresa (SBA, siglas en inglés) también ofrece préstamos con intereses bajos por las pérdidas para bienes personales, propiedades inmuebles y negocios.

Para comenzar el proceso de la solicitud se sugiere tener a su disposición:

- \* Su dirección con código postal
- \* Instrucciones de cómo llegar a su propiedad
- \* Condición de su casa dañada
- \* Información sobre seguros, si la tiene disponible
- \* Número del Seguro Social
- \* Número de teléfono al que se le pueda contactar
- \* Dirección donde puede recibir correo
- \* Depósito Directo:

Los fondos de asistencia en desastres se pueden enviar directamente a su cuenta bancaria, por lo que es importante que se proporcione el tipo de cuenta bancaria, número de cuenta y número de ruta bancaria

Manténgase en contacto con FEMA:

- \* Después de inscribirse, se le dará un número de inscripción de FEMA
- \* Asegúrese de escribir su número y guardarlo
- \* Necesitará el número siempre que se ponga en contacto con FEMA

Una vez completado el proceso de inscripción, recibirá una llamada de FEMA para dar seguimiento. Un inspector programará una cita para visitar su hogar. Los inspectores contratados por FEMA no requerirán información de la cuenta bancaria.

La misión de FEMA es apoyar a los ciudadanos y a las agencias de primera respuesta para garantizar que trabajen juntos para desarrollar, mantener y mejorar la capacidad de prepararse.

La asistencia de recuperación por desastre está disponible sin distinción de raza, color, religión, nacionalidad, sexo, edad, discapacidad, conocimiento de inglés o situación económica.

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**Tras Retirar Los Datos De Su Web, FEMA Vuelve A Dar Estadísticas Sobre El Acceso A Agua Potable Y Electricidad En Puerto Rico**

By Alejandra Vargas Morera



[Univision](#), October 6, 2017

Estos dos datos fundamentales desaparecieron de la página que documenta la respuesta de la agencia federal del manejo de emergencias en la isla. Sin explicación y tras el reporte que en principio publicó The Washington Post, este viernes volvieron a colocar esa información.

La falta de agua potable y electricidad en Puerto Rico tras el paso devastador del huracán María han puesto a la isla en una situación de crisis humanitaria. A las críticas de las autoridades locales sobre la lentitud en la ayuda, marcada la polémica entre la alcaldesa de San Juan y el presidente Donald Trump, podría sumarse otra más: la falta de transparencia.

El diario The Washington Post fue el primero en reportar que los datos de acceso a agua potable y electricidad fueron eliminados de la página web de la Agencia de Gestión para Emergencias (FEMA) que reúne los avances de la respuesta federal a la emergencia. Hasta el miércoles la mitad de los 3.6 millones de habitantes de Puerto Rico no tenía agua potable y tan sólo un 5% había recuperado la electricidad, más de dos semanas después del paso del huracán que dañó por completo la red eléctrica. Para el jueves, los datos ya no estaban allí. Luego del reporte, sin embargo, este viernes por la tarde el portal de la agencia volvió a tener los datos sobre agua y electricidad.

Un portavoz de FEMA, William Booher, indicó al periódico que esa información está recogida en otra página web oficial de la oficina del gobernador de Puerto Rico, Ricardo Rosselló, pero no explicó por qué habían dejado de incluirse en el reporte general de la ayuda federal.

“Nuestra misión es apoyar al gobernador y sus prioridades de respuesta a través de la estructura de mando unificada para ayudar a los puertorriqueños a recuperarse y volver a la rutina”, indicó al diario Booher, que defendió que en cualquier caso los datos están disponibles y abiertos al público en la otra web.

Los datos que sí se mantienen allí son los de los trabajos que están llevando a cabo el gobierno.

Según FEMA, actualmente hay 14,000 empleados federales en Puerto Rico y las Islas Vírgenes, todos los aeropuertos y oficinas de correo federales están abiertos, han limpiado más de 30 millas de carretera. Además, el 65% de las tiendas de comestibles han reabierto y casi todos los hospitales y centros de diálisis, agregan.

El presidente Trump, que visitó la isla el martes, ha asegurado que el trabajo federal ha sido “increíble” y “exitoso”, mientras la alcaldesa de San Juan, Carmen Yulín Cruz, se ha convertido en el símbolo del enfado de Puerto Rico.

Ambos se enzarzaron en una disputa dialéctica después de que Cruz suplicara ayuda ante los problemas para distribuir la ayuda sobre el terreno y, después de diez días sin energía eléctrica, denunciara: “Estamos muriendo y nos están matando con su ineficiencia y burocracia”.

“Quieren que les resuelvan todo, cuando debería ser un esfuerzo de la comunidad. Los trabajadores federales presentes en la isla están haciendo un excelente trabajo”, contestó Trump, quien durante su visita dijo que Puerto Rico debería estar orgulloso de que solo murieran 16 personas, a diferencia de la “catástrofe real” de Katrina, que dejó un saldo de 1,800 muertos. Poco después de las palabras del mandatario, el gobernador Roselló anunciaba que el balance de muertos aumentaba a 34.

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## **Sin Luz Y Sin Agua: Así Es La Vida Cotidiana De Los Puertorriqueños Dos Semanas Después Del Huracán María**

By Patricia Clarembaux

[Univision](#), October 6, 2017

PUERTO RICO.- Las rutinas de los puertorriqueños están trastocadas desde que el huracán María devastó todo cuanto pudo en esta isla hace dos semanas. La falta de agua y luz –o de al menos de uno de ellos– les ha reducido las comidas, los ha llevado a bañarse en casas de familiares e incluso mantiene negocios cerrados. Y en algunos casos no tenerlos es el menor de los problemas: hay viviendas que quedaron destruidas.

Poco a poco Puerto Rico intenta volver a su ritmo. Ya muchos han regresado al trabajo, pero igual deben lidiar con lo esencial, buscan incansablemente agua, comida –la que haya– y diésel, para mantener las plantas encendidas y al menos librarse de los 90 grados de temperatura al prender el aire acondicionado.

Las kilométricas filas de las gasolineras han bajado, es cierto. Pero en las calles se mantienen las líneas de personas esperando a la entrada de manantiales naturales a la orilla de cualquier carretera para llenar una, dos, o cuantas botellas de agua puedan para hidratarse y bañarse.

Según la Autoridad Eléctrica de Luz, apenas 9% de la isla tiene electricidad en su casa. Y a 54,6% le llegó el agua, reportó Acueducto. Para el miércoles, las estadísticas de la agencia federal para el manejo de desastres (FEMA) mostraban que solo el 5% de los residentes tenía luz y la mitad de la población había recuperado el acceso a agua potable. Los datos habían sido retirados el jueves de la página web, pero este viernes luego de que medios informaran que las estadísticas ya no estaban, el portal de la agencia volvió a incluir la información.

Hicimos un recorrido por tres municipios del centro-norte de Puerto Rico y estas son las historias de sus habitantes:

#### Recuperando lo que quedó tras la inundación

Toda la planta baja de la casa de dos pisos de Margarita García, en Sabana Seca, municipio Toa Baja, quedó sumergida bajo el agua con el huracán María. La nevera y la cocina todavía llevan pintado el borde marrón de tierra que le dejó la inundación. Ella no sabe qué hará: “Hasta que no llegue la luz no puedo saber si prenden o si también tengo que botarlas”.

En la acera frente a su casa está todo lo que descartaron. Hay un sofá, dos sillones, colchones, un gavetero, un equipo de sonido, mucha madera arrumada y tan destruida que no tiene forma de nada. En su casa prácticamente no quedó nada. Y así está toda la cuadra en este barrio humilde, llena de los enseres que desecharon sus vecinos.

Ya lograron limpiar el piso de cerámica de la sala, en la planta baja, porque llegó el agua hace cinco días. Brilla como si no hubiese pasado nada y huele a Mistolín. Allí duermen en colchones inflables, con calor y al acecho de los mosquitos, ella, sus tres nietos, su hija y su yerno.

Pero arriba el desastre que dejó María está intacto. Las hojas secas y las ramas hacen una alfombra en el suelo. El techo de zinc de su cuarto se cayó parcialmente, huele a humedad. “No sé qué decirte, no sé si tendré que botarlo todo. Tengo que terminar primero abajo”, explica resignada. “Básicamente lo hemos perdido todo”.

La familia completa no desperdicia ni un momento del día para limpiar porque sin luz en la noche, cuentan que la zona se convierte en una “boca de lobo”. Sin nevera no tienen dónde guardar la comida que les donan, porque tampoco tienen a dónde comprarla: “Yo no he comido nada hoy (...) pero si no llega ninguna ayuda hay que basarse en lo que a uno le queda”.

#### Un enfermo en cama que espera paciente

Ramón Martínez, de 80 años, está postrado en una cama desde hace un año. Sufre de esclerosis y solo puede mover su cabeza. Su casa quedó sin agua ni luz tras el golpe del huracán María, pero al menos el miércoles habían podido mantener encendida la planta para prender el aire acondicionado, para recargar la máquina que le permite respirar cómodamente al dormir, la silla para movilizarlo y para poder reclinar más la cama clínica.

Pero este jueves se les acabó el diesel y el distribuidor no había llegado cuando casi eran las siete de la noche. Lo esperan desde el domingo. “Lo más grave es que puedan salirle úlceras”, cuenta su hija Margie Martínez al mostrar que tanto las ventanas como la puerta principal están abiertas de par en par. “Ahora mismo tiene un hongo en el área genital y el no tener agua y aire acondicionado se lo puede empeorar”.

Desde la cama, el padre replica en una voz apenas audible: “No tengo televisor, no tengo nada, uno lo pasa incómodo. Pero hay que adaptarse y aceptar lo que hay”.

La familia tiene agua suficiente para bañarlo –pero a la velocidad de cada envase de mantequilla–, y para darle de tomar. Antes del huracán compraron botellones de agua potable y, además, llenaron varios recipientes plásticos de a galón hasta el tope. Para bajar los baños usan el agua de la piscina, que pasó de ser cristalina a verde tras la devastación que dejó María.

A pesar de todo, aseguran, continuarán bregando.

La salvación: un manantial de la familia

Eliana Rodríguez es una mujer ágil a pesar de sus 82 años. No tiene agua ni luz desde que el huracán Irma pasó por la isla, hace un mes. Aún así resuelve. Cada mañana a las 6:00 am se levanta y camina los 15 minutos que hay desde su casa en Santa Juanita, en el municipio Bayamón, hasta el manantial de la familia y se trae sus dos botellones de agua 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 refunfuno. “Esto es una novela de horror”.

Parados en la casa, parados en el trabajo

Los Figueroa están todos en la tintorería de la familia, la Joe’s Cleaners, en el municipio Bayamón. El negocio está parado porque no tienen agua ni luz y sin eso tampoco hay clientes. Entre los padres y los hijos, los únicos que tienen agua son los primeros. Así que esa casa se ha convertido casi en un centro de operaciones. De allí sale el agua con la que intentan llenar los tanques de 500 galones de la tintorería para reabrir el lugar al menos por un día; con la que se bañan casi todos; con la que cocinan.

“Esto es agobiante”, dice Ángel Figueroa, de 51 años, al mostrar en la penumbra las pilas de ropa para lavar y planchar que se quedaron arrumadas desde antes de que María golpeará la isla caribeña y que, ahora, acomodan para tenerlas listas en caso de que llegue alguno de los servicios. “Sufrimos nosotros, pero también los empleados que todos los días nos preguntan si hay trabajo, si llegó la luz. Nuestra mayor pérdida es el negocio”.

Para comer los más afectados son los padres, Aída y José, de 72 y 76 años. No tienen luz en su residencia, así que desde inicios de septiembre han tenido que desayunar rebanadas de pan solas – porque no hay nevera para refrigerar los embutidos–; almorzar cualquier cosa en la calle,

hamburguesas, por ejemplo; cenar lo que se pueda y beber agua a temperatura ambiente. “Estamos pasando trabajo”, dice él. “No está fácil”, agrega y rompe en llanto.

José dice que para lavar su ropa volvieron a tiempos remotos: a mano. Pero solo con cosas pequeñas, ni los pantalones ni las camisas. “Estamos sobreviviendo”, agrega ella, aunque reconoce que hay gente que puede estar peor que ellos.

Una casa reducida a un cuarto

Carmen Ríos, de 64 años, quedó confinada prácticamente a su cuarto y a un minúsculo patio lateral. El huracán María voló casi todo el techo de la casa de madera en Maguayo, municipio Dorado. Se llevó el del baño, el de la cocina –incluso con los gabinetes–, el del cuarto de su nieto, el del pasillo central. Lo único que quedó sujeto a las vigas de madera del techo, fueron dos lámparas. A pesar del destrozo ella asegura que se queda en su casa. Cuando cae la noche cierra la puerta plástica corrediza de su cuarto y se encomienda a dios. Vive sola.

“Agarro una lamparita de batería que tengo y un faro como de gas. Con eso me alumbro en el cuarto y para bañarme. Me baño tardecito porque sí tengo agua”, cuenta. “Luego me acuesto, pero como a las 3:00 am estoy sentada aquí afuera, desvelada”.

La comida la está comprando al día. Y así mismo la prepara en una pequeña cocina que improvisó en un pasillo lateral de la casa. Convirtió la lavadora y un freezer en topes y sobre una mesa montó una pequeña estufa a gas. Este jueves comieron un bistec encebollado y arroz con habichuelas.

Carmen Ríos asegura que pasa el día llorando al ver el desastre en que quedó convertida su casa, que además acababa de remodelar. No sabe si podrá reconstruirla. Dice que todo depende de la ayuda que pueda recibir de la Agencia de Gestión de Desastres (FEMA). De lo que sí está segura es que allí se quedará, aunque sus hijos intenten convencerla de que se mude con ellos. “¿Tú crees que con 64 años me voy a estar yendo? No. Mejor me quedo aquí y que sea lo que dios quiera”.

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## **Estados Unidos Militariza Esfuerzo De Asistencia En Puerto Rico Tras Problemas De Distribución**

By Tim Johnson

[McClatchy](#), October 9, 2017

Mientras soldados norteamericanos entregaban el domingo cajas de alimentos y agua en esta localidad costera, un funcionario federal dijo que está satisfecho con lo que se ha logrado hasta ahora.

“Parecen estar contentos en este momento. Creo que va muy bien”, dijo Patrick Hernández, administrador adjunto de operaciones de la Agencia Federal para el Manejo de Emergencias (FEMA).

A poca distancia, mirando hacia la operación de distribución a través de una cerca, Serafin Román ofreció una versión radicalmente diferente de la situación: “Es algo terrible. La gente está desesperada. No tienen agua. Algunos están pasando hambre”.

Las dos opiniones radicalmente opuestas no hacen sino señalar el abismo que hay entre el punto de vista oficial sobre los esfuerzos de recuperación tras el devastador paso del huracán María y lo que piensa el hombre de a pie. En algunas partes de Puerto Rico, al entrar en la tercera semana de los esfuerzos de recuperación, algunos puertorriqueños dicen sentirse olvidados y vulnerables. A menudo, los vecinos y los funcionarios locales cuentan versiones drásticamente diferentes sobre la frecuencia de distribución de los alimentos.

Como respuesta ante la grave crisis, los militares estadounidenses explicaron el domingo la forma en la que cambiará la distribución de alimentos, agua y gasolina en muchas de las 78 municipalidades de la isla: van a militarizar las labores de asistencia de una manera significativa después que algunos alcaldes no pudieron con el esfuerzo.

Antes de este fin de semana, se entregaban suministros en 10 áreas regionales de la isla, y entonces los alcaldes eran responsables de organizar la recogida y la distribución.

Pero el general José J. Reyes, jefe adjunto de la Guardia Nacional de Puerto Rico, dijo en una entrevista que se puso en marcha una nueva estrategia para situar entre 10 y 20 soldados en cada municipalidad, dándoles vehículos y apoyo logístico, con la tarea de entregar los suministros en cada barrio.

“Necesitamos entrar directamente a cada barrio para asegurar que todos reciben suministros”, dijo Reyes. “Tendrán vehículos, comunicaciones por radio y apoyo logístico... Van a vivir ahí. Van a operar 24/7”.

En las 10 ciudades más grandes de Puerto Rico, cada una con una población mayor de 150,000 habitantes, los ayuntamientos seguirán administrando la distribución, dijo Reyes, pero no en localidades más pequeñas.

El jefe de los servicios de asistencia, el teniente general del Ejército Jeffrey S. Buchanan, reconoció que la distribución de ayuda a nivel municipal no siempre se ha hecho de manera efectiva.

“Hemos trabajado duro para identificar cuellos de botella”, dijo Buchanan en un aeropuerto de San Juan antes de subir a un helicóptero con rumbo a Aguadilla, unas 80 millas al oeste de la capital.

“No debemos pretender que va a ser un proceso perfecto”, dijo, señalando que los alcaldes tienen retos a la hora de distribuir la ayuda, como carreteras dañadas, falta de vehículos, malas comunicaciones y áreas grandes con poca población.

El descontento era evidente el domingo en un centro de distribución de agua y alimentos en Aguadilla. Sin embargo, esa frustración no se ve en todas partes. Algunas municipalidades están organizando las labores de asistencia y recuperación mejor que otras. Entre las zonas más azotadas por la catastrófica tormenta del 20 de septiembre, algunas están tan alejadas que es necesario entregar la ayuda en helicóptero porque las carreteras están intransitables.

“Hay personas que viven en áreas montañosas en la región central y allí es más difícil llegar, pero estamos tratando de llegar a todos”, dijo Hernández. Los equipos de militares “están haciendo una labor fenomenal limpiando y despejando las vías de acceso”.

Hernández le restó importancia a la ira expresada por algunos vecinos, afirmando que los sobrevivientes de un desastre de esta magnitud quieren que la vida regrese a la normalidad.

“Todos los sobrevivientes de una catástrofe semejante se sienten así”, dijo.

Sheila Lenox, de 29 años, dijo que la caja de comida que recibió el domingo es la primera comida importante que ha visto desde el huracán.

“Esta es la primera vez que nos dan una caja llena de comida”, dijo Lenox, quien está desempleada. “Hemos estado comiendo lo que nos daban los vecinos”.

Cuando se le preguntó cómo habían sobrevivido, Jetson Samot, pareja de Lenox, respondió: “Con salchichas y galletas”. “No podemos comprar nada. Los supermercados han subido los precios de todo. Es muy difícil encontrar algo de comer. Tenemos un lugar donde vivir, pero nada para alimentarnos”, dijo Lenox.

Otra vecina, Carmen Santiago, retirada de 67 años, dijo que deseaba que hubiera más disciplina y lógica en la distribución para evitar que algunos vecinos reciban mucho y otros nada.

Cuando se le dijo que algunos vecinos se quejaron de que eran los primeros alimentos y agua que recibían, el alcalde Carlos Méndez puso en duda esa afirmación.

“Ya habían recibido alimentos antes. He venido aquí tres o cuatro veces y puedo atestiguarlo”, dijo Méndez.

Méndez dijo que las labores de asistencia “empezaron con lentitud pero ahora van bien”.

“Todo el mundo tiene sed, todo el mundo tiene hambre porque no reciben comida todos los días. Pero por lo menos reciben cada cuatro o cinco días”.

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### **Aseguran Que Lluvias En Puerto Rico Dificultan Entrega De Ayuda Tras “María”**

[El Universal \(MEX\)](#), October 9, 2017

Las fuertes lluvias que se registran en Puerto Rico dificultan la entrega de suministros a los damnificados por el huracán María, que devastó las infraestructuras de electricidad y telecomunicaciones de la isla caribeña.

La Agencia Federal para el Manejo de Emergencias (Fema) informó hoy a través de un comunicado de que debido a las lluvias torrenciales y la saturación del terreno puede que las aeronaves que llevan la ayuda a la población no puedan aterrizar, por lo que se advierte de que la carga podría lanzarse desde el aire.

El comunicado subraya que, una vez que el tiempo mejore, las aeronaves volverán a depositar los suministros, principalmente agua y comida, en tierra, tal y como se ha hecho durante los últimos días.

El Servicio Nacional de Meteorología en San Juan emitió una advertencia de inundaciones para más de 20 municipios ante las fuertes lluvias y tormentas que se esperan durante las próximas horas, en especial para áreas del interior, el este y la capital, San Juan.

La agencia federal ha emitido además una vigilancia de inundaciones repentinas para todo Puerto Rico hasta la tarde del miércoles por la presencia en la región de una onda tropical que se unirá a una vaguada ya estacionada al norte de la isla caribeña.

La previsión de fuertes lluvias durante los dos próximos días sigue a las inundaciones registradas el domingo, que afectaron con especial virulencia al área metropolitana de San Juan.

Durante el domingo en algunas partes de la capital se registraron hasta cuatro pulgadas de lluvia, lo que provocó la inundación de calles, en especial en el distrito sanjuanero de Santurce.

Corrimientos de tierras y cortes de carreteras se registraron en los municipios de San Juan, Carolina y Vega Baja, en la costa norte.

El riesgo para hoy es grande, ya que las lluvias se registrarán sobre los suelos ya saturados y en áreas donde permanecen gran cantidad de escombros acumulados tras el pase del huracán María por la isla hace casi tres semanas.

El gobernador de Puerto Rico, Ricardo Rosselló, denunció hoy que la alta acumulación de escombros en las calles de la capital facilitó las inundaciones en San Juan, que obligaron a la intervención de los Bomberos y otras agencias federales que ayudan en la labor de reconstrucción tras el paso del huracán María.

Rosselló sostuvo que a diferencia de lo que pasa en San Juan, en otros municipios de la isla sí se han retirado los escombros que obstruyen el paso del agua por los desagües.

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### **Lo Que Discutirá Jenniffer González Con El Vicepresidente Mike Pence**

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

El Second Air Force con el vicepresidente de Estados Unidos, Mike Pence, aterrizó esta tarde en Puerto Rico para constatar de primera mano la crítica situación de isla tras el catastrófico paso del huracán María por la isla.

Pence llegó al país acompañado de la comisionada residente en Washington, Jennifer González, y su arribo se da a tres días de la visita del presidente de Estados Unidos, Donald Trump, junto a parte de su gabinete. Se da también luego de la visita que hicieron a Florida, donde constataron la ola migratoria de boricuas que se está dando a pasos agigantados hacia el estado y en la que en tan solo dos semanas ya se han contabilizado seis mil puertorriqueños que se han ido y 400 niños matriculados en las escuelas, 300 en Orlando y 100 en Kissimmee.

La comisionada residente dijo que se han establecido centros de ayuda de Fema y la Cruz Roja en varios de los aeropuertos de Florida y que en su visita ayer a Orlando vio la llegada de residentes de Trujillo Alto, Carolina, Cabo Rojo, Juncos, Arecibo, Ponce y Corozal.

“Es bien fuerte”, dijo González a El Nuevo Día, quien narró que inmediatamente llegaron ayer a Florida, dos familias de puertorriqueños, una de Guayama y otra de Corozal, los recibieron y les narraron cómo habían perdido sus casas y lo que habían levantado.

Hoy el trayecto de Pence comenzó en Islas Vírgenes y ya aterrizó en Puerto Rico, donde como Trump, le darán un resumen de la situación en Puerto Rico luego del paso de María, el pasado 20 de septiembre, y la devastación que dejó a su paso el ciclón en los 78 municipios de la isla.

La comisionada residente tiene en su agenda del día discutir con Pence varios asuntos relevantes, entre ellos la tardanza en la instalación de los toldos azules en las miles de casas que perdieron sus techos a lo largo y ancho del país.

“Mi agenda hoy con el vicepresidente va a incluir el que mucha de la gente nos dicen que todavía sus casas no tienen el toldo azul, que está lloviendo y que aún están a la intemperie. Eso es una prioridad para mí”, recaló González tras añadir que obviamente tocará los temas de los sistemas de energía eléctrica y agua.

Según González, hay dos tipos de toldos. Está el más débil, que lo entrega Fema y que no requiere de mayores protocolos y burocracia. Lo datos que le han dado a la comisionada residente es que se han repartido ya 11,000 a los alcaldes, que son los encargados de repartirlos a la gente, así como en Vivienda Pública. El otro tipo de toldo es el azul, que es más fuerte y es instalado por el Cuerpo de Ingenieros.

“Yo entiendo que a la gente no les está llegando”, admitió González.

¿Por qué?

-Esa será mi agenda hoy con el vicepresidente, pedirle que nos ayude en eso. Mi preocupación es que como la gente no tiene Internet, no hay teléfonos, no hay luz, la aplicación de ese toldo es electrónica. Lo que están haciendo los municipios es que están llevando las solicitudes en papel y con esa solicitud de papel, el Cuerpo de Ingenieros las tramita. Sin embargo, no tengo los números de cuántos toldos han instalado, porque es el Cuerpo de Ingenieros al que le toca eso.

-¿Cree que lo que han entregado no va a la par con la necesidad que hay?

-Entiendo que eso no va a la par con la necesidad que hay en la calle y como no va a la par, yo le voy a pedir al vicepresidente Pence hoy que asigne más personal para la instalación de estos toldos, que se flexibilice la manera en que se tramita la obtención de este toldo, que es vital para que a la gente no se le moje lo poco que le queda en la casa. También la cantidad de funciones que está haciendo el Cuerpo de Ingenieros, porque ellos están montando puentes, arreglando carreteras, limpiando escombros, instalando toldos azules y arreglando el sistema eléctrico. Aunque son tropas

distintas, la realidad es que esa es una de las áreas (repartición de toldos azules) que yo quiero que se agilice, para lo que voy a buscar la indulgencia del vicepresidente.

¿Hay otras áreas que tocará en sus conversaciones hoy con Pence?

-Hay otras áreas también que creo que son importantes. Ellos están instalando los generadores. Que los generadores que faltan en los hospitales, en las égidas y las bombas de agua, que son acueductos, esas deben ser una prioridad y va a ser una de las 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.

¿Habrán más?

-Ya el vicepresidente dijo que este no va a ser el único paquete de fondos federales, que vienen otros.

El recorrido en la Isla incluye Country Club y la Iglesia de Santa Bernardita, que es un ministerio amplio de ayuda para suplir las necesidades de los que no tienen y que está bien organizado. De hecho, es de las pocas iglesias que abre las 24 horas y la que González visita con frecuencia, especialmente en horas de la noche.

La comisionada residente en Washington tiene la intención de movilizar a la isla la mayor cantidad de congresistas a Puerto Rico para entiendan el nivel de devastación y de necesidad que hay. De hecho, mañana tiene en agenda otro viaje con un grupo de legisladores federales.

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### **Ponceños No Quieren Quedar En El Olvido**

[El Nuevo Día \(PRI\)](#), October 9, 2017

Ponce – “Que se acuerden de nosotros, de la zona rural, que también existimos”.

Con estas palabras, Gerardo Albizu Torres, de 37 años, resumió el sentir de muchos residentes de la zona montañosa de este municipio que, según contaron, no han recibido “ningún tipo de ayuda” a casi tres semanas del paso del huracán María.

Señalaron, incluso, que la alcaldesa María “Mayita” Meléndez es “la gran ausente” en la ruralía ponceña, donde tampoco se observan los toldos azules de la Agencia Federal para el Manejo de Emergencias (FEMA, en inglés). Estos toldos son la única opción que ciudadanos como Albizu Torres tienen para proteger “lo poco que nos queda”.

Albizu Torres perdió la casa que compró en 2001 en el barrio Real Anón. La estructura de madera y zinc se quedó sin techo y todo lo que había en su interior se dañó por la lluvia, que ha seguido cayendo. Ahora, en el espacio de la sala y cocina, el agua empozada es un criadero de mosquitos.

“Sería bueno que vengan las ayudas, pero a los campos no llegan. Está lloviendo todas las tardes y, como todavía no tenemos los toldos de FEMA, todo se sigue mojando”, agregó.



Como el resto de los puertorriqueños, Albizu Torres pasa largas horas en filas para adquirir agua embotellada, alimentos, hielo y gasolina, entre otros bienes de primera necesidad. Mientras la ayuda para restaurar su hogar llega, pernocta en la casa de su padre, de cemento, también en el barrio Real Anón.

“No ha venido nadie para acá, nadie”, dijo, y justo después su hija Geraldine, de 6 años, soltó: “una crisis”.

“No se ha visto por aquí”

“¿Dónde está ‘Mayita’? ‘Mayita’ no se ha visto por aquí para nada”, comentó, por su parte, Michael Guzmán Marrero, de 45 años, mientras se bañaba en el río Inabón, en la colindancia de los barrios Real Anón y Coto Laurel.

Según contó, “en todo Ponce” hay necesidad, pero lo más que urge es agua embotellada. Dijo que recientemente fue hasta Cayey buscando agua y solo pudo comprar un galón, “porque los estaban racionando”.

Historias similares narraron los vecinos del barrio San Patricio, que viajan a Utuado, Jayuya o Adjuntas para buscar suministros. Estos tres pueblos les quedan más cerca que el casco ponceño.

Luis Vélez Bianchi, de 65 años y quien perdió parte del techo de la segunda planta de su casa, declaró que “nadie del gobierno (estatal) ha pasado por aquí y la alcaldesa se ha olvidado del barrio”.

Vélez Bianchi tiene servicio de agua potable, pero no de electricidad. Sobre este último, dijo –entre risas– que espera recobrarlo antes de las navidades del año 2019. En 1998, tras el paso del huracán Georges, estuvo tres meses sin luz, “pero este huracán (María) no tiene comparación”.

“Ustedes (El Nuevo Día) son los primeros que pasan por acá”, indicó, entretanto, Myrna Ríos Mejía, de 48 años, quien vive junto a su madre, de 78 años; hermana, de 50; y cuatro hijos. Los siete pasaron el huracán en los bajos de la residencia, que perdió el techo del baño y los cuartos quedaron “inundados” por la lluvia.

Relató que no ha podido comprar alimentos, ni agua embotellada. Como no tiene electricidad, no ha podido darse las terapias para su condición de asma. A su madre se le están agotando los medicamentos para el dolor.

“No tenemos con quien ir a ningún lado. Los carros que tenemos aquí no sirven. Estamos a fuerza de los guineos del mismo patio. Pero necesitamos ayuda. Los políticos, que siempre pasan buscando votos en época de elecciones, todavía no se han dado la vuelta por aquí”, aseveró Ríos Mejía.

Los esposos Charito Oliveras Collazo y Edwin Laboy Millán, de 31 y 48 años, respectivamente, también se sienten “olvidados” en el sector La Yuca del barrio Machuelo Arriba, donde ellos y otros residentes “abrimos camino” para no quedarse incomunicados.

“Es mentira que la ayuda está llegando. Acá arriba no ha venido nadie. Ni la basura están recogiendo y se están formando muchos vertederos clandestinos”, contó Oliveras Collazo, quien recoge agua en una pluma que los propios vecinos instalaron en una iglesia de la comunidad.

Ninguno de los entrevistados con daños en sus hogares había iniciado formalmente su reclamación ante FEMA.

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### **Cuerpo De Ingenieros Da Primer Contrato Para Reparar Sistema Eléctrico**

[El Nuevo Día \(PRI\)](#), October 9, 2017

El Cuerpo de Ingenieros del Ejército de los Estados Unidos (USACE) concedió hoy, lunes, un contrato ascendente a \$35.1 millones a la empresa Weston Solutions para la restauración del sistema eléctrico de Puerto Rico.

Este es el primero de una serie de contratos que concederá el USACE como parte del proceso para restaurar el servicio energético que colapsó tras el azote del huracán María. El 80% del sistema de transmisión y distribución quedó en el piso y el gran reto de la Autoridad de Energía Eléctrica

(AEE) -en coordinación con el USACE- es satisfacer la gran demanda de luz del norte de la Isla cuando la generación en su mayoría se produce en el sur.

Hoy, el gobernador Ricardo Rosselló informó que 15% de los abonados de la AEE ya cuenta con servicio. Además, recalcó que “paralelo” al restablecimiento de la luz se trabaja con dar paso en un futuro cercano a un nuevo sistema energético.

“Nuestro objetivo no es solamente levantar el mismo sistema que teníamos antes. Levantar el mismo sistema que teníamos antes nos pone en la misma posición de vulnerabilidad. Invertimos un montón de chavos para estar sujetos a que venga otra tormenta y que nos rebase nuevamente. Nuestro objetivo es -paralelo esto- investigar y ver cuál es el mejor sistema que podamos tener en Puerto Rico en términos de generación, que sea moderno y nos permita una real oportunidad para hacer cambios transformativos en el sistema eléctrico en Puerto Rico”, puntualizó Rosselló.

Weston Solutions, una empresa con sede en Pennsylvania, tendrá la misión de proveer generación eléctrica a la planta de generatriz de Palo Seco, en San Juan. Traerá un generador de 50 megavatios que llegará a “Puerto Rico muy pronto”, informó en comunicado de prensa Diana Holland, comandante de la División del Sur del Atlántico del USACE.

La idea es que al proporcionarle generación de emergencia a Palo Seco, más clientes de la AEE recibirán electricidad en lo que se completan las reparaciones a las líneas de transmisión que se conectan a Palo Seco.

“Este es un paso importante en nuestros esfuerzos para restaurar la electricidad a los ciudadanos de Puerto Rico”, dijo Holland.

La reparación del sistema eléctrico incluye cuatro pasos, de acuerdo con el USACE. La primera fase es proveer energía y generación temporera a lugares críticos. La segunda es asegurar una generación adecuada en las centrales eléctricas para luego reinstalar y reparar las líneas de transmisión. Por último, es preciso restaurar y reparar las líneas de distribución.

Tanto los directivos de la USACE como de la Agencia federal para el Manejo de Emergencias (FEMA, en inglés) han dicho que el restablecimiento total del servicio eléctrico demorará meses.

El director de Operaciones de Contingencia y Seguridad Nacional del USACE, José Sánchez, dijo en entrevista con este diario que la misión que le ha dado FEMA es solo reparar “de emergencia” el sistema eléctrico. Pero ha recalcado que es imperativo evolucionar a un sistema más fuerte.

Ha advertido que ve “difícil” que el restablecimiento de la luz en su totalidad se produzca al cabo de seis a siete meses, parámetro que se ha usado recientemente como referente pues fue el tiempo que tomó hacerlo tras el azote del huracán Georges en 1998. Sin embargo, Sánchez dijo que trabajan a toda capacidad y con contratistas para acelerar el proceso.

Sin embargo, la cantidad de brigadas que posee la AEE, unas 230 -cada una de tres a cuatro personas- no menos que las que había en el pasado. Por eso y ante la emergencia se hacen las contrataciones que la USACE estima serán más de 2,000.

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## **En Espera Por Un Plan De Reconstrucción Para La Isla**

[El Nuevo Día \(PRI\)](#), October 9, 2017

WASHINGTON — El Senado estadounidense aguardaría por las recomendaciones de la Junta de Supervisión Fiscal a cargo de las finanzas públicas de Puerto Rico y del gobernador Ricardo Rosselló antes de diseñar un plan que encamine la reconstrucción de la isla.

Tras la devastación causada por el huracán María, ya no parece haber debate sobre la necesidad de algún tipo de rescate financiero del gobierno federal para revivir la economía de Puerto Rico, la cual el ciclón acabó de hundir.

Lo que aún no está claro es qué cosas formarán parte de ese plan, que los demócratas quieren se asemeje al concepto del Plan Marshall con el cual se impulsó la reconstrucción de Europa central después de la Segunda Guerra Mundial, por medio de medidas para modernizar su economía.

“Queremos que se rinda cuentas sobre hacia donde ese dinero va a ir”, advirtió ayer el senador republicano Ron Johnson (Wisconsin), presidente del Comité de Seguridad Interna y Asuntos de Gobierno, en una conferencia telefónica de los cinco senadores que estuvieron el sábado observando los daños causados por el huracán María en Puerto Rico.

Desde antes del huracán, economistas, grupos de estudio y sindicatos habían reclamado que aun después de autorizar la reestructuración de la deuda pública, por medio de un nuevo sistema judicial de bancarrota territorial, Puerto Rico necesitaría medidas que ayuden a la economía.

Ahora, demócratas del Senado dicen que eso es inevitable. “Se necesita un plan financiero inmediato”, dijo el senador demócrata Richard Blumenthal (Connecticut), quien dijo desde el punto de vista del Senado su contenido debe salir de conversaciones entre la Junta, el gobernador Rosselló y el Comité de Finanzas, que maneja los temas referentes al Tesoro, Medicaid, y temas contributivos.

El gobernador Rosselló –quien ha estado en conversaciones con el Tesoro–, dijo ayer que requiere una inyección inicial de \$4,600 millones y ha advertido que a finales de este mes el gobierno de Puerto Rico puede quedarse sin dinero en efectivo.

El senador Blumenthal dijo que entendía que la “tormenta financiera” ocurriría a finales de año.

El gobierno de Rosselló ha discutido en Washington, entre otras cosas, la posibilidad de que el Tesoro garantice un préstamo del gobierno de Puerto Rico o que la Reserva federal compre bonos de la isla.

En la conferencia telefónica, la demócrata Kirsten Gillibrand (Nueva York) dijo que “se necesita un plan tipo Plan Marshall no importa lo que tome”. “Se requiere un Plan Marshall no para reparar temporalmente, sino para la recuperación y resiliencia a largo plazo”, sostuvo Blumenthal.

Los republicanos han sido menos contundentes, pero reconocen que se requiere apoyo federal a un plan dirigido a revivir la economía. “Queremos trabajar con el Senado para presentar algo que atienda las necesidades a corto y largo plazo”, indicó el republicano Cory Gardner, presidente del subcomité de Energía de la Comisión de Energía y Recursos Naturales.

Los senadores coincidieron que todo el proceso de reestructuración comienza por restablecer la red eléctrica, para poder facilitar el funcionamiento de los pilares de la economía de Puerto Rico, como la manufactura y el turismo.

“(La red eléctrica) era débil antes de la tormenta, ahora está muy devastada”, sostuvo Johnson.

Esta semana, el Congreso debe aprobar la asignación de \$12,770 millones para volver a llenar las arcas del fondo para atender desastres de la Agencia federal para el Manejo de Emergencias (FEMA).

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## **Llega Un Generador A Culebra Para Un Centro De Salud**

**[El Nuevo Día \(PRI\)](#), October 9, 2017**

El generador tenía escrito diversos mensajes con tiza en solidaridad con el pueblo de Culebra.

“Dios los bendiga y los mejores deseos (de la) Guardia Nacional de Puerto Rico”, leía uno de los mensajes.

Un generador de 30 kilovatios, y cuyo peso es de 1,927 libras, aguardaba ayer, domingo, en el interior de un helicóptero de carga Boeing CH-47 Chinook de Pennsylvania, aeronave necesaria para transportar un objeto de dicho tamaño y peso.

Precisamente esa fue una de las razones para que el generador, que debió llegar a la isla municipio antes del paso cercano del huracán María, aún aguardase en la base de Isla Grande. Su destino es el centro de salud HealthproMed 330 ubicado en Culebra.

El coronel de la Guardia Nacional de Puerto Rico, Jorge Galoff, dijo que se enteraron de la urgencia de llevar el generador a Culebra a través de la Agencia Federal para el Manejo de Emergencias (FEMA). Ivonne Rivera, administradora del centro de salud, se vio en la necesidad de abordar a funcionarios de la agencia luego de pedirle ayuda al secretario de Salud, Rafael Rodríguez Mercado, para llevar el generador a Culebra.

“Nunca recibí respuesta”, dijo la mujer que estaba feliz de poder recibir la asistencia de la Guardia Nacional.

“Desde el sábado después de María, todas las mañanas yo llegaba al Centro de Mando del Gobierno a buscar apoyo, para ver cómo podíamos transportar esta planta a Culebra. Y no recibía absolutamente ninguna contestación”, narró Rivera.

Tras varios intentos, no fue posible conseguir a Rodríguez Mercado.

Rivera, entretanto, destacó que el centro de salud no había podido dar servicios desde el azote de Culebra. El lugar, creado hace 14 años y que da servicio diariamente a aproximadamente 15 personas, es subvencionado con fondos federales. Además, ofrece servicios de dentista, pediatría, obstetricia y ginecología, médico de familia, internista, optómetra, trabajador social y nutricionista.

Rivera agradeció no solo al coronel Galoff sino también al coronel Ricardo Garratón, también de la Guardia Nacional, quien fue su primer contacto en la milicia para así llevar el generador a Culebra.

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### **Comprometida La Capacidad De Abasto Del País**

[El Nuevo Día \(PRI\)](#), October 8, 2017

Enormes cantidades de sedimentos se movieron hacia los embalses a consecuencia de las copiosas lluvias del huracán María, reduciendo potencialmente su capacidad de almacenamiento y amenazando, a su vez, con crear un problema de disponibilidad de agua en el país, advirtieron expertos.

La mayoría de los embalses ya están altamente sedimentados, y el panorama se complica aún más con el hecho de que María también causó una gran devastación forestal.

Sin vegetación en las montañas, se pierde la capacidad de amortiguamiento o retención de sedimentos, lo que facilita su entrada a los cuerpos de agua durante eventos de lluvia.

“En Puerto Rico, la capacidad de los embalses para recibir agua es cada vez menos, y ahora va a haber mucha más sedimentación entrado. Cuando a un embalse le queda el 20% de su capacidad, está anulado para todo efecto práctico”, sostuvo el exdirector de la Agencia Federal de Protección Ambiental (EPA, por sus siglas en inglés) en Puerto Rico y el Caribe, Carl Soderberg.

Mencionó, por ejemplo, que los embalses Carraízo, en Trujillo Alto, y Dos Bocas, en Utuado, están sedimentados en 40% y 63%, respectivamente, y “es posible que ahora pierdan otro por ciento adicional”.

Cuestionado al respecto, el presidente ejecutivo de la Autoridad de Acueductos y Alcantarillados (AAA), Elí Díaz Atienza, indicó que, una vez se “normalice” el servicio de agua

potable, la corporación pública iniciará un “análisis de la sedimentación” en los embalses causada por el huracán, que tocó suelo boricua el pasado 20 de septiembre.

“Reconocemos los retos de las represas. Estos sistemas traen muchos sedimentos y nos pueden haber afectado las reservas de agua. Tan pronto resolvamos el asunto de suplir agua a las comunidades, haremos la evaluación”, dijo.

Contó que, desde antes que María azotara la isla, la AAA está “trabajando” con el experto en manejo de reservas de agua y consultor internacional en hidrología, Greg Morris, para “buscar opciones para bajar un poco los sedimentos” en los embalses.

Preliminarmente, Díaz Atienza señaló que algunas de esas opciones incluyen dragados continuos (equipo permanente en los embalses), dragados dirigidos (embalses particulares) y mover los sedimentos hacia el mar a través de la apertura controlada de compuertas.

“Estaremos mirando los efectos de cada opción y calculando cuál es la mejor. Reclamaremos a través de la Agencia Federal para el Manejo de Emergencias (FEMA, por sus siglas en inglés) los costos necesarios para remover los sedimentos que se recibieron con el huracán y posterior a eso por no tener la forestación necesaria”, dijo el funcionario.

Más costoso

Aparte de sedimentos, los ríos y embalses están recibiendo ahora más hojas y ramas, lo que aumentará el costo de tratamiento del agua para que su consumo sea seguro, expuso el doctor en ecología y catedrático asociado de la Universidad de Carolina del Norte en Chapell Hill, Javier Arce Nazario.

Advirtió, incluso, que la descomposición de este material resultará en mayor cantidad de carbono disuelto en el agua que, cuando se mezcla con cloro, crea compuestos carcinógenos.

“Estos compuestos orgánicos y el sinnúmero de otros contaminantes que deben estar llegando a los ríos, resultará en un aumento en costo en el tratamiento del agua por parte de la AAA”, dijo Arce Nazario.

“La AAA va a recibir agua con un nivel de turbiedad bien alto y tendrá que lavar más a menudo sus filtros. Producir agua potable va a ser más duro y, por ende, más costoso”, agregó Soderberg.

Para este año fiscal, la AAA cuenta con un presupuesto de \$594 millones para costear su programa de operación y mantenimiento de sistemas de acueductos y alcantarillados.

Infraestructura vieja

El huracán María sacó a relucir la situación de vulnerabilidad de algunas de represas. Ejemplo de ello es lo que en principio se reportó como una rotura de 24 pulgadas en la represa Guajataka, 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 Guajataka se construyó entre 1919 y 1928.

Contó que, a excepción de las represas Cerrillos y Portugués, ambas en Ponce, las demás son “más vulnerables” a eventos como huracanes, porque no están diseñadas con la última tecnología.

“Las represas más modernas tienen mucha instrumentación que permite detectar cualquier indicio de falla. También cuentan con mecanismos de seguridad que no permiten que haya un desbordamiento. Pero en Puerto Rico, por el tiempo de construcción que tienen las represas, ya es necesario que haya una reevaluación y reacondicionamiento de todas estas estructuras. Necesitamos personal experto en el país que pueda realizar esto”, recalcó.

Sobre el aumento en sedimentación, Vázquez Ruiz dijo que es un problema que no supone un riesgo de seguridad para los embalses, pero hace que “vayan perdiendo su utilidad”.

Díaz Atienza, por su parte, descartó que la coyuntura actual se preste para impulsar la construcción de más represas. Aparte de que los “lugares idóneos” para nuevos embalses escasean en la isla, la AAA pretende “atacar la necesidad de más agua” con iniciativas para reducir las pérdidas en producción.

Al momento, la AAA pierde –física y comercialmente– el 60% del agua que produce.

Efecto en corales

Soderberg, entretanto, dijo que el flujo de sedimentos y la devastación forestal también tendrán “efecto directo” sobre los arrecifes de coral.

“Cuando les llegue esa sedimentación (a través de los ríos), los va a liquidar. Los sedimentos son veneno para los corales”, aseveró.

Datos del Centro para la Ecología Tropical Aplicada y Conservación (CATEC) de la Universidad de Puerto Rico, Recinto de Río Piedras, apuntan a que el 80% de los arrecifes de coral, a menos de 100 pies de profundidad, ya muestran señales de mortandad asociada al evento de blanqueamiento de 2005. Ese evento se relaciona, a su vez, al aumento en la temperatura del mar debido al cambio climático.

Arce Nazario añadió que, después de un huracán, los estuarios se tornan menos salados y la turbidez aumenta, lo que afecta a las especies que allí habitan.

No se descarta, por lo tanto, una merma en la actividad pesquera.

Más inundaciones

Mientras, la directora del CATEC, Elvira Cuevas, expuso que, a corto plazo, otro efecto de la devastación forestal causada por María serán más inundaciones.

“Las inundaciones serían mayores al no tener la cobertura vegetal necesaria para reducir la escorrentía”, dijo.

Con ella coincidió el ambientalista y urbanista Ramón Cruz, miembro de la Junta de Directores del Sierra Club en Estados Unidos, quien señaló que la pérdida de áreas de mangle también aumenta el riesgo de inundaciones.

Arce Nazario fue más comedido, al indicar que la incidencia de inundaciones dependerá de la condición del terreno antes y después del huracán.

“El huracán no destruye toda la vegetación y no crea una superficie impermeable. Nosotros, los humanos, talamos un bosque y hacemos estacionamientos por donde el agua no penetra. Dentro de los bosques destruidos por el huracán hay mucha vida que podrá tener funciones importantes como, por ejemplo, retener la lluvia y crear fricción para que el agua no llegue rápidamente al río”, expresó.

El análisis preliminar del impacto de María en las áreas custodiadas por el Departamento de Recursos Naturales y Ambientales (DRNA) arrojó que el 98% de los árboles adultos está “en el piso”, indicó en días recientes la secretaria Tania Vázquez. El 80% de los árboles juveniles sobrevivió el azote del huracán, lo que ayudaría a adelantar la reforestación de las áreas naturales.

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### **En Precario La Salud Mental Tras El Paso Del Ciclón Por La Isla**

[El Nuevo Día \(PRI\)](#), October 10, 2017

JAYUYA. – Nilda Méndez Mercado se cuestiona a diario por qué sigue viva. Llegó hace poco más de un mes a Puerto Rico, desde el estado de Nueva Jersey, para estar “tranquila”. Pero el huracán María le cambió los planes.

El ciclón destruyó su casa en el sector Alturas Pisá del barrio Collores, en este municipio. Ni una pared quedó intacta. La vivienda se había construido con los ahorros “de toda una vida”.

Méndez Mercado quería regresar con su esposo, Francisco Soto Zamora, a quien dejó en las montañas jayuyanas mientras atendía su salud en Estados Unidos. Es paciente de cáncer, diabética y le dio un derrame cerebral que paralizó la mitad de su cuerpo.

“Pero ahora tengo depresión. Estoy mala de los nervios. Pasé el huracán aquí y fue terrible. Se llevó todo lo que me quedaba. Todo era nuevo y se lo llevó”, dijo llorosa la mujer de 70 años.

Desde el pasado 20 de septiembre, cuando María tocó suelo boricua, Méndez Mercado está “refugiada en un cuarto” en la casa de su suegra, de cemento. Sus problemas de movilidad le impiden salir a buscar ayuda. Tampoco ha llegado nadie a ofrecérsela.

“No he recibido ninguna ayuda, ni agua siquiera. Pasan y siguen. No nos han dado nada. No existimos en este lado. Todo se queda en el pueblo. Vienen los helicópteros con comida y agua, pero como yo no puedo ir... Necesito pañales, medicamentos y, cuanto antes, una vivienda, porque yo no puedo vivir así”, esbozó.

Méndez Mercado contó que pasa los días “llorando y llorando”, y que varias noches –en las últimas semanas– “me he acostado a dormir con hambre porque no nos han dado nada”.

Señaló que, debido a las irregularidades en el servicio postal, sus hijos no han podido enviarle ayuda desde los estados de Nueva Jersey, Illinois y Florida. “La correspondencia no llega”, dijo.

Dijo que, “tan pronto tenga unos dólares” y se normalice el tráfico aéreo, regresará a Estados Unidos.

“Nos viró la vida”

Wanda Sepúlveda Torres y Belinda Maldonado Medina, de 53 y 27 años, respectivamente, son vecinas de Méndez Mercado y también se expresaron deprimidas.

Denunciaron, además, que ninguna agencia municipal, estatal o federal ha visitado el sector Alturas Pisá para ofrecer servicios de salud mental.

“Porque los necesitamos. Este huracán nos viró la vida a todo el mundo”, dijo Sepúlveda Torres, quien perdió el techo de su casa y decenas de pertenencias, y ahora duerme en una caseta de campaña en el patio.

Lo menos que reclaman es un toldo de la Agencia Federal para el Manejo de Emergencias (FEMA, en inglés), “para que la lluvia no siga mojando lo poco que nos quedó”.

500 familias

El administrador municipal de Jayuya, Alexis Bennett, indicó que 500 familias perdieron sus casas parcial o totalmente debido al paso de María, incluyendo algunas de cemento.

El huracán, asimismo, cobró la vida de un hombre cuando un alud derrumbó su vivienda, en el sector Caricaboa.

“No tenemos agua embotellada, pero la que está saliendo por el grifo es potable y lo podemos garantizar. También necesitamos combustible, tanto para nuestra flota como para alguna infraestructura del gobierno estatal”, dijo Bennett, tras precisar que el 33% del municipio tiene el servicio de la Autoridad de Acueductos y Alcantarillados (AAA).

A casi tres semanas del paso de María, las brigadas siguen “abriendo camino”. Las carreteras, de hecho, aún exhiben grandes cantidades de lodo y algunos tramos están inundados por las lluvias que continúan. En el sector Hoyos Planes, unas 25 familias solo tienen acceso a pie, porque la carretera PR-531 colapsó.

Bennett reconoció que la falta de combustible ha limitado la repartición de agua y comida en los barrios jayuyanos.

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## Efluvios De La Donahue

By Mayra Montero

[El Nuevo Día \(PRI\)](#), October 8, 2017

La noticia de que el gobernador no tiene “un Plan B” para atender el desastre causado por el huracán, siendo su única alternativa los fondos que le otorgue el Congreso y la administración del presidente Trump, no puede sorprender a nadie. Es más, ni siquiera es noticia.

¿Quién tiene un Plan B de cara a este desastre? A ver, ¿de dónde va a sacarse nada para comenzar siquiera a darle forma a esto?

La presencia del Ejército de los Estados Unidos va para largo, y oí decir que empezaban a ocuparse ellos mismos de la entrega de alimentos y otros artículos de primera necesidad, en vista de que habían surgido indicios de que en la ruta entre el centro de acopio y los municipios, se “esfumaban” paquetes de medicinas y otros productos.

También oí que había quejas de los militares, porque en algunos residenciales y otros sectores del interior de la Isla, los llamados “bichotes” obstaculizaban su trabajo.

Bienvenidos al club.

Eso lo sufren aquí, a diario, cientos de instituciones cívicas o religiosas, que deben pasarle la manita al capo y contar con su autorización para poder asomar la cara en las comunidades que viven bajo un cacicazgo de origen criminal, y en las que el trapicheo es cosa seria. Los del ejército, sin embargo, creo que no son propensos a pasarle la manita a nadie. El día que tengan que entrar en un residencial, un barrio remoto o lo que sea, y tengan órdenes concretas de no andarse con contemplaciones, se abrirán paso por donde tengan que abrirlo. Aunque no hayan venido en son de guerra, ese tipo de movilización es un inconveniente para el bajo mundo, algo que, unido a los problemas tácticos que dejó el huracán, arruina en parte lo que es la válvula de escape de mucha gente que depende de la economía informal. Puede haber “roces”, claro que sí.

Es sabido que los huracanes entorpecen el movimiento clandestino de los cargamentos. La mar está picada, los vuelos son escasos y las carreteras quedan intransitables. Si a eso se le añade una fuerza militar que llega a controlar las vías públicas y con la que es difícil establecer “alianzas” para que se hagan de la vista larga o custodien el trasiego, la situación puede tornarse tensa. Debe tenerse en cuenta, sin embargo, que el día en que le inflijan un rasguño a uno de esos militares, arderá Troya. Los que van a entrar a buscar a los culpables no serán agentes locales ni simples investigadores, sino oficiales del ejército, con sus métodos un poco más enérgicos.

El problema sigue siendo la falta de electricidad.

Cada vez que uno lee que han tenido que mandar a buscar especialistas mexicanos en tendido eléctrico, a los que FEMA pagará su sueldo, es imposible no acordarse de los millones que se dilapidaron en Lisa Donahue y su compañía. A la par que la gran estafa que resultó el trazado y construcción de la llamada Vía Verde, está este otro fiasco de la contratación de la reina madre —se movía como una reina madre—, afectada y ladina, que cargó con cientos de millones, ella y sus compinches. Una mujer que nada adelantaba, que pedía prórrogas y más prórrogas a su contrato vergonzoso, y que no hizo otra cosa en Puerto Rico que no fuera lucrarse y marearnos con la “colonizadora” de que ella podía resolverlo todo.

Aquí tenemos las consecuencias. La Donahue en capilla ardiente, sin que le falte ni una bombillita, y nosotros ahogados en la incertidumbre, con cientos de negocios cerrados, miles de empleados en la calle, sin trabajo y sin sueldo.



Ésa es otra. Hay una diferencia entre la gente que está en su casa, cobrando salarios del gobierno, y los que han recibido un portazo en las narices, porque los comercios y las pequeñas empresas ignoran cuándo podrán reanudar operaciones. Los verdaderos sacrificados son esos, los que están ahora mismo esperando que llegue la luz, alimentando la esperanza de que el patrono no cierre para siempre.

Por eso choca tanto que, cobrando su salario entero, algunos se dediquen a “filosofar” sobre el Plan B y el Plan C, y hasta el Plan Z que debería tener el gobernador.

Desengañense, no hay más ninguno: esperar un rescate económico y echar hacia adelante con lo que nos caiga, con espíritu de sacrificio y austeridad. Sí, austeridad, esa palabra que tanto mortifica a los patriotas de balcón.

En cuanto a la visita del vicepresidente Pence, que se puso en plan Miss Simpatía y aseguró que el coquí iba a “cantar más alto”, confieso que prefiero los gruñidos del otro. Los papeltoallazos del otro. La descarnada brutalidad del otro. Lo prefiero incluso antes que la vocecita de la Donahue. ¿Recuerdan su voz? Dios sabe que nunca la creí.

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## **OPINIÓN: “Lo Que Vi En Puerto Rico”**

[El Tiempo Latino](#), October 10, 2017

Ponce, PUERTO RICO – Esta semana pude ser testigo de la peor devastación que he presenciado en mi vida. He ido muchas veces a la Isla del Encanto, tengo familia allá. Sin embargo este viaje no fue como ningún otro.

Pasé la mayor parte del tiempo en Ponce, en la parte sur de la isla. Ponce es la segunda ciudad más poblada de Puerto Rico. Allí estuve junto al gobernador Ricardo Roselló, la alcaldesa María Meléndez y una delegación de demócratas de la Florida entregando insumos a quienes más lo necesitaban luego de sobrevivir la destrucción del huracán María. Vimos un colchón de tamaño matrimonial enredado en un poste de cableado telefónico. Las líneas de comunicación están tan afectadas que ni siquiera pudimos utilizar un teléfono satelital para comunicarnos con el mundo exterior.

La isla que conozco ya no existe, ha sido destruida por uno de los huracanes más feroces en la historia de Estados Unidos. Lo que no fue destruido y aún sigue intacto es la identidad estadounidense de Puerto Rico. De hecho, tan sólo a pasos de casas destruidas por la tormenta, aún estaba en pie una bandera estadounidense con sus estrellas y rayas ondeando en el viento.

Los 3.5 millones de personas en Puerto Rico son ciudadanos estadounidenses. Ellos merecen un trato justo e igualitario como cualquier otro ciudadano estadounidense. Desafortunadamente, tenemos un presidente que ha mostrado una perturbadora indiferencia por el bienestar de estos conciudadanos. El presidente Trump esperó más de una semana luego del huracán para levantar las restricciones del Jones Act, a pesar de haberlas levantado para Florida y Texas incluso antes de que el huracán Irma tocara tierra. No hay excusa para el retraso de Trump, que sólo ha causado más sufrimiento al impedir que las naves puedan entregar insumos de manera más rápida. Es más, la agencia FEMA aún no ha autorizado todas las herramientas de asistencia que tienen a su disposición.

Mientras millones esperaban recibir ayuda el fin de semana pasado, Trump decidió iniciar una pelea a través de Twitter con la alcaldesa de San Juan, Carmen Yulín Cruz, quien en ese momento iba puerta por puerta buscando salvar vidas mientras Trump estaba en su campo de golf y le dedicaba sólo una hora a Puerto Rico. Representantes de su administración llamaron la devastación en la isla como una “historia de buenas noticias”.

Incluso cuando el presidente Trump visitó Puerto Rico el martes, dejó en claro que él considera que el esfuerzo de rescate de nuestro gobierno era una inconveniencia en vez de una responsabilidad nacional. “Ustedes descontrolaron nuestro presupuesto” le dijo al pueblo de Puerto Rico, un sentimiento que estuvo curiosamente ausente de sus respuestas a desastres en Texas y Florida.

Responder a un desastre natural es un problema complejo. Sin embargo, el problema aquí no es con las personas en el terreno o con los trabajadores de carrera que dedican sus vidas a situaciones como esta. El problema es con la persona a la cabeza de las decisiones.

Los puertos de Puerto Rico están abiertos. Los aeropuertos están abiertos. Con todo y esto, el general de tres estrellas nombrado por el Pentágono para liderar los esfuerzos de alivio dijo la semana pasada que no está ni cerca de tener la cantidad de tropas o equipos que necesita.

Trump encabeza el poder ejecutivo. ¿Por qué no actúa como tal? ¿Por qué no está canalizando la inmensa cantidad de recursos a su disposición para traer la ayuda que la gente necesita desesperadamente? ¿Y, por qué es que sigue felicitándose a sí mismo por un trabajo que está lejos de terminarse?

La situación en Puerto Rico no es una “historia de buenas noticias”. Es una emergencia y necesitamos manos a la obra. Las muertes han incrementado en un doble desde la visita de Trump. La gente necesita agua, comida, insumos básicos. Ellos necesitan que FEMA tenga una presencia en lugares como Ponce, donde más de un millón de personas están desesperadas por ayuda federal. Ellos necesitan la fuerza completa y todos los recursos del gobierno de los Estados Unidos.

Proveer al pueblo de Puerto Rico con la asistencia que necesitan no debería ser un tema partidista. No se puede fijar un precio para la vida, ya sea en Florida, Texas o Puerto Rico. No sólo resulta inhumano tratar a nuestros hermanos puertorriqueños como ciudadanos de segunda clase, es también algo profundamente anti-estadounidense.

No hay nada como ser testigo de primera mano, caminar por esas comunidades devastadas y hablar con las personas que lo han pedido todo, menos lo que llevan puesto y la esperanza de sus corazones. Ellos no se dan por vencidos, ellos saldrán adelante, pero no pueden hacerlo solos. Necesitamos estar allí para nuestros hermanos boricuas.

Es el momento de que el presidente Trump deje de actuar como que esto es una “misión cumplida”. Nuestra tarea apenas comienza.

Esta pieza fue publicada inicialmente en inglés en el U.S. News & World Report.

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## **Supervisión Para Que La Ayuda Llegue Rápido A Los Necesitados**

[El Nuevo Día \(PRI\)](#), October 9, 2017

Aguadilla – No faltaban brazos para pasar de mano en mano las cajas con agua y las que contenían comida.

De esa forma, los militares -de la Guardia Nacional, de la Reserva del Ejército de los Estados Unidos y los State Guard (voluntarios activados por el gobernador)- hacían llegar a las manos de cientos de puertorriqueños afectados por el huracán María los suministros proporcionados por la Agencia Federal para el Manejo de Emergencias (FEMA, por sus siglas en inglés).

Alrededor de 500 familias de los residenciales Stanford y Agustín Stahl, en Aguadilla, hicieron una larga cola tan pronto vieron los tres camiones militares con su distintivo color crema. En menos de una hora, tiempo en que todos recibieron ayuda, no dudaron en tomarse fotos con los militares y decirles en inglés y español, gracias.

“Esto me ayuda con el nene y eso”, dijo Marilyn Valentín tras recibir una caja con tres galones de agua y otra con comida lista para consumo. Con la ayuda de los militares cargó los suministros en el coche donde llevaba a su niño de cuatro años.

Lo mismo hizo Raicha Guerra, quien llevaba a su hijo 2 años.

“Los que han venido son el Army y la Cruz Roja”, comentó la joven de 22 años cuando este diario le preguntó por la ayuda recibida.

A pasos de ella estaba el alcalde de Aguadilla, Carlos Méndez, quien previamente se había reunido en las instalaciones de la Guardia Nacional en Aguadilla con el teniente general Jeffrey S. Buchanan, encargado de las operaciones militares en Puerto Rico.

Buchanan, al igual que el comandante dual de tropas (Dual Status Commander), el general José Reyes, viajó desde San Juan hasta el pueblo costero de Aguadilla para ver de cerca la nueva logística implementada por el general de tres estrellas. En vez de que los alcaldes de los 78 municipios lleguen a los centros de distribución de alimento y agua, serán los militares los que lleguen a cada municipio.

Esa fue la logística que anunció la semana pasada el propio Buchanan para asegurarse de que la ayuda llegue a la gente afectada por el huracán María, luego de quejas por la tardanza en la entrega o por la poca cantidad que reciben.

Para ello, se crearon cuatro áreas de apoyo logístico (logistic support area) que deben llevar los suministros a 68 pueblos. Estas áreas consisten de casetas repletas de militares ubicadas en la antigua base Roosevelt Roads, en Ceiba; el Fuerte Buchanan, en Guaynabo; en la base Ramey, en Aguadilla; y en el Campamento Santiago, en Salinas. En cada una debe haber entre 2,000 a 3,000 militares.

“Esto nos ayuda a descentralizar”, explicó Buchanan, quien no dudó en descargar camiones y entregar suministros.

Cada una de estas áreas tiene un apoyo de ingeniería, otro de seguridad y uno de personal médico. Así que, en conjunto, cada área no solo se destina para la distribución de agua y alimentos sino que también brinda seguridad, limpia vías de acceso y provee servicios médicos donde sea necesario, dijo Reyes.

Estas cuatro áreas se unen a 10 municipios, para así cubrir los 78 municipios, que recibirán suministros de los militares y que también sus respectivos alcaldes pueden buscar la ayuda.

Se trata de municipios grandes que pueden hacer este tipo de tarea o que sufrieron gran devastación tras la embestida del huracán, dijo Reyes en referencia a Carolina, San Juan, Bayamón, Guaynabo, Arecibo, Ponce, Mayagüez, Humacao, Utuado y Guayama.

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### **Urge La Necesidad De Contar Con Más Camiones Cisterna En Morovis**

[El Nuevo Día \(PRI\)](#), October 8, 2017

MOROVIS – La alcaldesa de Morovis, Carmen Maldonado, indicó que el municipio continúa esfuerzos diarios para llevar agua y alimentos a las comunidades afectadas, al tiempo que reconoció que si no fuera por organizaciones privadas y la Agencia Federal para el Manejo de Emergencias (FEMA), los suministros, especialmente el agua, no llegarían a donde se necesitan.

“El reto mayor, y lo que estoy enfrentando ahora mismo, son los camiones cisterna. Morovis no tiene agua. Tenemos muchísimas personas encamadas y en este municipio solo cuento con un camión cisterna. Le hice la petición a FEMA de que me enviaran cuatro camiones cisterna adicionales porque Acueductos solamente me envió uno de 2,000 galones”, dijo Maldonado.

La alcaldesa adelantó que coordinará un viaje a los Estados Unidos para gestionar dos camiones cisterna adicionales.

“Hay mucha necesidad de agua y alimentos, y para mí eso es primordial, antes que cualquier cosa material”, enfatizó la ejecutiva municipal.

Por su parte, el Comisionado de Seguridad del municipio, Francisco Rosado Correa, explicó que el ayuntamiento está en la etapa de recuperación y remoción de escombros. Del mismo modo, añadió que esperan identificar varias escuelas que puedan servir como centros de distribución.

“Estamos llevándole alimento y agua a la comunidad como prioridad. Una vez logremos estabilizar el problema del alimento y el agua, vamos a establecer unos centros de distribución, posiblemente vamos a utilizar escuelas en los distintos barrios para poder llevar la comida y el agua. Por ahora lo estaremos llevando directamente a las casas”, sostuvo Rosado Correa.

A más de 20 días del paso del temporal por Puerto Rico, las comunidades Vaga, Pasto y San Lorenzo permanecen incomunicadas debido al colapso del puente que daba paso a Morovis. El único acceso, actualmente, es a través del municipio vecino de Orocovis.

“Lo que nos tomaba 15 minutos, ahora nos está tomando casi hora y cuarto. A esos barrios estamos llevando doctores, transportación a pacientes que tienen algún tipo de condición como diálisis o personas que reciben algún tipo de tratamiento”, dijo Rosado.

La petición del ayuntamiento es que el gobierno central coordine la instalación de un puente provisional para restablecer el acceso a dichas comunidades.

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### **Más De La Mitad Del País Tiene Agua**

By Yaritza Rivera Clemente

[El Vocero de Puerto Rico](#), October 7, 2017

El gobernador Ricardo Rosselló informó que 695 mil clientes cuentan con el servicio de agua, lo que equivale al 55.5% de los abonados, mientras que solo un 10.7% de la población está conectado al sistema de energía eléctrica.

Según la Autoridad de Acueductos y Alcantarillados (AAA), el servicio por zonas se encuentra en 64% para el área metro, 69% para el oeste, 69% para el sur y 63% para el este. El norte cuenta con un 28% de servicio.

También se informó que los generadores eléctricos en la represa de Carraízo están en funcionamiento lo que permitió restablecer el servicio en la urbanización Fairview y el barrio Saint Just de Trujillo Alto, para añadir 12 mil nuevos clientes.

“Reconocemos que muchos clientes no están recibiendo los servicios de agua y luz por lo que he ordenado a las dos corporaciones públicas a detener el envío de facturas. A las personas que se les haya enviado facturas por periodos en los que no tuvo el servicio, no tendrán que pagarlo y no se le discontinuará el servicio. Una vez tengamos los servicios de medición operacionales solo se le cobrará la tarifa de consumo a los clientes que hayan recibido servicios”, dijo Rosselló.

Respecto a la situación en la represa Guajataca, Rosselló indicó que aún se encuentra en “estado crítico”, y mencionó que el Cuerpo de Ingenieros y el Departamento de Defensa de Estados Unidos laboran para establecer en el lugar barreras de concreto para mitigar cualquier emergencia. Recalcó que esa iniciativa busca prevenir el impacto que pudieran tener las lluvias que se esperan en la zona noroeste en los próximos días.

Por su parte, el director ejecutivo de la Autoridad de Energía Eléctrica (AEE), Ricardo Ramos, informó que se está trabajando para energizar la represa de La Plata. Señaló que los trabajos se interrumpieron el jueves por causa de los rayos que acompañaron la intensa lluvia que cayó en la tarde. Espera que la represa pueda entrar en funciones este fin de semana.

Aumentan las muertes

De otro lado, el primer ejecutivo confirmó que con dos muertes reportadas en los municipios de Patillas y San Germán aumentó a 36 el número de víctimas fatales relacionado al huracán.

En el caso de Patillas, se informó que se trata de una persona que fue encontrada entre escombros, y en San Germán, otra que presuntamente fue golpeada por un árbol.

Rosselló dijo que espera tener un cuadro más claro sobre las muertes vinculadas al potente ciclón y mencionó que el director del Departamento de Seguridad Pública, Héctor Pesquera, está a cargo de recabar la información a las agencias pertinentes.

Además, se comunicó que la Agencia Federal para el Manejo de Emergencias (Fema, por sus siglas en inglés) entregó ayer 160,259 litros de agua y 262,800 comidas de los Centros de Distribución.

De igual forma, se dijo que se le suplió combustible a once instalaciones médicas. Se esperaba que ayer se entregaran más camiones de combustible a otros municipios y se espera llegar con igual ayuda a Vieques y a Culebra.

De otro lado, la Junta Reglamentadora de Telecomunicaciones notificó que 42% de los clientes cuentan con servicio celular. Debido a un corte de fibra en Ponce, se afectaron 70,000 abonados.

Hay 14 Cell on Wings (COW) de AT&T instalados; cada uno tiene cobertura de servicios de un radio de 3 millas y permite hacer llamadas y enviar mensajes de texto desde los celulares. El COW de Arecibo tiene una cobertura de servicio de 4 millas.

Pagan horas extras a Policía

La Policía de Puerto Rico recibió por medio de FEMA \$950,000 para el pago de horas extras trabajadas durante el huracán Irma y ya se hizo la solicitud de las primeras dos semanas de María.

Además, se restableció el servicio de la red de radio central para Arecibo, Mayagüez y Aguadilla, además del servicio con el que ya cuenta San Juan, Bayamón, Carolina y Caguas. Las demás regiones tienen comunicaciones a nivel regional.

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## **Bajo Lupa La Distribución De Agua Y Alimentos**

By Laura M. Quintero

[El Vocero de Puerto Rico](#), October 9, 2017

El gobernador Ricardo Rosselló informó ayer que ante las continuas querellas de que el agua y la comida no llegan a los sectores en necesidad, ha solicitado a la Fiscalía federal y al Departamento de Justicia realizar una investigación que permita identificar cuáles son los problemas de distribución.

“Hemos decidido tomar una serie de acciones para evitar el mal manejo de la comida... He ordenado a la Guardia Nacional que vaya a los municipios y esté observando y participando en la distribución de los alimentos que están llevando”, comentó en relación a las ayudas de la Agencia Federal para el Manejo de Emergencias (FEMA), la Oficina de la Primera Dama y de otras entidades a los damnificados del huracán María.

La determinación del gobernador surge luego de denuncias de que empleados gubernamentales se estaban apropiando de los suministros, según la vicepresidenta de la Asociación de Productos de Puerto Rico, Marilú Otero. Reclamos similares hizo el pastor Jorge Raschke, quien se topó con que habían robado en los muelles parte de la ayuda traída por Pentecostales Unidos por Puerto Rico.

Rosselló pidió que se investiguen las querellas “para ver si en efecto es una cuestión de mal manejo y si en efecto se ha hecho algo de manera equívocada, consideren todo el procesamiento de la ley”.

Algunos municipios como Cayey se movieron a crear estructuras de base comunitaria para identificar a encamados, niños o personas con necesidades de salud a ser atendidos con prioridad, de modo que la propia comunidad se apodere de la recuperación. El alcalde cayeyano, Rolando Ortiz, informó que se distribuirá el agua y los alimentos de acuerdo con ese censo comunitario y se organizarán también comedores comunitarios.

“Le planteé al gobernador que para nosotros enfrentar una crisis, necesitamos una estructura local con autoridad”, contó el también presidente de la Asociación de Alcaldes a EL VOCERO.

En la calle los auditores

Por otro lado, los agentes de auditoría fiscal del Departamento de Hacienda y auditores de la Oficina del Contralor estarán contabilizando y monitoreando “todo lo que se está entregando” en los municipios. El secretario de Hacienda, Raúl Maldonado, comentó a este diario que entre ambas entidades hay 500 agentes disponibles para esta tarea.

Abordado sobre por qué demoró tanto el gobierno en establecer este sistema, Maldonado mencionó que la distribución estaba en manos de los municipios. “Los alcaldes tenían un sistema interno de finanzas, lo que pasa es que con la destrucción que hubo se les hizo bien difícil y queremos darles un apoyo adicional”, contestó.

El gobernador reconoció, además, que se han recibido querellas de comercios que han estado cobrando el Impuesto sobre Ventas y Uso (IVU) y gasolineras que han desobedecido la orden de congelación del margen de ganancias del Departamento de Asuntos del Consumidor (DACO).

El secretario del DACO, Michael Pierluisi, confirmó a la prensa que recibirá empleados de otras agencias que se capacitarán para salir a la calle a inspeccionar el cumplimiento con las órdenes administrativas de congelación de precios. Las multas oscilarán entre \$5,000 a \$10,000 por cada transacción ilegal.

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### **A Quince Días De María**

[El Vocero de Puerto Rico](#), October 6, 2017

Sin lugar a dudas el huracán María ha dejado una huella dolorosa en Puerto Rico. Su furia nos golpeó de una manera tan violenta que nos deja en ascuas de cara a nuestro futuro.

Definitivamente, ni nosotros, ni nadie, podía estar 100% preparado para un desastre de esta magnitud.

Las acciones del gobierno previas al paso del huracán fueron puntuales para evitar mayor cantidad de muertes.

Las autoridades locales movieron sus limitados recursos bastante rápido luego del paso del fenómeno atmosférico y lograron abrir accesos en una buena parte de la Isla.

Pero la respuesta de la Agencia Federal para el Manejo de Emergencias (FEMA) y de otras instituciones federales desafortunadamente no fue, ni es, tan rápida como se necesitaba.

Entendemos que ser una isla complica mucho el panorama, pero no justifica la dilación en las entregas de suministros, como agua y alimentos, y tampoco en la entrega de los famosos toldos azules para proteger las casas que perdieron sus techos.

No nos malinterpreten; agradecemos la ayuda de FEMA y otras agencias federales, pero debe acelerarse el proceso, sobre todo en la montaña.

Aunque vivimos una era digital, en que las comunicaciones son más rápidas y el Internet se convierte en un aliado para apoyar las soluciones, no nos sirve de nada cuando no hay energía eléctrica, y parte del proceso burocrático para coordinar las ayudas ha descansado en la herramienta digital, probablemente convirtiendo el proceso en uno más lento.

Ya han pasado dos semanas y al día de ayer teníamos muchos signos positivos.

El Aeropuerto Internacional Luis Muñoz Marín está abierto en un 100%, lo que facilitará el movimiento de pasajeros varados aquí, la llegada de más personal de apoyo y el reencuentro de familias.

Las estaciones de gasolina continúan operando con bastante normalidad y, al día de ayer, casi 900 de estos establecimientos estaban abiertos.

Hay 64 hospitales en funciones y ya 25 de ellos están operando con energía suplida por la Autoridad de Energía Eléctrica (AEE).

En cuanto a los bancos, las sucursales abiertas superaban las 175 y los cajeros automáticos o ATM están operando en un 79%.

El agua del sistema de la Autoridad de Acueductos y Alcantarillados (AAA) continúa fluyendo a buen ritmo desde hace días, alcanzando ya el 55% de la Isla.

Las señales celulares también reportan una mejoría significativa, alcanzando ya en la Isla un 45% de los clientes.

Desafortunadamente, la energía eléctrica todavía sigue siendo el talón de Aquiles del proceso de recuperación, pero debemos recordar que el sistema ya se encontraba frágil antes de María. Casi un 10% de los clientes de la AEE está recibiendo electricidad.

Todo esto lo vemos como señales positivas que deben empezar a generar más esperanza en la ruta hacia la nueva normalidad.

El presidente Donald Trump estuvo en visita oficial de cuatro horas en Puerto Rico y pudo comprobar que realmente somos una zona de desastre. Mientras él cumplía con sus compromisos, su equipo se reunió con el gobernador y tuvieron la oportunidad de discutir en profundidad la crisis energética.

La visita programada durante el día de hoy del vicepresidente de Estados Unidos, Mike Pence, puede ser quizás un indicio de que, aparte de los \$29,000 millones solicitados para los afectados por los huracanes Irma, María y Harvey en distintas jurisdicciones, puedan recibirse otras ayudas y más apoyo del gobierno federal.

Y realmente necesitamos que sea revisada la situación de Puerto Rico porque, de acuerdo con los estimados preliminares, entre los daños directos y el impacto en la actividad económica, de una forma u otra las pérdidas ascienden a más de \$95,000 millones.

La mejoría es lenta, pero constante, y por ello debemos mirar el futuro con esperanza.

Lo que sí tiene que cambiar radicalmente es el apoyo a las comunidades más impactadas, sobre todo las de la zona montañosa.

Hacemos un llamado a los directivos de FEMA para que agilicen la entrega de agua, provisiones y toldos a esta parte de la población.

A quince días del impacto de María podríamos estar mejor, sin lugar a dudas, si los recursos se asignan y manejan con mayor prontitud.

También ayudaría mucho a que estemos mejor si todos, como ciudadanos, ejercemos la paciencia y elevamos la vara de la tolerancia en medio de una de las crisis económicas y sociales más difíciles de nuestra historia.

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## **OPINION**

**Christie Was Right Not To Allow Building On Flood-Prone Areas. Why The Change? | Opinion**

By John A. Miller and Samantha Medlock  
Star-Ledger, October 9, 2017

For over a month, many of us have been riveted to the Weather Channel and news outlets, watching the heroic rescue efforts in Texas during Hurricane Harvey, as well as the massive evacuation of Florida and devastating impacts of Hurricane Irma on that state and the Leeward Islands, plus the outright devastation of Puerto Rico and other Caribbean Islands by Hurricane Maria.

It's been a stark reminder that New Jersey has its own vulnerabilities, with hundreds of thousands of residents living in areas that are prone to flooding and at risk from severe storms and sea level rise.

But instead of working to make us safer, the Christie administration is rushing to adopt rule changes that will put more of the state's people and businesses and infrastructure in harm's way.

In 2013, Gov. Chris Christie wisely vetoed legislation that would allow new residential and commercial development to occur in our state's coastal high hazard areas on piers or platforms over oceans or rivers.

Developers were pressuring to build in Atlantic City and along the Hudson River Waterfront, and the governor rightly prevented such high risk development from occurring in these flood-prone areas. Not only would such risky new development endanger the people and property perched over waterways, but it would put first responders in harm's way. And even if developers factor in the cost of private flood insurance under today's prices -- and find buyers who are willing and able to pay them -- those insurance costs will likely increase over time.

Now in its final months, the administration seems to have flip-flopped, and the Department of Environmental Protection has proposed altering the rules to allow developers to build in the places that are most exposed to the threats of the new powerful storms that our future certainly holds.

The proposed rule amendments fail to make mention of climate change or sea level rise, an omission that should be considered a slap in the face to the New Jerseyans already dealing with chronic flooding during high tides. New Jersey's coast is likely to experience up to two feet of sea level rise by 2050. And towns along the shore are already experiencing nuisance (really chronic) flooding - climate change effects are already here.

### Risking Human Lives

Perhaps of most concern is that residential and retail buildings built out over the water will put first responders' lives at risk. We have seen in recent days the valor and courage of those in Texas, Florida, and the Caribbean who have worked so hard to secure others' safety, including many who defied evacuation orders. New Jersey's coastal high hazard area is the area of greatest risk and defined by three foot and greater waves during a storm event - conditions that are sure to make rescue efforts difficult and potentially deadly. There is no way to know where the pier or platform ends when it is under several feet of turbulent water. And as many who called for



rescue in the recent storms learned the hard way, emergency services may not be available during the worst of the storm.

This means that the occupants of new homes built on piers could have to ride out future storms on their own, likely without electricity, drinkable water, communications, or emergency assistance. When rescue becomes available after the storm has passed, it will still be risky to first responders and residents and extremely costly to public budgets. Further, we know all too well from Hurricanes Sandy and Harvey that floodwaters are often contaminated and contact can lead to sickness. We need to reduce disaster risks and costs, not needlessly and wastefully increase vulnerability in new construction.

### Risking Property

The National Flood Insurance Program (NFIP) operates as a quid pro quo, making federally-backed flood insurance available in communities that agree to manage development against the risk of flooding. From 1978 to August 2017, New Jersey had the third-highest payouts from the federal program, amounting to nearly \$6 billion, including claims from Hurricane Sandy. Development on waterway sites would jeopardize the ability of homeowners and business owners to insure their assets from future storm or flooding damage. Under federal law, the availability of flood insurance under the NFIP is contingent upon land use control measures coupled with consistent enforcement.

If a municipality were to approve this type of development, they would be in danger of being removed from the NFIP. Anyone in the town looking to purchase flood insurance, including businesses, residents, or the municipality itself, could find themselves unable to do access federally-backed flood insurance through the NFIP. As Governor Christie himself noted when he rejected the idea in 2013, allowing such risky development endangers policyholders' access to federally-backed flood insurance as well as the community's standing under the NFIP. New Jerseyans who do not live in floodplains will be affected, too: If a community is kicked out of the NFIP for failing to adequately manage floodplain development, then every family and business throughout the community becomes ineligible for certain forms of federal assistance in a presidentially declared disaster.

### Risking Economic Prosperity

As a laboratory for innovation, New Jersey should be working to understand the nature of the risk it faces, and what kinds of steps are needed to assure it will remain a safe, vibrant and inclusive place and better prepared for the natural disaster risks it is likely to face in the future. The state should work to attract investment in sustainable and strong new projects that provide the housing, infrastructure, and workplaces of the future. These must be properly sited and designed to last their full expected life, using modern planning and building codes, taking into account sea-level rise, extreme precipitation, and storm-surge impacts. New Jersey's leaders need to learn what storms like Sandy, Harvey, and Irma have to teach, to position the state to compete for new commercial investment driven by access to an educated, vibrant, and resilient workforce.

The comment period for the proposed changes to the rules ended September 15. Both gubernatorial candidates should call for an extension of the comment period and seek additional input from voters on this risky scheme, especially in light of Hurricanes Harvey, Irma and Maria and future storms that may hit on his or her watch.

*John A. Miller, P.E., CFM, CSM, of Lamberville is a water resources engineer and a United States Senate fellow.*

*Samantha Medlock, CFM, of Alexandria, Virginia, is a former senior adviser for preparedness and resilience in the Obama White House.*

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END

<b>From:</b>	FEMA-ESF15-Coordination </O=EXCHANGELABS/OU=EXCHANGE ADMINISTRATIVE GROUP (FYDIBOHF23SPDLT)/CN=RECIPIENTS/CN=1684F0A97D524A068FB7B08BF23014BE-FEMA-ESF15->
<b>Subject:</b>	FEMA: Daily Media Monitoring Report DR 4335/4340 VI 10.8.17
<b>Date:</b>	2017/10/08 09:20:29
<b>Priority:</b>	Normal
<b>Type:</b>	Note

Below is the media monitoring report dated today, October 8, 2017, for DR 4335/4340 VI.

## Media Monitoring Report

### October 8, 2017

#### FEMA Region 2

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

**Holiday Message.** *In observance of Columbus Day, we will not publish on Monday, October 9, 2017. Service will resume Tuesday, October 10, 2017. We wish our readers a safe holiday.*

### HEADLINES

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##### **Residents Losing Hope In Puerto Rico (VIDEO)**

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##### **Minus Electrical Grid, Puerto Rico Becomes Generator Island**

By Richard Fausset, Frances Robles and Deborah Acosta

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## **‘We’ll Give You Whatever We Have:’ How Organizations Are Fighting to Bring Relief to Puerto Rico**

By Jen Kirby

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## **Flood Insurance Reform Front Unusually Quiet Despite Major Storms**

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By Patricia A. Miller

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By Wale Aliyu

[NBCNewYork.com](http://NBCNewYork.com), October 7, 2017

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By Jerry DeMarco

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## **Construction Firm Owner Charged With Pocketing \$75K Meant For Sandy Repairs**

By Lauren Carroll

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### **HURRICANE SEASON**

## **Hurricane Nate Makes Landfall At Mouth Of Mississippi River**

[The Associated Press](http://TheAssociatedPress.com), October 7, 2017

### **OPINION**

## **In Puerto Rico, Realities Clash As Locals Piece New Lives Together**

By Bianca Padró Ocasio

[Orlando Sentinel](http://OrlandoSentinel.com), October 7, 2017

## **STORIES**

### **HURRICANE MARIA PUERTO RICO**

## **Weeks Later, 90% Of Puerto Ricans Still Without Power**

[Gulf Times](http://GulfTimes.com), October 8, 2017

About 90% of Puerto Rico was still without power on Friday, more than two weeks after Hurricane Maria raked across the island, according to the US Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA).

The hobbled power grid on the US territory has meant many businesses, hospitals and public facilities are resorting to generators, including 27 installed by FEMA personnel, to create electricity for their operations.

About 40% of the island has access to wired or wireless communication services, and about half the 3.4mn residents have drinking water, FEMA said.

The agency said it has about 800 personnel on the ground in Puerto Rico and the US Virgin Islands working on hurricane recovery operations.

The US territories were among the Caribbean islands badly affected by Hurricanes Maria and Irma.

The agency provided the update on recovery efforts as Puerto Rico Governor Ricardo Rossello announced that the number of deaths caused by the hurricane had risen by two to 36 and as US Vice-President Mike Pence headed to Puerto Rico and the island of St Croix in the US Virgin Islands to assess hurricane damage.

Pence met Governor Kenneth Mapp of the US Virgin Islands after arriving at St Croix. He was to visit churches and take a tour of the Virgin Islands by helicopter.

Pence also met Lieutenant General Buchanan, who is heading the US recovery efforts. The briefing was mostly behind closed doors.

They spoke to reporters seated at a table with about a dozen other officials.

In Puerto Rico the vice-president spoke individually to several people, including at least one who told him he was angry with the response.

Asked about that interaction, Pence said: “The devastation here in Puerto Rico has been historic. We understand the frustration when you think of the magnitude of the loss, the impact on the families, the loss of life.”

He said his message was the same one President Donald Trump delivered earlier this week, which is the US is “here for the long haul”.

The Department of Defence said on Friday that more than 11,000 department personnel are working to restore resources to Puerto Rico.

The FEMA and military personnel are part of 15,000 US federal employees on the island to work on the recovery effort.

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## **Residents Losing Hope In Puerto Rico (VIDEO)**

By Nick Valencia

[CNN](#), October 7, 2017

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## **Senators Pledge to Support Long-Term Rebuilding of Puerto Rico**

By Ezra Fieser

[Bloomberg](#), 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.

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## **Minus Electrical Grid, Puerto Rico Becomes Generator Island**

By Richard Fausset, Frances Robles and Deborah Acosta

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

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

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

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

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

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

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



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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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## **‘We’ll Give You Whatever We Have:’ How Organizations Are Fighting to Bring Relief to Puerto Rico**

By Jen Kirby

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

The sixth-floor windows wouldn’t hold in the winds, they knew. So the doctors and staff at the University Pediatric Hospital in San Juan moved the entire neonatal intensive-care unit, the NICU, down three floors as Hurricane Maria closed in. The predicted damage came. Windows cracked, water poured in. The air-conditioning units blew away.

The entire hospital is now relying on one cooling tower. There was no running water for the first week; the dialysis machines had to be lugged to the adult hospital next door. All 12 elevators went out. The hospital relied on generators until electricity came back, last Wednesday. Only two elevators work now. The NICU, and its tiny, vulnerable patients, remain on the third floor, divided up among 20 rooms on the general pediatric ward.

“We’re in San Juan. We’re the medical center in Puerto Rico,” Marta Suarez, a pediatric nephrologist told Daily Intelligencer, of the University Pediatric Hospital. “So you wonder how are other hospitals are being helped.”

Suarez’s facility is the only public pediatric hospital on the island. It has the largest NICU, and handles the most complicated medical cases. The most vulnerable are referred here. But now Suarez and her co-workers are dealing with the dual challenge of providing care to patients, while supporting other medical centers across the island. Many of those facilities are even more cut off, even more desperate for basic items, from insulin to IV fluids to gauze. “I think for people to understand what is going on is to imagine being thrown back 100 years,” she said. “All the progress we’ve had in medical care, you’ve been thrown back 100 years.”

Those crisis conditions are made worse by what is essentially a logistical nightmare. About 90 percent of the island is still without electricity, and only about a quarter of cell-phone towers are back online. Gas is flowing again to 74 percent of gas stations, according to FEMA, but roads are still badly damaged, complicating travel and aid delivery. And the University Pediatric Hospital is just one of dozens of organizations, large and small, battling these enormous obstacles.

“Our speciality is working on really tough challenges globally, we’re in 40-plus countries. We’re in South Sudan, Syria, places that are a little bit more well known for being logistical challenges,” Christy Delafield, senior global communications manager with Mercy Corps, which made the rare decision of getting involved in Puerto Rico a week ago. “But the scale of this disaster is monumental. Three million plus people in Puerto Rico, and everybody was impacted in some way.”

It was “the great equalizer,” said Michael Fernández, who works for a local community organization Caras, describing Maria. “I’m quoting a friend of mine,” he said, “‘but ‘it doesn’t matter if you’re rich or poor ... everybody has been affected.’” Even big companies and businesses that would normally donate resources, and spearhead efforts, he said, were knocked down. “There wasn’t one corner of Puerto Rico that wasn’t hit hard.”

Fernández said communication has been the biggest challenge to any aid efforts. He and his colleagues have a platform, Connect Relief, which tracks which communities need what — clean water, for example — so organizations or individuals can donate directly. But coordination is intensely difficult without good cell or internet service. There’s the worry that organizations will duplicate efforts — delivering, say, two truckloads of food but no batteries. Fernández said it represents a broader lack of coordination among the government of Puerto Rico, local municipalities, and bigger aid groups. Smaller organizations like Caras know their communities, they know who lives where, and who needs what, but their expertise hasn’t been utilized as much as he’d hoped. “There would be less people hungry and thirsty,” he said.

Mercy Corps’ small team on the ground is cooperating with local groups for that exact reason. “These challenges exist on such a massive scale that it just slows everything down,” Delafield said. “Even with the best of intentions, even with people working around clock.” The frustration is justifiable, she added. You can’t just pick up the phone and call someone. Radios are broadcasting notices to visit this website, or download this app for assistance — something that’s

impossible without internet or phone service. Her team is equipped with satellite phones, but they do little good when the people they need to reach do not. “You don’t have any way to call the truck that’s on the road,” she said.

Spotty service and dead phone lines mean sometimes the only way to survey the crisis is getting in the car — especially now that the immediate gas crisis has eased. Suarez said one of her pediatric residents drove around to doctors and clinics asking what they need. “Doctors are saying, ‘I need this, I need that,’” Suarez said. “So you’re trying to help as many people as you can. It’s a little bit overwhelming.” Suarez said they’re trying to deliver everything from sterile gloves to ointments to antibiotics. Many pharmacies can’t process insurance payments, and people lack cash, so Puerto Ricans are flocking to hospitals to get their daily treatments. Suarez said they distributed vials of insulin to endocrinology clinics; people have no way to refrigerate supplies. “‘We’ll give you whatever we have,’” Suarez said they told doctors. “And that’s what we did.”

But what Suarez and her hospital can give is barely enough. There had been shortages before Maria, too, because of the debt crisis. “We have always been very low on supplies, so we knew coming in that it was going to be a huge crisis,” Suarez said. “We knew we were going to run out of everything that we needed.” Shipments have come in: on Monday after the storm, 100 doses of tetanus vaccine from AmeriCares, needed as people waded through sewage water, cleaning up debris. Another shipment of supplies came in Wednesday from Texas, and were waiting at the airport.

Such shipments of medicine, or food, or fuel, have trickled out faster after days of being stuck at the ports or in airports because of the lack of diesel and truck drivers, and damaged infrastructure. The situation has improved, but Steve Dooley, director of partnerships at the Center for Popular Democracy, said it’s still a struggle to get aid down to Puerto Rico, and there’s a backlog of deliveries once it arrives, especially because of the unreliable roads. “There’s people who have storage units full in Boston, church-fulls and storefronts-full in New York,” he said. “People who have two warehouses full of donated things in Miami.”

After weighing the options, Dooley said his organization decided to hop on the commercial flights — still operating on a reduced schedule — down to Puerto Rico and deliver the supplies directly. Dooley and six others took a Delta flight from JFK to San Juan on Wednesday, stuffing three bags each full of saltines, cans of tuna fish, mosquito spray, and baby sunscreen. They also carried thousands in cash, with plans to distribute it all through a grassroots relief effort they’ve been working with in San Juan. Their departure date is still unknown — it will depend if they can charter out a flight.

Roadways are still blocked off, or destroyed down to a single lane. The radio is still the best way to get the news. But aid efforts are visibly paying off, if slowly. More people have generators, the gas lines have shortened. “We adapt and go forward, adapt and go forward, adapt and go forward,” Fernández said.

Yet against the backdrop of this aid, the question of the United States’ government response hangs over the whole crisis. There are more than 13,000 federal staff and 800 FEMA workers on

the ground in Puerto Rico and the U.S. Virgin Islands, though the administration has received criticism for what has been perceived as a slow response to an overwhelming crisis. Like Mercy Corps, Oxfam International also made the unusual move to intervene in a U.S. natural disaster, something it hasn't done since Katrina, though the organization already had a presence in rural parts of Mississippi and Alabama at that time, said Scott Paul, the humanitarian policy lead with Oxfam International. "Oxfam is an international organization that tends to respond when systems are overwhelmed," Paul said. "In the United States, we don't ordinarily have to do that," he said. Despite this, as the crisis unfolded in Puerto Rico and the federal government's response didn't appear to match the overwhelming need, "it became clear the added capacity was needed."

Suarez said FEMA workers visited the hospital for the first time Wednesday, though the Navy had visited and assessed the hospital in the initial days after the hurricane hit. "They [FEMA] brought satellite phones," Suarez said. "We're like, 'we don't really need that. We have phones. Give that to the rest of the island.'"

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## **HURRICANE MARIA USVI**

### **Paperwork Hassles Frustrate Some Trying to Bring Generators into USVI**

By Marina Leonard and Bill Kossler

[St. Thomas Source](#), October 7, 2017

With power restored to only 22 percent of St. Thomas and 12 percent of St. Croix, private generators are in high demand, but paperwork hassles are frustrating some who are spending good money to bring more into the territory.

Asked about the delays, Gov. Kenneth Mapp said at his Friday evening news conference that officials should only ask for extra documentation if a person wanted an exemption from excise taxes or customs duties.

Reader Jeff Saplis of Sea Glass Properties told the Source he started sourcing and shipping in generators after Hurricane Irma and got in a dozen without difficulty a week ago. But Saplis said this week he found himself struggling all week to get another 10 generators cleared through the ports.

Asked what he was doing with the generators, Saplis said he was donating many of them and selling others at cost, depending on the level of need and ability to pay.

He sent representatives to St. Thomas Cargo three times to try to pick up the generators.

"The second time they went, they called me from there and said I needed a letter with the names and contact information for everyone that would be receiving one of the generators. And that it needed to be notarized," Saplis said Friday.

He spent a day getting that information, found a notary and had it notarized. But that did not resolve the issue right away.

“So we went back Thursday and according to St. Thomas Cargo, the woman at Excise said they need to get their in-house counsel to see if it was acceptable,” Saplis said.

According to Saplis, he went back a final time on Friday, and was told he had to pay excise taxes of \$700 on the 10 generators, then another \$600 in customs duties, before he could take them.

Because of his frustration with the difficulty, lack of clarity and slow process, he canceled a subsequent order for more generators Saplis said.

But at his news conference, Mapp said the extra paperwork is necessary only if you are seeking an exemption from the excise tax and Customs duties, and if you pay the tax, no extra paperwork should be requested by V.I. officials, Mapp said.

“When you bring merchandise into the territory, we don’t ask who’s going to be buy your merchandise,” Mapp said.

However, merchandise that is donated is treated differently than merchandise which is to be given away for free. Only those generators that are to be donated require a notarized document verifying where those generators will be going before they can be released by customs, according to Mapp.

He said the reason for this documentation is because any items that are to be donated have specific exemptions when it comes to excise tax and customs fees and there needs to be an attested document in order to avoid fraud as to these exemptions.

However, those generators and other merchandise which are to be sold do not require any such documentation but do require excise tax and customs fees to be paid.

Mapp said if anyone is importing generators for sale and is asked for additional documentation as to where the generators are to be going after they have cleared customs, that individual should contact Internal Revenue Bureau Director Marvin Pickering, as this practice of requiring those selling merchandise to attest as to where the merchandise is going is not a legal practice.

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## **Bureau Of Motor Vehicles Officers Suffer Severe Damage**

[Virgin Islands Consortium](#), October 7, 2017

ST. THOMAS — The St. Thomas and St. Croix offices of the Bureau of Motor Vehicles (BMV) suffered severe storm damage as a result of last month’s hurricanes, BMV Director Lawrence Olive has reported, according to a Government House release issued Saturday. He noted that the office on St. John is in much better shape, but currently lacks the infrastructure necessary to provide services.

Mr. Olive, who has been working to keep the public informed via regular radio reports, said BMV is unable to process driver’s licenses at this time and that the Bureau of Information Technology was working to restore the bureau’s computer system.

“I have advised the American Association of Motor Vehicles Administrators about the severity of the damage to our offices here and I have requested that they assist Virgin Islanders who may be relocating to other states with a recently expired license,” Mr. Olive said. “Our local law enforcement is also obviously aware of the problems we are experiencing.”

The St. Croix office at the Patrick Sweeney Complex will be open from 10 a.m. to 2 p.m. beginning Tuesday, October 10, with the goal of processing 40 registrations per day. Vehicle registrations and transfers can be processed without the online system, Mr. Olive said. Only cash payments can be taken until internet service is restored. The St. Thomas facilities in Sub Base suffered the worst damage.

“We are working to clean up and repair a section of the building that we can operate from temporarily,” the director said. “We expect to make an announcement next week.”

Phone service is currently down at all three BMV offices.

“I thank the public for their understanding and my staff for their efforts under these difficult conditions,” Mr. Olive concluded.

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## **RTPark is Damaged, But Still Committed to Economic Development**

By Marina Leonard

[St. Thomas Source](#), October 7, 2017

The Research and Technology Park building on St. Croix was the multimillion dollar jewel of the University of the Virgin Islands St. Croix campus. It won the “LEED Silver Certification” from the Green Building Certification Institute for being energy efficient and environmentally friendly. But even that distinction did not protect the building from the wrath of Hurricane Maria on Sept. 20.

The building suffered interior and exterior damage, including damage to the winged roof, and it looks very different today from the innovative building that all visitors are used to viewing on UVI’s campus.

The building was designed to have sustainable site development, water savings and energy efficiency. The goal was to be as efficient as possible in areas of human and environmental health. The “green” certification the building received from the Leadership in Energy and Environmental Design overseen by the U.S. Green Building Council, however, did not protect it from high utility bills, which was only one of the issues with the innovative construction.

Thursday, the staff of the RTPark issued a press release saying that it would conduct a structural and safety assessment to determine the impact of Hurricane Maria on the building.

In the meantime, RTPark staff will continue to promote their economic development program. Many of their tenants and clients are telecommunication companies that do not physically reside



in the building but remain paying tenants and clients, and they receive tax breaks based on the economic development program.

Spokesperson Felicia Persaud said the clients are “not dependent on a brick and mortar building.”

According to Persaud, not one client of RTPark plans to leave due to the damage done to the building, and even more perspective clients are proceeding with their applications.

RTPark will soon launch RTPark Rebuilding the USVI, a campaign to support the Fund for the Virgin Islands.

In addition, the UVI College of Science and Mathematics used the building for science and math classes, and the RTPark will determine when those classes can resume.

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## **Duncan Distributing Food Sunday in Frederiksted**

[St. Thomas Source](#), October 7, 2017

NBA superstar and St Croix native Tim Duncan will return to his roots Sunday, distributing food in Frederiksted.

According to a texted news release from Rashidi Clenance, Duncan will be distributing 130,000 pounds of food from 10 a.m. to 3 p.m. Sunday.

The dsitribution will take place at the Midre Cummings Park in Frederiksted.

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## **Schools in Both Districts to Open on October 10, 12 or 16**

[St. Thomas Source](#), October 7, 2017

St. Thomas-St. John District

The Virgin Islands Department of Education (VIDOE) St. Thomas – St. John District will open its 2017-18 school year on Tuesday, Oct. 10. Due to some facilities requiring extensive repair work, only 10 schools will be ready to receive students on Tuesday; however, by Oct. 16, all schools declared operational in the district will be open for instruction.

While all schools have sustained hurricane-related damage, the DOE has condemned two: Addelita Cancryn Junior High and Emanuel Benjamin Oliver Elementary Schools. The Gladys

Abraham Elementary School, although not condemned, will not be operational this school year; therefore, schools in the district will assume regular and split session schedules.

The district's Curriculum Center and receiving warehouse were severely damaged during the hurricane, and the industrial freezer that housed frozen foods for the school lunch program was also destroyed. DOE has secured refrigerated containers that will store frozen foods as a replenishment supply arrives in the district. Abbreviated meals will be served during the first week of school.

For breakfast, students can expect tuna or peanut butter and jelly sandwiches. Meals Ready to Eat (MREs) from the Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA) will be provided for lunch. Students are welcome to bring their own lunch. Emergency drinking water will also be provided. Hot meals will begin on Oct. 16.

Results of a test drive conducted by the Water and Power Authority (WAPA), the Department of Public Works, School Bus Inc., and the district's Pupil Transportation Division determined that the normal school bus routes can and will remain the same. Buses will begin traveling on their scheduled routes for morning and regular session schools at 6:15 a.m. Those schools include Bertha C. Boschulte Middle, Ivanna Eudora Kean High, Ulla F. Muller Elementary, Leonard Dober Elementary, Lockhart Elementary, Yvonne Milliner-Bowsky Elementary and Addelita Cancryn Junior High.

Buses will begin pick-up of students attending afternoon session schools at 10:15 a.m. These schools are Gladys Abraham Elementary, E. Benjamin Oliver Elementary and Charlotte Amalie High. Additional buses will be added to pick up students at Kirwan Terrace, Estate Tutu and Hidden Valley.

Education officials have been working with FEMA, the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers and other local and federal partners to get school facilities up and running in the territory following Hurricanes Irma and Maria. School restoration efforts include ensuring each operational school facility has electricity from WAPA and/or generators, running water, debris removal, room sanitation and temporary roof repairs.

#### St. Croix District

The St. Croix District has set a tentative start date for Oct. 16. Similar to the St. Thomas-St. John District, some schools will resume instruction before others. The 2017-18 school year began in the district on Tuesday, Sept. 12 prior to Hurricane Maria's landfall in the territory. Arthur A. Richards Junior High School has since been condemned, and significant damages have been reported at many of the schools.

#### St. Thomas – St. John District 2017-2018 School Year Opening Dates

Location – Start Time/ End Time

October 10

Leonard Dober Elementary — 7:45 a.m./ 2:45 p.m.

Jane E. Tuitt Primary School — 7:50 a.m./ 2:35 p.m.

Joseph Sibilly Elementary — 7:50 a.m./ 2:30 p.m.

Joseph Gomez Elementary — 7:45 a.m./ 2:40 p.m.

Addelita Cancryn Jr. High School — 7:30 a.m./ 11:30 a.m.

Charlotte Amalie H.S. — Noon/4 p.m.

Bertha C. Boschulte Middle School — 7:25 a.m./ 2:25 p.m.

Edith Williams AA — 8 a.m./ 3:10 p.m.

Raphael O. Wheatley Skills Center — 8 a.m./ 3 p.m.

Day Adult Education — 8 a.m./ 3 p.m.

October 12

Ivanna Eudora Kean HS — 7:30 a.m./ 2:50 p.m.

October 16

Julius E. Sprauve School (Grades K – 5) — 8 a.m./ Noon

Julius E. Sprauve School (Grades 6 – 8) — 11 a.m./ 4 p.m.

Ulla F. Muller Elementary — 7:30 a.m./ Noon

Gladys Abraham Elementary — 11:15 a.m./ 4:30 p.m.

Lockhart Elementary — 8 a.m./ 2:45 p.m.

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\*\*The opening of Yvonne Milliner-Bowsky Elementary, merging with the E. Benjamin Oliver Elementary, will be announced.

Schools listed in bold will assume a split session schedule.

Addelita Cancryn Junior High School will conduct student orientations on Tuesday, Oct. 10; grade 7 will report at 8 a.m.; grade 8 will report at 10 a.m. The school will be in full session on Wednesday, Oct. 11.

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## **INSURANCE and LEGAL**

### **Some Still Waiting For Sandy Insurance Claim Repayment As Deadline Approaches**

By Kristin F. Dalton

[Staten Island Advance](#), October 7, 2017

STATEN ISLAND, N.Y. -- As the Oct. 25 deadline for reopened Hurricane Sandy insurance claims quickly approaches, some Staten Islanders are still waiting for payment.

Sandy insurance claims were reopened in 2015 after a CBS "60 Minutes" report exposed engineers working for flood insurance companies under the FEMA-run National Flood Insurance Program (NFIP) had altered damage reports to show little or no damage to homes.

With falsified documents underreporting damage, payouts to people trying to repair their homes were artificially low or rejected altogether.

About 1,200 lawsuits had been filed in U.S. District Court for the Eastern District of New York, with homeowners saying their claims were unfairly denied.

Executives from NFIP promised homeowners fraud-free reexamination of claims and rapid resolution in 90 days.

Former Republican Congressman Michael Grimm, who recently announced his plan to challenge Rep. Daniel Donovan (R-Staten Island/Brooklyn) for his former congressional seat, is calling for a deadline extension.

"The Sandy Claims Review deadline must be pushed to at least Dec. 15 to assure all victims of the storm get hearings they were promised and the money they deserve," Grimm said.

Grimm said the NFIP is "turning their back" on homeowners who have been patiently waiting to be properly paid.

Donovan, however, says that he's working with NFIP toward resolution of all of the outstanding claims.

"As chair of the subcommittee that oversees disaster response, I have been following this issue closely and working with FEMA to ensure the very small group of people affected by this deadline are working toward a resolution," Donovan responded.

A total of 19,449 review requests received results out of the total 19,461 received in the region, according to a spokesman for Donovan's office.

"The opportunity for damage inspection fraud was a major issue with FEMA, which is why it was the focus of one of the first bills I introduced and passed," he said.

In April 2016, Donovan sponsored the Flood Insurance Mitigation and Policyholder Protection Act, his first bill in office.

Donovan's bill passes more than a year after FEMA announced changes to its flood insurance program after fraud allegations.

Donovan's bill requires engineers to provide copies of their reports to homeowners so they can see whether a later version has been altered.

The bill also extends the suit window so that homeowners would have either two years from the date of loss or 90 days after the FEMA appeal concludes, whichever is later.

#### PETITION LAUNCHED

Grimm also set up an online petition for those who are in support of extending the deadline.

"I remember the suffering like it was yesterday. It disturbs me to no end to know so little work has been done in Washington to help the victims of Sandy who, on the five year anniversary of the storm this month, are still suffering," he said.

But Donovan called Grimm's effort to draw attention to the issue unnecessary.

"Shame on Mr. Grimm for unnecessarily alarming people. It's not a coincidence he's trying to create a distraction while people are getting notices for flood insurance increases as a result of bad legislation. It's hard to imagine the bar for shame could go any lower," Donovan said.

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### **Flood Insurance Reform Front Unusually Quiet Despite Major Storms**

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

Weeks after Hurricanes Harvey, Irma and Maria brought devastating floodwaters, it appeared problems with the federally run flood insurance program would be thrust into the spotlight.

After all, Floridian activists have pressed Congress for years to stop a program that would dramatically raise flood insurance rates for residents in older, flood-prone areas that previously got lower, subsidized rates.

Yet, following the hurricanes, that previously vocal front for flood insurance reform is relatively quiet.

That's because the goal posts have changed slightly — again. What was once a Sept. 30 deadline for Congress to renew the National Flood Insurance Program is now pushed back to early December.

“We're in a holding pattern,” said Patty Latshaw, vice president of compliance for Wright National Flood insurance.

The government-run program has long been the dominant way to buy flood insurance. Florida accounts for about 40 percent of its policies. Wright has the highest number of National Flood Insurance Program policy holders of any insurance company in the country, and Pinellas County has the largest amount of properties with subsidized rates in the country.

President Donald Trump signed legislation on Sept. 8 that moved the program's renewal deadline back to Dec. 8, giving more time to local communities that are particularly sensitive to whether flood insurance rates are escalated dramatically or the NFIP doesn't get renewed in time.

One such area is Shore Acres, a low-lying St. Petersburg waterfront community on the east side of Pinellas County. In 2016, Pinellas County Property Appraiser Pam Dubov saw nearly double-digit increases in sales prices for homes in the area. Between 65 and 92 percent of the homes then qualified for subsidized flood insurance rates.

Robin Sollie, head of the Tampa Bay Beaches Chamber of Commerce, said that despite the area flooding even in heavy summer storms, the community did not flood during Hurricane Irma.

And two weeks after the storm, conversation about flood insurance was fairly absent.

“Everyone is focused on mitigating their level of stress and trying to clean up their yard,” Sollie said.

The issue was brought back into the spotlight last year when there was widespread concern over rate hikes after a financial blow — a \$23 billion deficit — the federal program took after Hurricanes Katrina and Sandy.

What will sharpen the conversation is upcoming legislation that will potentially reshape the federal flood insurance program.

While it's too early to tell what the final version of the bill will be, Latshaw hopes it will include a few specific elements.

“Long-term reauthorization is really what's needed in the bill,” she said. That means something that will last around five years.

Simplification of the program is also necessary to help consumers have an easier time acquiring policies.

“Sometimes it can be very daunting purchasing (a flood policy),” Latshaw said.

One current bill attempting to reform the program is HR 2875, which was introduced by Rep. Nydia M. Velázquez, D-N.Y. It outlines a revised appeals process for those with policies through the program who challenge a denied claim, penalizes companies that underpay program claims and expands some of the Federal Emergency Management Agency’s duties under the program.

“After Sandy, we heard from homeowners in New York City and up and down the East Coast who saw their claims denied, delayed or underpaid due to problems in the flood insurance program,” Velázquez said in a statement. “This bipartisan legislation would address these shortcomings and protect policyholders from fraud and abuse.”

The bill also establishes an advisory council that would examine and make recommendations on rates.

A Senate bill introduced in July, SB 1571, would extend the program through Sept. 30, 2023. It requires modernized flood mapping for communities covered by the program, pushes flood-prone communities to create mitigation plans and calls for FEMA to factor in replacement cost value into premiums.

On Thursday, the House passed a bill proposed by Reps. Dennis Ross, R-Lakeland, and Kathy Castor, D-Tampa, that seeks to pave the way for more consumers to take out flood insurance policies from private insurers. Flood coverage is currently is a very small segment of private insurers’ business. HR 3823, the Flood Insurance Market Development Act, calls for the development of a private flood insurance market to lower costs to consumers.

“The recent major flood events across the country have provided a much-needed sense of urgency to our efforts to provide consumers with private sector flood insurance options,” Ross said in a statement.

The proposed bills will be addressed in the upcoming Congress.

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## **PREPAREDNESS**

### **Oyster Creek Passes Latest FEMA Emergency Drill**

By Patricia A. Miller

[Patch.com](#), October 7, 2017

LACEY TOWNSHIP - The Oyster Creek Nuclear Generating Station and a number of county and municipal responders passed a recent emergency drill to test the ability to shut down during a radiological release, according to a report in The Sandpaper.

The Federal Emergency Management Agency reviewed the three-day drill held from Sept. 25 to Sept. 27 and approved the results, said Susan O’Neil of the FEMA Regional Assistance Committee.

Ocean County Office of Emergency Management officials along with 17 municipal offices of emergency management tested their ability to respond to a mock emergency at the Oyster Creek Nuclear Generating Station on Route 9 in Lacey Township.

The simulated drills are held twice a year to evaluate the response of nuclear plant workers and municipal, county and state agencies.

“The Ocean County Office of Emergency Management participates annually in drills that focus on the nuclear power plant,” Ocean County Sheriff Michael G. Mastronardy said. “This year’s exercise will be monitored and reviewed by FEMA. The federal agency will look at the actions taken by the participants and will review it for both efficiencies and any deficiencies they may find.”

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Exelon, the plant's owner, recently asked the federal Nuclear Regulatory Commission to significantly revise the plant's emergency plan a year after it closes in late 2019.

Exelon says the fuel in the plant's spent fuel pool will have cooled enough to "significantly" reduce the risk of a fire in the pool that could release radioactivity into the environment, NRC spokesman Neil R. Sheehan said.

The changes Exelon is asking the NRC for include:

- Ending the 10-mile emergency planning zone around Oyster Creek.
  
- Eliminating emergency sirens in the emergency planning zone.
  
- Eliminating the need for full-scale emergency exercises, which are currently conducted every two years.
  
- A large reduction in emergency response staff
- Ending the dissemination of emergency plan information to the public
- Ending the need for multiple emergency response facilities

If the NRC approves the request, the changes would take place in January of 2021, 12 months after the plant closes, according to an earlier Patch report.

“We will need to thoroughly review the analysis and determine if the company’s assessment of the risks is accurate,” Sheehan said.

Each nuclear plant has a different lifespan, providing distinctive quantities of fuel in the pool, he said.

Oyster Creek is the oldest nuclear plant in the United States. It went online on Dec. 23, 1969.

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## **OTHER NEW YORK NEWS**

### **De Blasio, Black Eyed Peas Urge New Yorkers to Help Puerto Rico, U.S. Virgin Islands in Wake of Devastating Hurricane**

By Wale Aliyu

[NBCNewYork.com](http://NBCNewYork.com), October 7, 2017

Even though Hurricane Maria hit the Caribbean weeks ago, islands there continue to struggle in a crisis left by the powerful storm.

Mayor Bill de Blasio and members of the music group Black Eyed Peas were at FDNY EMS Station 26 in the Bronx Saturday urging New Yorkers to get involved in the relief response by donating essentials like batteries, baby food and first aid supplies.

“These are the products that people in Puerto Rico need and they’re not going to get enough of them if we don’t do this,” de Blasio said.

“Especially being a Mexican American, Latino, myself, it’s important for me to use my voice and my platform to be of service to our people,” Gomez said. “I always say that the power of the people is much stronger than the people in power.”

While the donation drive is shipping goods to Puerto Rico, other are collecting to help the surrounding areas affected.

“It gives me pleasure to see how many people actually showed up here this morning, said Roy Abraham. “People have been working since 6 o’clock this morning. And if we can continue that effort, I think we can get Dominica, at least Dominica, back on the road to recovery.”

City Council member Andy King was collecting goods to make sure the victims on the Virgin Islands don’t get overlooked in the desperate recovery efforts. He said the majority of islands are not getting coverage.

“We are not seeing the pictures of devastation on some of these island and they are living with turmoil each and every day, so I’m asking us all, do all that you can,” King said. “Small as they might be, they are still our brothers, our sisters, our family members who are living there.”

As of Friday, power had only been restored for 10.7 percent of Puerto Rico and 55.5 percent of people have drinking water, according to status.PR, a Spanish-language website maintained by the governor's office.

Among the other signs of progress Friday, according to Puerto Rico's government: 78 percent of gas stations up and running, 73 percent of supermarkets open, and more than half of bank branches open.

Still, a communications blackout remains a major problem for many. About 42 percent of the island has access to wired or wireless service, according to the governor's office. Overall, 84.6 percent of cell sites are still out, the Federal Communications Commission said.

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## **OTHER NEW JERSEY NEWS**

### **Bergen Sheriff: How You Can Help Hurricane Maria Victims In Puerto Rico**

By Jerry DeMarco

[Hackensack Voice](#), October 7, 2017

HACKENSACK, N.J. -- You can help a united effort coordinated by law enforcement in Bergen County to provide disaster relief to Hurricane Maria victims in Puerto Rico.

Dozens of types of items will be collected at a drive this Wednesday, Oct. 11, from 11 a.m. to 8 p.m. at the Bergen County Administration parking lot at East Kansas and South River streets.

Joining forces for the drive are the Bergen County Sheriff's Office, Bergen County Sheriff's PBA Local 134, National Coalition of Latino Officers and the Port Authority Police Hispanic Society.

"Help us to help those in need," Bergen County Sheriff Michael Saudino said.

Among the sealed items needed:

- Gatorade;
- Pedialyte;
- Water;
- Baby formula;
- Personal care kits: toothpaste, brushes, soap, shampoo, deodorant, feminine products;
- Diapers;
- First-aid kits;
- Gloves;
- Trash bags;
- Hand sanitizer;
- Water purification tablets;
- Battery-operated flashlights;
- Battery-operated radios;
- Batteries (all sizes);
- Towels;
- Sleeping bags;
- Small tents;
- Blankets;
- Mosquito repellent and bug spray;
- Canned non-perishable food.

INFO: (201) 336-3540

Hurricane Maria hit Puerto Rico as a Category 4 storm -- the strongest there in 80 years and more powerful than Hurricane Irma -- with winds of 155 mph and a combined 20 inches of rainfall.

It will likely take months before power is restored throughout the island.

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## **Construction Firm Owner Charged With Pocketing \$75K Meant For Sandy Repairs**

By Lauren Carroll

[The Press of Atlantic City](#), October 6, 2017

The owner of a construction company has been charged with theft after taking about \$75,000 of clients' money for personal use, Ocean County Prosecutor Joseph D. Coronato announced.

Darin Smith, 45, of Whiting in Manchester Township, was arrested Wednesday after being indicted Sept. 27. The indictment alleged Smith's contracting company, Heritage Construction Enterprises Corp., entered into contracts with four separate homeowners to repair houses damaged by Hurricane Sandy.

Coronato said the homes are located in Long Branch, Ship Bottom, Tuckerton and Toms River. Smith allegedly took the homeowners' money for personal use and failed to make payments toward the renovation projects, according to the indictment.

Anyone with further information about Smith or Heritage Construction can call the Prosecutor's Office at 732-929-2027.

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## **HURRICANE SEASON**

### **Hurricane Nate Makes Landfall At Mouth Of Mississippi River**

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

Hurricane Nate came ashore at the mouth of the Mississippi River on Saturday and pelted the central Gulf Coast with wind and rain as the fast-moving storm steamed toward the Mississippi coast, where it was expected to make another landfall and threatened to inundate homes and businesses in vulnerable low-lying areas.

Nate was expected to pass to the east of New Orleans, sparing the city its most ferocious winds and storm surge. And its quick speed decreased the likelihood of prolonged rain that would tax the city's weakened drainage pump system.

Still, the city famous for all-night partying was placed under a curfew, effective at 7 p.m., and the streets were not nearly as crowded as they typically are on a Saturday night.

Cities along the Mississippi coast such as Gulfport and Biloxi were on high alert. Some beachfront hotels and casinos were evacuated. Rain began falling on the region Saturday, and forecasters called for 3 to 6 inches with as much as 10 inches in places.

Nate weakened slightly and was a Category 1 storm with maximum winds of 85 mph when it made landfall in a sparsely populated area of Plaquemines Parish. Forecasters had said it was possible that it could strengthen to a Category 2, but that seemed less likely as the night wore on.

Storm surges threatened low-lying communities in southeast Louisiana, eastward to the Alabama fishing village of Bayou la Batre.

"If it floods again, this will be it. I can't live on promises," said Larry Bertron as he and his wife prepared to leave their home in the Braithwaite community of vulnerable Plaquemines Parish. The hurricane veterans lost a home to Hurricane Katrina in 2005 and were leaving the house they rebuilt after Hurricane Isaac in 2012.

Governors in Louisiana, Mississippi and Alabama declared states of emergency. The three states have been mostly spared during this hectic hurricane season.

"This is the worst hurricane that has impacted Mississippi since Hurricane Katrina," Mississippi Emergency Management Director Lee Smithson said Saturday. "Everyone needs to understand that — that this is a significantly dangerous situation."

Louisiana Gov. John Bel Edwards urged residents to make final preparations quickly and stressed that Nate would bring the possibility of storm surge reaching up to 11 feet in some coastal areas.

"It's going to hit and move through our area at a relatively fast rate, limiting the amount of time it's going to drop rain," the Democratic governor said. "But this is a very dangerous storm nonetheless."

Streets in low-lying areas of Louisiana were already flooded. Places outside levee protections were under mandatory evacuation orders and shelters had opened.

Some people worried about New Orleans' pumping system, which had problems during a heavy thunderstorm Aug. 5. The deluge exposed system weaknesses — including the failure of some pumps and power-generating turbines — and caused homes and businesses to flood. Repairs have been made but the system remained below maximum pumping capacity.

On Alabama's Dauphin Island, water washed over the road Saturday on the island's low-lying west end, said Mayor Jeff Collier. Nate was projected to bring storm surges from 7 to 11 feet near the Alabama-Mississippi state line. Some of the biggest effects might be seen at the top of funnel-shaped Mobile Bay.

The window for preparing "is quickly closing," Alabama Emergency Management Agency Director Brian Hastings said.

Florida Gov. Rick Scott warned residents of the Panhandle to prepare for Nate's impact.

"Hurricane Nate is expected to bring life-threatening storm surges, strong winds and tornadoes that could reach across the Panhandle," the Republican governor said. The evacuations affect roughly 100,000 residents in the western Panhandle.

Pensacola International Airport announced it was closing at 6 p.m. Saturday and would remain closed Sunday. However, Louis Armstrong New Orleans International Airport was open Saturday.

"We are urging customers to check with their specific airlines to see whether their flights have been canceled, because there have been some of those," spokeswoman Michelle Wilcut said.

Nate is expected to quickly weaken as it cuts a path through the Southeast on its way to the Mid-Atlantic and Northeastern U.S., which could see its effects early next week.

The storm killed at least 21 people as it strafed Central America.

Waterside sections of New Orleans, outside the city's levee system, were under an evacuation order. About 2,000 people were affected. But not everyone was complying.

Gabriel Black stayed behind because an 81-year-old neighbor refused to leave.

"I know it sounds insane, but he has bad legs and he doesn't have anybody who can get to him," Black said.

Ahead of Saturday night's curfew, some bars were closed in the French Quarter, but music blasted from others.

"We're down here from Philly and we're not going to just stay in our hotel room," said Kelly Howell, who was with friends at the Bourbon Street Drinker.

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## **OPINION**

### **In Puerto Rico, Realities Clash As Locals Piece New Lives Together**

By Bianca Padró Ocasio

[Orlando Sentinel](#), October 7, 2017

People at the airport in Puerto Rico — not long ago the scene of stranded and desperate travelers — now gather for heartbreaking send-offs in front of the TSA checkpoint.

It's bittersweet.

The only sweet part is knowing your family will be safe, your elders will get the medical attention they need, children can keep going to school, college semesters won't be deferred.

That is, for those who can and want to make the "brinquito," or the tiny jump across the ocean. It's the promise of normalcy.

But on the island, where I grew up, remains the familiar bitter taste of struggle.

Puerto Ricans know struggle — they take pride in it — but this struggle feels out of their own hands.

Everywhere photojournalist Ricardo Ramirez Buxeda and I went this week, we saw signs of the painful process of gathering the pieces of a life before Hurricane Maria.

On Tuesday, when President Donald Trump came to assess the damage on the U.S. territory, we headed to Maunabo and Yabucoa, in the southeast part of the island. The satellite GPS rerouted us a few times, because some roads led to private properties, and others were blocked off as municipal workers picked up debris.

We arrived at the home of Ada Rivera in Barrio Talante, whose son Miguel Carmona lives in Orlando. Carmona hadn't heard from her or his own son in Maunabo, so we went to make sure they were fine.

Maunabo is right next to Yabucoa, where the storm first made landfall. Neighbors have been able to clear up their streets, but the area is pitch black and most neighbors are still without water. Cell phone towers are still down.

Rivera, who doesn't have water or power, offered us a cup of coffee.

"I have plenty of water saved up, so don't be shy if you need to use the bathroom," she said.

We, of course, refused, wanting to let them save their resources.

Rivera said that back in Orlando, we knew more about what was happening on Sept. 20 when the hurricane howled through the island than those who were living it.

And when Central Florida's 320,000 Puerto Ricans were yearning for word from the island, family and friends here were just as desperate to let them know they were OK.

On Wednesday, driving into Loíza from the northeast side of the island, Ricardo and I saw people stopping on the side of a bridge, where the iconic Rio Grande de Loíza flowed below just a couple of miles from the beach.

A sewer line under a road that runs along the river had burst, releasing wastewater over the road and into the river.

The stench was unbearable. A man who said he worked in federal security called authorities to respond to it. But it struck me that the lack of communication, of telling the world of what is happening, remains one of the toughest challenges. It still took us two hours to get back into San Juan, at which point I was able to tweet images and get the news of the incident out into the world.

Through all of our reporting, we never called ahead, set up a meeting, asked what time was convenient. We showed up unannounced and in one case, we even had a picture: Do you know this woman? Where does she live?

Everyone invited us in. Like in most tragedies, everyone felt the need to report on their own story: where they were when the hurricane rolled through, who they haven't heard from and what the government isn't doing.

When we went to a cooperative building in Trujillo Alto, south of San Juan, residents found a dozen ways to tell us what Maria's winds sounded like on the day of the hurricane: "...like a chainsaw," "... like a hand slapping for hours against the glass doors," "... like a car alarm that wouldn't go off."

We returned to the metro area at the end of every day to send in our work. Here, another reality emerged. The damage was obvious, but at least there was power and a cell signal and that made a huge difference.

I left the Convention Center in San Juan close to 9 p.m. on Wednesday, the night the governor extended curfew to midnight.

I walked to the nearby Sheraton hotel — where some press members, FEMA, electric, military and essential government workers are staying. Some smoked cigars, sipped on whiskey and finished steak dinners at the hotel's restaurant.

Ricardo and I had to pass through three checkpoints every day to access the press area at the Convention Center. The heavily armed military presence isn't normal. But everyone seemed to act as if it was.

I ran into a friend, another reporter. "Even if everything is upside down, at least if people see the metro area is coming back to life, there is hope that help for everyone else will arrive soon," she said.

On my last night, I went into Río Piedras to see a friend I promised I'd meet before leaving. The bar El Boricua — El Bori, for short — and the streets around it were so packed it was hard to move through the crowd. This is how it usually looks on a Thursday night.

Bargoers talked politics: "Where are the blue tarps! Why do they keep arresting people who violate curfew! I haven't showered in a few days!"

The beer was cold and live salsa played for hours. I ran into more friends who said it was the first time they had left their homes in two weeks.

The next day, I was back in Orlando, reassured that my family and friends will find ways to cope. There are so many more stories to tell.

For me, it's definitely more bitter.

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END

<b>Sender:</b>	FEMA-ESF15-Coordination </O=EXCHANGELABS/OU=EXCHANGE ADMINISTRATIVE GROUP (FYDIBOHF23SPDLT)/CN=RECIPIENTS/CN=1684F0A97D524A068FB7B08BF23014BE-FEMA-ESF15->
<b>Sent Date:</b>	2017/10/08 09:20:23
<b>Delivered Date:</b>	2017/10/08 09:20:29



<b>From:</b>	Mize, Nancy </O=EXCHANGELABS/OU=EXCHANGE ADMINISTRATIVE GROUP (FYDIBOHF23SPDLT)/CN=RECIPIENTS/CN=1D1027E794D64817ABBBC95D82813514-MIZE, NANCY>
<b>Subject:</b>	Daily Media Monitoring Report DR 4335/4340 VI 10.8.17
<b>Date:</b>	2017/10/08 08:21:08
<b>Priority:</b>	Normal
<b>Type:</b>	Note

Attached is the media monitoring report dated today, October 8, 2017, for DR 4335/4340 VI.

## Media Monitoring Report

### October 8, 2017

#### FEMA Region 2

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

**Holiday Message.** *In observance of Columbus Day, we will not publish on Monday, October 9, 2017. Service will resume Tuesday, October 10, 2017. We wish our readers a safe holiday.*

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## **STORIES**

### **HURRICANE MARIA PUERTO RICO**

#### **Weeks Later, 90% Of Puerto Ricans Still Without Power**

[Gulf Times](#), October 8, 2017

About 90% of Puerto Rico was still without power on Friday, more than two weeks after Hurricane Maria raked across the island, according to the US Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA).

The hobbled power grid on the US territory has meant many businesses, hospitals and public facilities are resorting to generators, including 27 installed by FEMA personnel, to create electricity for their operations.

About 40% of the island has access to wired or wireless communication services, and about half the 3.4mn residents have drinking water, FEMA said.

The agency said it has about 800 personnel on the ground in Puerto Rico and the US Virgin Islands working on hurricane recovery operations.

The US territories were among the Caribbean islands badly affected by Hurricanes Maria and Irma.

The agency provided the update on recovery efforts as Puerto Rico Governor Ricardo Rossello announced that the number of deaths caused by the hurricane had risen by two to 36 and as US Vice-President Mike Pence headed to Puerto Rico and the island of St Croix in the US Virgin Islands to assess hurricane damage.

Pence met Governor Kenneth Mapp of the US Virgin Islands after arriving at St Croix. He was to visit churches and take a tour of the Virgin Islands by helicopter.

Pence also met Lieutenant General Buchanan, who is heading the US recovery efforts. The briefing was mostly behind closed doors.

They spoke to reporters seated at a table with about a dozen other officials.

In Puerto Rico the vice-president spoke individually to several people, including at least one who told him he was angry with the response.

Asked about that interaction, Pence said: "The devastation here in Puerto Rico has been historic. We understand the frustration when you think of the magnitude of the loss, the impact on the families, the loss of life."

He said his message was the same one President Donald Trump delivered earlier this week, which is the US is "here for the long haul".

The Department of Defence said on Friday that more than 11,000 department personnel are working to restore resources to Puerto Rico.

The FEMA and military personnel are part of 15,000 US federal employees on the island to work on the recovery effort.

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## **Residents Losing Hope In Puerto Rico (VIDEO)**

By Nick Valencia

[CNN](#), October 7, 2017

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## **Senators Pledge to Support Long-Term Rebuilding of Puerto Rico**

By Ezra Fieser

[Bloomberg](#), 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.

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## **Minus Electrical Grid, Puerto Rico Becomes Generator Island**

By Richard Fausset, Frances Robles and Deborah Acosta

[The 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 Día, a local newspaper. In a visit to the hospital Thursday, the lights were on, and a worker said a backup generator was powering them. But hospital officials declined a request for comment.

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



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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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### **‘We’ll Give You Whatever We Have:’ How Organizations Are Fighting to Bring Relief to Puerto Rico**

By Jen Kirby

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

The sixth-floor windows wouldn’t hold in the winds, they knew. So the doctors and staff at the University Pediatric Hospital in San Juan moved the entire neonatal intensive-care unit, the NICU, down three floors as Hurricane Maria closed in. The predicted damage came. Windows cracked, water poured in. The air-conditioning units blew away.

The entire hospital is now relying on one cooling tower. There was no running water for the first week; the dialysis machines had to be lugged to the adult hospital next door. All 12 elevators went out. The hospital relied on generators until electricity came back, last Wednesday. Only

two elevators work now. The NICU, and its tiny, vulnerable patients, remain on the third floor, divided up among 20 rooms on the general pediatric ward.

“We’re in San Juan. We’re the medical center in Puerto Rico,” Marta Suarez, a pediatric nephrologist told Daily Intelligencer, of the University Pediatric Hospital. “So you wonder how are other hospitals are being helped.”

Suarez’s facility is the only public pediatric hospital on the island. It has the largest NICU, and handles the most complicated medical cases. The most vulnerable are referred here. But now Suarez and her co-workers are dealing with the dual challenge of providing care to patients, while supporting other medical centers across the island. Many of those facilities are even more cut off, even more desperate for basic items, from insulin to IV fluids to gauze. “I think for people to understand what is going on is to imagine being thrown back 100 years,” she said. “All the progress we’ve had in medical care, you’ve been thrown back 100 years.”

Those crisis conditions are made worse by what is essentially a logistical nightmare. About 90 percent of the island is still without electricity, and only about a quarter of cell-phone towers are back online. Gas is flowing again to 74 percent of gas stations, according to FEMA, but roads are still badly damaged, complicating travel and aid delivery. And the University Pediatric Hospital is just one of dozens of organizations, large and small, battling these enormous obstacles.

“Our speciality is working on really tough challenges globally, we’re in 40-plus countries. We’re in South Sudan, Syria, places that are a little bit more well known for being logistical challenges,” Christy Delafield, senior global communications manager with Mercy Corps, which made the rare decision of getting involved in Puerto Rico a week ago. “But the scale of this disaster is monumental. Three million plus people in Puerto Rico, and everybody was impacted in some way.”

It was “the great equalizer,” said Michael Fernández, who works for a local community organization Caras, describing Maria. “I’m quoting a friend of mine,” he said, “‘but ‘it doesn’t matter if you’re rich or poor ... everybody has been affected.’” Even big companies and businesses that would normally donate resources, and spearhead efforts, he said, were knocked down. “There wasn’t one corner of Puerto Rico that wasn’t hit hard.”

Fernández said communication has been the biggest challenge to any aid efforts. He and his colleagues have a platform, Connect Relief, which tracks which communities need what — clean water, for example — so organizations or individuals can donate directly. But coordination is intensely difficult without good cell or internet service. There’s the worry that organizations will duplicate efforts — delivering, say, two truckloads of food but no batteries. Fernández said it represents a broader lack of coordination among the government of Puerto Rico, local municipalities, and bigger aid groups. Smaller organizations like Caras know their communities, they know who lives where, and who needs what, but their expertise hasn’t been utilized as much as he’d hoped. “There would be less people hungry and thirsty,” he said.

Mercy Corps’ small team on the ground is cooperating with local groups for that exact reason. “These challenges exist on such a massive scale that it just slows everything down,” Delafield

said. “Even with the best of intentions, even with people working around clock.” The frustration is justifiable, she added. You can’t just pick up the phone and call someone. Radios are broadcasting notices to visit this website, or download this app for assistance — something that’s impossible without internet or phone service. Her team is equipped with satellite phones, but they do little good when the people they need to reach do not. “You don’t have any way to call the truck that’s on the road,” she said.

Spotty service and dead phone lines mean sometimes the only way to survey the crisis is getting in the car — especially now that the immediate gas crisis has eased. Suarez said one of her pediatric residents drove around to doctors and clinics asking what they need. “Doctors are saying, ‘I need this, I need that,’” Suarez said. “So you’re trying to help as many people as you can. It’s a little bit overwhelming.” Suarez said they’re trying to deliver everything from sterile gloves to ointments to antibiotics. Many pharmacies can’t process insurance payments, and people lack cash, so Puerto Ricans are flocking to hospitals to get their daily treatments. Suarez said they distributed vials of insulin to endocrinology clinics; people have no way to refrigerate supplies. “‘We’ll give you whatever we have,’” Suarez said they told doctors. “And that’s what we did.”

But what Suarez and her hospital can give is barely enough. There had been shortages before Maria, too, because of the debt crisis. “We have always been very low on supplies, so we knew coming in that it was going to be a huge crisis,” Suarez said. “We knew we were going to run out of everything that we needed.” Shipments have come in: on Monday after the storm, 100 doses of tetanus vaccine from AmeriCares, needed as people wade through sewage water, cleaning up debris. Another shipment of supplies came in Wednesday from Texas, and were waiting at the airport.

Such shipments of medicine, or food, or fuel, have trickled out faster after days of being stuck at the ports or in airports because of the lack of diesel and truck drivers, and damaged infrastructure. The situation has improved, but Steve Dooley, director of partnerships at the Center for Popular Democracy, said it’s still a struggle to get aid down to Puerto Rico, and there’s a backlog of deliveries once it arrives, especially because of the unreliable roads. “There’s people who have storage units full in Boston, church-fulls and storefronts-full in New York,” he said. “People who have two warehouses full of donated things in Miami.”

After weighing the options, Dooley said his organization decided to hop on the commercial flights — still operating on a reduced schedule — down to Puerto Rico and deliver the supplies directly. Dooley and six others took a Delta flight from JFK to San Juan on Wednesday, stuffing three bags each full of saltines, cans of tuna fish, mosquito spray, and baby sunscreen. They also carried thousands in cash, with plans to distribute it all through a grassroots relief effort they’ve been working with in San Juan. Their departure date is still unknown — it will depend if they can charter out a flight.

Roadways are still blocked off, or destroyed down to a single lane. The radio is still the best way to get the news. But aid efforts are visibly paying off, if slowly. More people have generators, the gas lines have shortened. “We adapt and go forward, adapt and go forward, adapt and go forward,” Fernández said.

Yet against the backdrop of this aid, the question of the United States' government response hangs over the whole crisis. There are more than 13,000 federal staff and 800 FEMA workers on the ground in Puerto Rico and the U.S. Virgin Islands, though the administration has received criticism for what has been perceived as a slow response to an overwhelming crisis. Like Mercy Corps, Oxfam International also made the unusual move to intervene in a U.S. natural disaster, something it hasn't done since Katrina, though the organization already had a presence in rural parts of Mississippi and Alabama at that time, said Scott Paul, the humanitarian policy lead with Oxfam International. "Oxfam is an international organization that tends to respond when systems are overwhelmed," Paul said. "In the United States, we don't ordinarily have to do that," he said. Despite this, as the crisis unfolded in Puerto Rico and the federal government's response didn't appear to match the overwhelming need, "it became clear the added capacity was needed."

Suarez said FEMA workers visited the hospital for the first time Wednesday, though the Navy had visited and assessed the hospital in the initial days after the hurricane hit. "They [FEMA] brought satellite phones," Suarez said. "We're like, 'we don't really need that. We have phones. Give that to the rest of the island.'"

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## **HURRICANE MARIA USVI**

### **Paperwork Hassles Frustrate Some Trying to Bring Generators into USVI**

By Marina Leonard and Bill Kossler

[St. Thomas Source](#), October 7, 2017

With power restored to only 22 percent of St. Thomas and 12 percent of St. Croix, private generators are in high demand, but paperwork hassles are frustrating some who are spending good money to bring more into the territory.

Asked about the delays, Gov. Kenneth Mapp said at his Friday evening news conference that officials should only ask for extra documentation if a person wanted an exemption from excise taxes or customs duties.

Reader Jeff Saplis of Sea Glass Properties told the Source he started sourcing and shipping in generators after Hurricane Irma and got in a dozen without difficulty a week ago. But Saplis said this week he found himself struggling all week to get another 10 generators cleared through the ports.

Asked what he was doing with the generators, Saplis said he was donating many of them and selling others at cost, depending on the level of need and ability to pay.

He sent representatives to St. Thomas Cargo three times to try to pick up the generators.

"The second time they went, they called me from there and said I needed a letter with the names and contact information for everyone that would be receiving one of the generators. And that it needed to be notarized," Saplis said Friday.

He spent a day getting that information, found a notary and had it notarized. But that did not resolve the issue right away.

“So we went back Thursday and according to St. Thomas Cargo, the woman at Excise said they need to get their in-house counsel to see if it was acceptable,” Saplis said.

According to Saplis, he went back a final time on Friday, and was told he had to pay excise taxes of \$700 on the 10 generators, then another \$600 in customs duties, before he could take them.

Because of his frustration with the difficulty, lack of clarity and slow process, he canceled a subsequent order for more generators Saplis said.

But at his news conference, Mapp said the extra paperwork is necessary only if you are seeking an exemption from the excise tax and Customs duties, and if you pay the tax, no extra paperwork should be requested by V.I. officials, Mapp said.

“When you bring merchandise into the territory, we don’t ask who’s going to be buy your merchandise,” Mapp said.

However, merchandise that is donated is treated differently than merchandise which is to be given away for free. Only those generators that are to be donated require a notarized document verifying where those generators will be going before they can be released by customs, according to Mapp.

He said the reason for this documentation is because any items that are to be donated have specific exemptions when it comes to excise tax and customs fees and there needs to be an attested document in order to avoid fraud as to these exemptions.

However, those generators and other merchandise which are to be sold do not require any such documentation but do require excise tax and customs fees to be paid.

Mapp said if anyone is importing generators for sale and is asked for additional documentation as to where the generators are to be going after they have cleared customs, that individual should contact Internal Revenue Bureau Director Marvin Pickering, as this practice of requiring those selling merchandise to attest as to where the merchandise is going is not a legal practice.

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## **Bureau Of Motor Vehicles Officers Suffer Severe Damage**

[Virgin Islands Consortium](#), October 7, 2017

ST. THOMAS — The St. Thomas and St. Croix offices of the Bureau of Motor Vehicles (BMV) suffered severe storm damage as a result of last month’s hurricanes, BMV Director Lawrence Olive has reported, according to a Government House release issued Saturday. He noted that the office on St. John is in much better shape, but currently lacks the infrastructure necessary to provide services.

Mr. Olive, who has been working to keep the public informed via regular radio reports, said BMV is unable to process driver's licenses at this time and that the Bureau of Information Technology was working to restore the bureau's computer system.

"I have advised the American Association of Motor Vehicles Administrators about the severity of the damage to our offices here and I have requested that they assist Virgin Islanders who may be relocating to other states with a recently expired license," Mr. Olive said. "Our local law enforcement is also obviously aware of the problems we are experiencing."

The St. Croix office at the Patrick Sweeney Complex will be open from 10 a.m. to 2 p.m. beginning Tuesday, October 10, with the goal of processing 40 registrations per day. Vehicle registrations and transfers can be processed without the online system, Mr. Olive said. Only cash payments can be taken until internet service is restored. The St. Thomas facilities in Sub Base suffered the worst damage.

"We are working to clean up and repair a section of the building that we can operate from temporarily," the director said. "We expect to make an announcement next week."

Phone service is currently down at all three BMV offices.

"I thank the public for their understanding and my staff for their efforts under these difficult conditions," Mr. Olive concluded.

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## **RTPark is Damaged, But Still Committed to Economic Development**

By Marina Leonard

[St. Thomas Source](#), October 7, 2017

The Research and Technology Park building on St. Croix was the multimillion dollar jewel of the University of the Virgin Islands St. Croix campus. It won the "LEED Silver Certification" from the Green Building Certification Institute for being energy efficient and environmentally friendly. But even that distinction did not protect the building from the wrath of Hurricane Maria on Sept. 20.

The building suffered interior and exterior damage, including damage to the winged roof, and it looks very different today from the innovative building that all visitors are used to viewing on UVI's campus.

The building was designed to have sustainable site development, water savings and energy efficiency. The goal was to be as efficient as possible in areas of human and environmental health. The "green" certification the building received from the Leadership in Energy and Environmental Design overseen by the U.S. Green Building Council, however, did not protect it from high utility bills, which was only one of the issues with the innovative construction.

Thursday, the staff of the RTPark issued a press release saying that it would conduct a structural and safety assessment to determine the impact of Hurricane Maria on the building.

In the meantime, RTPark staff will continue to promote their economic development program. Many of their tenants and clients are telecommunication companies that do not physically reside in the building but remain paying tenants and clients, and they receive tax breaks based on the economic development program.

Spokesperson Felicia Persaud said the clients are “not dependent on a brick and mortar building.”

According to Persaud, not one client of RTPark plans to leave due to the damage done to the building, and even more perspective clients are proceeding with their applications.

RTPark will soon launch RTPark Rebuilding the USVI, a campaign to support the Fund for the Virgin Islands.

In addition, the UVI College of Science and Mathematics used the building for science and math classes, and the RTPark will determine when those classes can resume.

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## **Duncan Distributing Food Sunday in Frederiksted**

[St. Thomas Source](#), October 7, 2017

NBA superstar and St Croix native Tim Duncan will return to his roots Sunday, distributing food in Frederiksted.

According to a texted news release from Rashidi Clenace, Duncan will be distributing 130,000 pounds of food from 10 a.m. to 3 p.m.Sunday.

The dsitribution will take place at the Midre Cummings Park in Frederiksted.

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## **Schools in Both Districts to Open on October 10, 12 or 16**

[St. Thomas Source](#), October 7, 2017

St. Thomas-St. John District

The Virgin Islands Department of Education (VIDOE) St. Thomas – St. John District will open its 2017-18 school year on Tuesday, Oct. 10. Due to some facilities requiring extensive repair work, only 10 schools will be ready to receive students on Tuesday; however, by Oct. 16, all schools declared operational in the district will be open for instruction.

While all schools have sustained hurricane-related damage, the DOE has condemned two: Addelita Cancryn Junior High and Emanuel Benjamin Oliver Elementary Schools. The Gladys Abraham Elementary School, although not condemned, will not be operational this school year; therefore, schools in the district will assume regular and split session schedules.

The district's Curriculum Center and receiving warehouse were severely damaged during the hurricane, and the industrial freezer that housed frozen foods for the school lunch program was also destroyed. DOE has secured refrigerated containers that will store frozen foods as a replenishment supply arrives in the district. Abbreviated meals will be served during the first week of school.

For breakfast, students can expect tuna or peanut butter and jelly sandwiches. Meals Ready to Eat (MREs) from the Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA) will be provided for lunch. Students are welcome to bring their own lunch. Emergency drinking water will also be provided. Hot meals will begin on Oct. 16.

Results of a test drive conducted by the Water and Power Authority (WAPA), the Department of Public Works, School Bus Inc., and the district's Pupil Transportation Division determined that the normal school bus routes can and will remain the same. Buses will begin traveling on their scheduled routes for morning and regular session schools at 6:15 a.m. Those schools include Bertha C. Boschulte Middle, Ivanna Eudora Kean High, Ulla F. Muller Elementary, Leonard Dober Elementary, Lockhart Elementary, Yvonne Milliner-Bowsky Elementary and Addelita Cancryn Junior High.

Buses will begin pick-up of students attending afternoon session schools at 10:15 a.m. These schools are Gladys Abraham Elementary, E. Benjamin Oliver Elementary and Charlotte Amalie High. Additional buses will be added to pick up students at Kirwan Terrace, Estate Tutu and Hidden Valley.

Education officials have been working with FEMA, the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers and other local and federal partners to get school facilities up and running in the territory following Hurricanes Irma and Maria. School restoration efforts include ensuring each operational school facility has electricity from WAPA and/or generators, running water, debris removal, room sanitation and temporary roof repairs.

#### St. Croix District

The St. Croix District has set a tentative start date for Oct. 16. Similar to the St. Thomas-St. John District, some schools will resume instruction before others. The 2017-18 school year began in the district on Tuesday, Sept. 12 prior to Hurricane Maria's landfall in the territory. Arthur A. Richards Junior High School has since been condemned, and significant damages have been reported at many of the schools.

#### St. Thomas – St. John District 2017-2018 School Year Opening Dates



Location – Start Time/ End Time

October 10

Leonard Dober Elementary — 7:45 a.m./ 2:45 p.m.

Jane E. Tuitt Primary School — 7:50 a.m./ 2:35 p.m.

Joseph Sibilly Elementary — 7:50 a.m./ 2:30 p.m.

Joseph Gomez Elementary — 7:45 a.m./ 2:40 p.m.

Addelita Cancryn Jr. High School — 7:30 a.m./ 11:30 a.m.

Charlotte Amalie H.S. — Noon/4 p.m.

Bertha C. Boschulte Middle School — 7:25 a.m./ 2:25 p.m.

Edith Williams AA — 8 a.m./ 3:10 p.m.

Raphael O. Wheatley Skills Center — 8 a.m./ 3 p.m.

Day Adult Education — 8 a.m./ 3 p.m.

October 12

Ivanna Eudora Kean HS — 7:30 a.m./ 2:50 p.m.

October 16

Julius E. Sprauve School (Grades K – 5) — 8 a.m./ Noon

Julius E. Sprauve School (Grades 6 – 8) — 11 a.m./ 4 p.m.

Ulla F. Muller Elementary — 7:30 a.m./ Noon

Gladys Abraham Elementary — 11:15 a.m./ 4:30 p.m.

Lockhart Elementary — 8 a.m./ 2:45 p.m.

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\*\*The opening of Yvonne Milliner-Bowsky Elementary, merging with the E. Benjamin Oliver Elementary, will be announced.

Schools listed in bold will assume a split session schedule.

Addelita Cancryn Junior High School will conduct student orientations on Tuesday, Oct. 10; grade 7 will report at 8 a.m.; grade 8 will report at 10 a.m. The school will be in full session on Wednesday, Oct. 11.

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## **INSURANCE and LEGAL**

### **Some Still Waiting For Sandy Insurance Claim Repayment As Deadline Approaches**

By Kristin F. Dalton

[Staten Island Advance](#), October 7, 2017

STATEN ISLAND, N.Y. -- As the Oct. 25 deadline for reopened Hurricane Sandy insurance claims quickly approaches, some Staten Islanders are still waiting for payment.

Sandy insurance claims were reopened in 2015 after a CBS "60 Minutes" report exposed engineers working for flood insurance companies under the FEMA-run National Flood Insurance Program (NFIP) had altered damage reports to show little or no damage to homes.

With falsified documents underreporting damage, payouts to people trying to repair their homes were artificially low or rejected altogether.

About 1,200 lawsuits had been filed in U.S. District Court for the Eastern District of New York, with homeowners saying their claims were unfairly denied.

Executives from NFIP promised homeowners fraud-free reexamination of claims and rapid resolution in 90 days.

Former Republican Congressman Michael Grimm, who recently announced his plan to challenge Rep. Daniel Donovan (R-Staten Island/Brooklyn) for his former congressional seat, is calling for a deadline extension.

"The Sandy Claims Review deadline must be pushed to at least Dec. 15 to assure all victims of the storm get hearings they were promised and the money they deserve," Grimm said.

Grimm said the NFIP is "turning their back" on homeowners who have been patiently waiting to be properly paid.

Donovan, however, says that he's working with NFIP toward resolution of all of the outstanding claims.

"As chair of the subcommittee that oversees disaster response, I have been following this issue closely and working with FEMA to ensure the very small group of people affected by this deadline are working toward a resolution," Donovan responded.

A total of 19,449 review requests received results out of the total 19,461 received in the region, according to a spokesman for Donovan's office.

"The opportunity for damage inspection fraud was a major issue with FEMA, which is why it was the focus of one of the first bills I introduced and passed," he said.

In April 2016, Donovan sponsored the Flood Insurance Mitigation and Policyholder Protection Act, his first bill in office.

Donovan's bill passes more than a year after FEMA announced changes to its flood insurance program after fraud allegations.

Donovan's bill requires engineers to provide copies of their reports to homeowners so they can see whether a later version has been altered.

The bill also extends the suit window so that homeowners would have either two years from the date of loss or 90 days after the FEMA appeal concludes, whichever is later.

#### PETITION LAUNCHED

Grimm also set up an online petition for those who are in support of extending the deadline.

"I remember the suffering like it was yesterday. It disturbs me to no end to know so little work has been done in Washington to help the victims of Sandy who, on the five year anniversary of the storm this month, are still suffering," he said.

But Donovan called Grimm's effort to draw attention to the issue unnecessary.

"Shame on Mr. Grimm for unnecessarily alarming people. It's not a coincidence he's trying to create a distraction while people are getting notices for flood insurance increases as a result of bad legislation. It's hard to imagine the bar for shame could go any lower," Donovan said.

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### **Flood Insurance Reform Front Unusually Quiet Despite Major Storms**

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

Weeks after Hurricanes Harvey, Irma and Maria brought devastating floodwaters, it appeared problems with the federally run flood insurance program would be thrust into the spotlight.

After all, Floridian activists have pressed Congress for years to stop a program that would dramatically raise flood insurance rates for residents in older, flood-prone areas that previously got lower, subsidized rates.

Yet, following the hurricanes, that previously vocal front for flood insurance reform is relatively quiet.

That's because the goal posts have changed slightly — again. What was once a Sept. 30 deadline for Congress to renew the National Flood Insurance Program is now pushed back to early December.

“We're in a holding pattern,” said Patty Latshaw, vice president of compliance for Wright National Flood insurance.

The government-run program has long been the dominant way to buy flood insurance. Florida accounts for about 40 percent of its policies. Wright has the highest number of National Flood Insurance Program policy holders of any insurance company in the country, and Pinellas County has the largest amount of properties with subsidized rates in the country.

President Donald Trump signed legislation on Sept. 8 that moved the program's renewal deadline back to Dec. 8, giving more time to local communities that are particularly sensitive to whether flood insurance rates are escalated dramatically or the NFIP doesn't get renewed in time.

One such area is Shore Acres, a low-lying St. Petersburg waterfront community on the east side of Pinellas County. In 2016, Pinellas County Property Appraiser Pam Dubov saw nearly double-digit increases in sales prices for homes in the area. Between 65 and 92 percent of the homes then qualified for subsidized flood insurance rates.

Robin Sollie, head of the Tampa Bay Beaches Chamber of Commerce, said that despite the area flooding even in heavy summer storms, the community did not flood during Hurricane Irma.

And two weeks after the storm, conversation about flood insurance was fairly absent.

“Everyone is focused on mitigating their level of stress and trying to clean up their yard,” Sollie said.

The issue was brought back into the spotlight last year when there was widespread concern over rate hikes after a financial blow — a \$23 billion deficit — the federal program took after Hurricanes Katrina and Sandy.

What will sharpen the conversation is upcoming legislation that will potentially reshape the federal flood insurance program.

While it's too early to tell what the final version of the bill will be, Latshaw hopes it will include a few specific elements.

“Long-term reauthorization is really what's needed in the bill,” she said. That means something that will last around five years.

Simplification of the program is also necessary to help consumers have an easier time acquiring policies.

“Sometimes it can be very daunting purchasing (a flood policy),” Latshaw said.

One current bill attempting to reform the program is HR 2875, which was introduced by Rep. Nydia M. Velázquez, D-N.Y. It outlines a revised appeals process for those with policies through the program who challenge a denied claim, penalizes companies that underpay program claims and expands some of the Federal Emergency Management Agency’s duties under the program.

“After Sandy, we heard from homeowners in New York City and up and down the East Coast who saw their claims denied, delayed or underpaid due to problems in the flood insurance program,” Velázquez said in a statement. “This bipartisan legislation would address these shortcomings and protect policyholders from fraud and abuse.”

The bill also establishes an advisory council that would examine and make recommendations on rates.

A Senate bill introduced in July, SB 1571, would extend the program through Sept. 30, 2023. It requires modernized flood mapping for communities covered by the program, pushes flood-prone communities to create mitigation plans and calls for FEMA to factor in replacement cost value into premiums.

On Thursday, the House passed a bill proposed by Reps. Dennis Ross, R-Lakeland, and Kathy Castor, D-Tampa, that seeks to pave the way for more consumers to take out flood insurance policies from private insurers. Flood coverage is currently is a very small segment of private insurers’ business. HR 3823, the Flood Insurance Market Development Act, calls for the development of a private flood insurance market to lower costs to consumers.

“The recent major flood events across the country have provided a much-needed sense of urgency to our efforts to provide consumers with private sector flood insurance options,” Ross said in a statement.

The proposed bills will be addressed in the upcoming Congress.

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## **PREPAREDNESS**

### **Oyster Creek Passes Latest FEMA Emergency Drill**

By Patricia A. Miller

[Patch.com](#), October 7, 2017

LACEY TOWNSHIP - The Oyster Creek Nuclear Generating Station and a number of county and municipal responders passed a recent emergency drill to test the ability to shut down during a radiological release, according to a report in The Sandpaper.

The Federal Emergency Management Agency reviewed the three-day drill held from Sept. 25 to Sept. 27 and approved the results, said Susan O’Neil of the FEMA Regional Assistance Committee.

Ocean County Office of Emergency Management officials along with 17 municipal offices of emergency management tested their ability to respond to a mock emergency at the Oyster Creek Nuclear Generating Station on Route 9 in Lacey Township.

The simulated drills are held twice a year to evaluate the response of nuclear plant workers and municipal, county and state agencies.

“The Ocean County Office of Emergency Management participates annually in drills that focus on the nuclear power plant,” Ocean County Sheriff Michael G. Mastronardy said. “This year’s exercise will be monitored and reviewed by FEMA. The federal agency will look at the actions taken by the participants and will review it for both efficiencies and any deficiencies they may find.”

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Exelon, the plant's owner, recently asked the federal Nuclear Regulatory Commission to significantly revise the plant's emergency plan a year after it closes in late 2019.

Exelon says the fuel in the plant's spent fuel pool will have cooled enough to "significantly" reduce the risk of a fire in the pool that could release radioactivity into the environment, NRC spokesman Neil R. Sheehan said.

The changes Exelon is asking the NRC for include:

- Ending the 10-mile emergency planning zone around Oyster Creek.
  
- Eliminating emergency sirens in the emergency planning zone.
  
- Eliminating the need for full-scale emergency exercises, which are currently conducted every two years.
  
- A large reduction in emergency response staff
- Ending the dissemination of emergency plan information to the public
- Ending the need for multiple emergency response facilities

If the NRC approves the request, the changes would take place in January of 2021, 12 months after the plant closes, according to an earlier Patch report.

“We will need to thoroughly review the analysis and determine if the company’s assessment of the risks is accurate,” Sheehan said.

Each nuclear plant has a different lifespan, providing distinctive quantities of fuel in the pool, he said.

Oyster Creek is the oldest nuclear plant in the United States. It went online on Dec. 23, 1969.

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## **OTHER NEW YORK NEWS**

### **De Blasio, Black Eyed Peas Urge New Yorkers to Help Puerto Rico, U.S. Virgin Islands in Wake of Devastating Hurricane**

By Wale Aliyu

[NBCNewYork.com](http://NBCNewYork.com), October 7, 2017

Even though Hurricane Maria hit the Caribbean weeks ago, islands there continue to struggle in a crisis left by the powerful storm.

Mayor Bill de Blasio and members of the music group Black Eyed Peas were at FDNY EMS Station 26 in the Bronx Saturday urging New Yorkers to get involved in the relief response by donating essentials like batteries, baby food and first aid supplies.

“These are the products that people in Puerto Rico need and they’re not going to get enough of them if we don’t do this,” de Blasio said.

“Especially being a Mexican American, Latino, myself, it’s important for me to use my voice and my platform to be of service to our people,” Gomez said. “I always say that the power of the people is much stronger than the people in power.”

While the donation drive is shipping goods to Puerto Rico, other are collecting to help the surrounding areas affected.

“It gives me pleasure to see how many people actually showed up here this morning, said Roy Abraham. “People have been working since 6 o’clock this morning. And if we can continue that effort, I think we can get Dominica, at least Dominica, back on the road to recovery.”

City Council member Andy King was collecting goods to make sure the victims on the Virgin Islands don’t get overlooked in the desperate recovery efforts. He said the majority of islands are not getting coverage.

“We are not seeing the pictures of devastation on some of these island and they are living with turmoil each and every day, so I’m asking us all, do all that you can,” King said. “Small as they might be, they are still our brothers, our sisters, our family members who are living there.”

As of Friday, power had only been restored for 10.7 percent of Puerto Rico and 55.5 percent of people have drinking water, according to status.PR, a Spanish-language website maintained by the governor's office.

Among the other signs of progress Friday, according to Puerto Rico's government: 78 percent of gas stations up and running, 73 percent of supermarkets open, and more than half of bank branches open.

Still, a communications blackout remains a major problem for many. About 42 percent of the island has access to wired or wireless service, according to the governor's office. Overall, 84.6 percent of cell sites are still out, the Federal Communications Commission said.

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## **OTHER NEW JERSEY NEWS**

### **Bergen Sheriff: How You Can Help Hurricane Maria Victims In Puerto Rico**

By Jerry DeMarco

[Hackensack Voice](#), October 7, 2017

HACKENSACK, N.J. -- You can help a united effort coordinated by law enforcement in Bergen County to provide disaster relief to Hurricane Maria victims in Puerto Rico.

Dozens of types of items will be collected at a drive this Wednesday, Oct. 11, from 11 a.m. to 8 p.m. at the Bergen County Administration parking lot at East Kansas and South River streets.

Joining forces for the drive are the Bergen County Sheriff's Office, Bergen County Sheriff's PBA Local 134, National Coalition of Latino Officers and the Port Authority Police Hispanic Society.

"Help us to help those in need," Bergen County Sheriff Michael Saudino said.

Among the sealed items needed:

- Gatorade;
- Pedialyte;
- Water;
- Baby formula;
- Personal care kits: toothpaste, brushes, soap, shampoo, deodorant, feminine products;
- Diapers;
- First-aid kits;
- Gloves;
- Trash bags;
- Hand sanitizer;
- Water purification tablets;
- Battery-operated flashlights;
- Battery-operated radios;
- Batteries (all sizes);
- Towels;
- Sleeping bags;
- Small tents;
- Blankets;
- Mosquito repellent and bug spray;
- Canned non-perishable food.

INFO: (201) 336-3540

Hurricane Maria hit Puerto Rico as a Category 4 storm -- the strongest there in 80 years and more powerful than Hurricane Irma -- with winds of 155 mph and a combined 20 inches of rainfall.



It will likely take months before power is restored throughout the island.

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## **Construction Firm Owner Charged With Pocketing \$75K Meant For Sandy Repairs**

By Lauren Carroll

[The Press of Atlantic City](#), October 6, 2017

The owner of a construction company has been charged with theft after taking about \$75,000 of clients' money for personal use, Ocean County Prosecutor Joseph D. Coronato announced.

Darin Smith, 45, of Whiting in Manchester Township, was arrested Wednesday after being indicted Sept. 27. The indictment alleged Smith's contracting company, Heritage Construction Enterprises Corp., entered into contracts with four separate homeowners to repair houses damaged by Hurricane Sandy.

Coronato said the homes are located in Long Branch, Ship Bottom, Tuckerton and Toms River. Smith allegedly took the homeowners' money for personal use and failed to make payments toward the renovation projects, according to the indictment.

Anyone with further information about Smith or Heritage Construction can call the Prosecutor's Office at 732-929-2027.

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## **HURRICANE SEASON**

### **Hurricane Nate Makes Landfall At Mouth Of Mississippi River**

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

Hurricane Nate came ashore at the mouth of the Mississippi River on Saturday and pelted the central Gulf Coast with wind and rain as the fast-moving storm steamed toward the Mississippi coast, where it was expected to make another landfall and threatened to inundate homes and businesses in vulnerable low-lying areas.

Nate was expected to pass to the east of New Orleans, sparing the city its most ferocious winds and storm surge. And its quick speed decreased the likelihood of prolonged rain that would tax the city's weakened drainage pump system.

Still, the city famous for all-night partying was placed under a curfew, effective at 7 p.m., and the streets were not nearly as crowded as they typically are on a Saturday night.

Cities along the Mississippi coast such as Gulfport and Biloxi were on high alert. Some beachfront hotels and casinos were evacuated. Rain began falling on the region Saturday, and forecasters called for 3 to 6 inches with as much as 10 inches in places.

Nate weakened slightly and was a Category 1 storm with maximum winds of 85 mph when it made landfall in a sparsely populated area of Plaquemines Parish. Forecasters had said it was possible that it could strengthen to a Category 2, but that seemed less likely as the night wore on.

Storm surges threatened low-lying communities in southeast Louisiana, eastward to the Alabama fishing village of Bayou la Batre.

"If it floods again, this will be it. I can't live on promises," said Larry Bertron as he and his wife prepared to leave their home in the Braithwaite community of vulnerable Plaquemines Parish. The hurricane veterans lost a home to Hurricane Katrina in 2005 and were leaving the house they rebuilt after Hurricane Isaac in 2012.

Governors in Louisiana, Mississippi and Alabama declared states of emergency. The three states have been mostly spared during this hectic hurricane season.

"This is the worst hurricane that has impacted Mississippi since Hurricane Katrina," Mississippi Emergency Management Director Lee Smithson said Saturday. "Everyone needs to understand that — that this is a significantly dangerous situation."

Louisiana Gov. John Bel Edwards urged residents to make final preparations quickly and stressed that Nate would bring the possibility of storm surge reaching up to 11 feet in some coastal areas.

"It's going to hit and move through our area at a relatively fast rate, limiting the amount of time it's going to drop rain," the Democratic governor said. "But this is a very dangerous storm nonetheless."

Streets in low-lying areas of Louisiana were already flooded. Places outside levee protections were under mandatory evacuation orders and shelters had opened.

Some people worried about New Orleans' pumping system, which had problems during a heavy thunderstorm Aug. 5. The deluge exposed system weaknesses — including the failure of some pumps and power-generating turbines — and caused homes and businesses to flood. Repairs have been made but the system remained below maximum pumping capacity.

On Alabama's Dauphin Island, water washed over the road Saturday on the island's low-lying west end, said Mayor Jeff Collier. Nate was projected to bring storm surges from 7 to 11 feet near the Alabama-Mississippi state line. Some of the biggest effects might be seen at the top of funnel-shaped Mobile Bay.

The window for preparing "is quickly closing," Alabama Emergency Management Agency Director Brian Hastings said.

Florida Gov. Rick Scott warned residents of the Panhandle to prepare for Nate's impact.

"Hurricane Nate is expected to bring life-threatening storm surges, strong winds and tornadoes that could reach across the Panhandle," the Republican governor said. The evacuations affect roughly 100,000 residents in the western Panhandle.

Pensacola International Airport announced it was closing at 6 p.m. Saturday and would remain closed Sunday. However, Louis Armstrong New Orleans International Airport was open Saturday.

"We are urging customers to check with their specific airlines to see whether their flights have been canceled, because there have been some of those," spokeswoman Michelle Wilcut said.

Nate is expected to quickly weaken as it cuts a path through the Southeast on its way to the Mid-Atlantic and Northeastern U.S., which could see its effects early next week.

The storm killed at least 21 people as it strafed Central America.

Waterside sections of New Orleans, outside the city's levee system, were under an evacuation order. About 2,000 people were affected. But not everyone was complying.

Gabriel Black stayed behind because an 81-year-old neighbor refused to leave.

"I know it sounds insane, but he has bad legs and he doesn't have anybody who can get to him," Black said.

Ahead of Saturday night's curfew, some bars were closed in the French Quarter, but music blasted from others.

"We're down here from Philly and we're not going to just stay in our hotel room," said Kelly Howell, who was with friends at the Bourbon Street Drinker.

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## **OPINION**

### **In Puerto Rico, Realities Clash As Locals Piece New Lives Together**

By Bianca Padró Ocasio

[Orlando Sentinel](#), October 7, 2017

People at the airport in Puerto Rico — not long ago the scene of stranded and desperate travelers — now gather for heartbreaking send-offs in front of the TSA checkpoint.

It's bittersweet.

The only sweet part is knowing your family will be safe, your elders will get the medical attention they need, children can keep going to school, college semesters won't be deferred.

That is, for those who can and want to make the "brinquito," or the tiny jump across the ocean. It's the promise of normalcy.

But on the island, where I grew up, remains the familiar bitter taste of struggle.

Puerto Ricans know struggle — they take pride in it — but this struggle feels out of their own hands.

Everywhere photojournalist Ricardo Ramirez Buxeda and I went this week, we saw signs of the painful process of gathering the pieces of a life before Hurricane Maria.

On Tuesday, when President Donald Trump came to assess the damage on the U.S. territory, we headed to Maunabo and Yabucoa, in the southeast part of the island. The satellite GPS rerouted us a few times, because some roads led to private properties, and others were blocked off as municipal workers picked up debris.

We arrived at the home of Ada Rivera in Barrio Talante, whose son Miguel Carmona lives in Orlando. Carmona hadn't heard from her or his own son in Maunabo, so we went to make sure they were fine.

Maunabo is right next to Yabucoa, where the storm first made landfall. Neighbors have been able to clear up their streets, but the area is pitch black and most neighbors are still without water. Cell phone towers are still down.

Rivera, who doesn't have water or power, offered us a cup of coffee.

"I have plenty of water saved up, so don't be shy if you need to use the bathroom," she said.

We, of course, refused, wanting to let them save their resources.

Rivera said that back in Orlando, we knew more about what was happening on Sept. 20 when the hurricane howled through the island than those who were living it.

And when Central Florida's 320,000 Puerto Ricans were yearning for word from the island, family and friends here were just as desperate to let them know they were OK.

On Wednesday, driving into Loíza from the northeast side of the island, Ricardo and I saw people stopping on the side of a bridge, where the iconic Rio Grande de Loíza flowed below just a couple of miles from the beach.

A sewer line under a road that runs along the river had burst, releasing wastewater over the road and into the river.

The stench was unbearable. A man who said he worked in federal security called authorities to respond to it. But it struck me that the lack of communication, of telling the world of what is happening, remains one of the toughest challenges. It still took us two hours to get back into San Juan, at which point I was able to tweet images and get the news of the incident out into the world.

Through all of our reporting, we never called ahead, set up a meeting, asked what time was convenient. We showed up unannounced and in one case, we even had a picture: Do you know this woman? Where does she live?

Everyone invited us in. Like in most tragedies, everyone felt the need to report on their own story: where they were when the hurricane rolled through, who they haven't heard from and what the government isn't doing.

When we went to a cooperative building in Trujillo Alto, south of San Juan, residents found a dozen ways to tell us what Maria's winds sounded like on the day of the hurricane: "...like a chainsaw," "... like a hand slapping for hours against the glass doors," "... like a car alarm that wouldn't go off."

We returned to the metro area at the end of every day to send in our work. Here, another reality emerged. The damage was obvious, but at least there was power and a cell signal and that made a huge difference.

I left the Convention Center in San Juan close to 9 p.m. on Wednesday, the night the governor extended curfew to midnight.

I walked to the nearby Sheraton hotel — where some press members, FEMA, electric, military and essential government workers are staying. Some smoked cigars, sipped on whiskey and finished steak dinners at the hotel's restaurant.

Ricardo and I had to pass through three checkpoints every day to access the press area at the Convention Center. The heavily armed military presence isn't normal. But everyone seemed to act as if it was.

I ran into a friend, another reporter. "Even if everything is upside down, at least if people see the metro area is coming back to life, there is hope that help for everyone else will arrive soon," she said.

On my last night, I went into Río Piedras to see a friend I promised I'd meet before leaving. The bar El Boricua — El Bori, for short — and the streets around it were so packed it was hard to move through the crowd. This is how it usually looks on a Thursday night.

Bargoers talked politics: "Where are the blue tarps! Why do they keep arresting people who violate curfew! I haven't showered in a few days!"

The beer was cold and live salsa played for hours. I ran into more friends who said it was the first time they had left their homes in two weeks.

The next day, I was back in Orlando, reassured that my family and friends will find ways to cope. There are so many more stories to tell.

For me, it's definitely more bitter.

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<b>Date:</b>	2017/10/10 14:41:56
<b>Priority:</b>	Normal
<b>Type:</b>	Note

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



# *Media Analysis Report*

## **Puerto Rico - Hurricanes Irma/Maria DR-4336/4339-PR**

*Tuesday, October 10, 2017, Morning Edition*

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

- The ongoing power shortages, and shortages of saline and drugs dominate much of this edition.
- National media continued to report on Brock Long's remarks yesterday about how Puerto Rico's internal politics have affected the disaster response, as well as coverage of governor's "hell to pay" threat in seeking investigation of distribution bottlenecks ]
- Continued coverage of yesterday's news on the Jones Act waiver expiring and governor's request to Congress for \$4 billion
- This report includes much of the weekend coverage of Puerto Rico taken from this morning's FEMA's National Clips (Bulletin Intelligence)

### **Survivor News and Quotes:**

- Alfred Kenneth Rosas, a big, hale man, said that he and his family were sleeping in a tent on the roof, and joked, "We have our baths both inside and outside now, water has become like our family." – *The New Yorker*, visiting *Sabana Seca*, a strip of houses on the scrubby western outskirts of San Juan.
- "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. – *Washington Post*, visiting *Our Lady of Monte Carmelo Catholic Church* of in Utuado

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

- Brock Long: FEMA suffering battle fatigue after grueling hurricane season's multiple hits
- Long: Federal response to Hurricane Maria hampered by Puerto Rico's political culture and a lack of unity among leaders on the island
- CBS story about PR governor's seeking investigation over aid bottlenecks to municipalities, with "hell to pay" quote
- Jones Act waiver expired and won't be renewed-multiple stories, including reports about desire by some to repeal it altogether
- The Department of Defense took over the distribution of hurricane relief from government officials in Puerto Rico this weekend
- Much of the island still in the dark, three weeks later; downed lines a problem
- Drug and saline shortages hamper medical treatment
- Mainland politicians with Puerto Rican backgrounds are pushing for more aid to the island



- Two features tell of neighbors helping each other recover, and the spiritual aid offered by an inland church that struggled to resume services
- Opinion piece: Trump tells executive branch not to worry about Puerto Rico
- (Spanish) Distribution problems, Pence visit, governor's progress reports among the topics from weekend National FEMA Clips

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## FEMA

### **FEMA chief: Employees suffering ‘battle fatigue’ after hurricanes**

(Washington Times)

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

By [Laura Kelly](#)

Monday, October 9, 2017

[Washington Times](#)

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.”

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## **FEMA administrator: Puerto Rico’s politics, lack of unity, hindering hurricane response (Washington Post)**

By [Joel Achenbach](#) and [Arelis R. Hernández](#) October 9 at 4:53 PM

[Washington Post](#)

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.

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## RECOVERY

### **Puerto Rican governor says there will be "hell to pay" for mishandling supplies (CBS)**

Oct. 9, 2017

[CBS News](#)

Puerto Rico's governor says he's ordered an investigation into food and water distribution and promised there would be "hell to pay" for those mishandling supplies after [Hurricane Maria](#) devastated the U.S. territory.

Ricardo Rossello says an investigation is underway into reports that some areas in Puerto Rico are not collecting and delivering food and water, reports CBS News correspondent David Begnaud.

Rossello spoke with CNN on Monday, saying that 65 to 70 percent of drinking water has been restored to the island. He said there is "one area north" that has around 20 percent of its water restored.

"We're still, obviously, needing to do more. So, for example, we know we're delivering food to all of the municipalities, and water. There were some complaints that that water in some places was not getting to the people so I ordered an investigation," Rossello told the network. "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 also tweeted on Monday that he has ordered prosecutors to "investigate irregular indications in the handling of supplies."

Begnaud, who has [reported extensively](#) on the local and federal response in the wake of the deadly hurricane, reports that U.S. government and local officials say that water still needs to be boiled in Puerto Rico where there is water.

Begnaud says he received images from a man who was in Manatí with his family on Sunday. The pictures showed people standing in long lines waiting to get water on a side of the road where people were using PVC pipes to tap into a stream alongside a mountain.

In a letter to President Trump last weekend, Rossello requested federal funding for relief and [recovery efforts](#). The letter says independent damage assessments in Puerto Rico are as high as \$95 billion -- about 150 percent of the island's gross national product.

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### **US Military Takes Over Hurricane Relief Delivery (Daily Caller)**

[Daily Caller](#), October 8, 2017

The Department of Defense took over the distribution of hurricane relief from government officials in Puerto Rico this weekend after local mayors failed to appropriately disperse the emergency items to the territory's 78 municipalities, The Miami Herald reported Sunday.

According to The Herald, food, water, and medical supplies were previously delivered to 10 regional staging sites in Puerto Rico, but the mayors did not coordinate properly to distribute the large containers of relief at the staging sites.

Instead, 10 to 20 soldiers will be posted in every municipality with vehicles and logistical support, where they will deliver relief to every neighborhood.

"We need to push it directly to the barrio to ensure that everyone's getting it," Brig. Gen. Jose J. Reyes, assistant adjutant general of the Puerto Rico National Guard said. "They will have some

vehicles. They will have radio communications as well as logistics support.... They are going to be living there. They are going to be operating 24/7.”

Florida Republican Sen. Marco Rubio reacted to the news of the hurricane relief being handled by the U.S. military saying in a tweet Sunday night, “[Twelve] days ago said @DeptofDefense must take over @PuertoRicoRelief appears they have finally reached same conclusion.”

More political back and forth over the plight of the island continued when some residents in Puerto Rico’s capital lost power Sunday during an attempt to restore electricity to the territory failed because a substation went down earlier in the day, NBC News reported.

The power outage prompted San Juan Mayor Carmen Yulin Cruz to tweet early Sunday morning, “Power collapses in San Juan hospital with 4 patients now being transferred out. Have requested support from FEMA. NOTHING! @DavidBegnaud”

FEMA Administrator Brock Long responded to the mayor on ABC’s “This Week,” stating: “We filtered out the mayor a long time ago. We don’t have time for the political noise.”

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

By Jessica Kwong

[Newsweek](#), October 9, 2017

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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## **Lawmakers Seek Puerto Rico Exemption To Law That Slowed Aid (AP)**

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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## **The Jones Act Waiver For Puerto Rico Just Expired And Won't Be Renewed (Huffington Post)**

**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.”

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## [FROM THE WEEKEND NATIONAL CLIPS](#)

### **NBC: Puerto Rico-Hurricane Recovery**

. [NBC Nightly News](#) (10/9, story 6, 1:55, Holt, 16.61M) reported, “Now to Puerto Rico where the death toll now stands at 39 in the aftermath of Hurricane Maria. The most critical need right now, rebuilding the shattered power grid on that devastated island. Now some big name billionaires from the tech world are stepping up to offer some help. NBC’s Gabe Gutierrez is there with more.” NBC (**Gutierrez**) added, “Tonight most of Puerto Rico is powerless.” **Unidentified Speaker**: “Water. We need water.” **Gutierrez**: “Nearly three weeks after Hurricane Maria, 85 percent of the island still has no electricity. That’s almost three million Americans. The three-star general spearheading military relief efforts says he’ll take whatever help he can get.” **Lt. Gen. Jeffrey Buchanan**, US Army North:

“The power of America, my own belief, is not the federal government. It’s the local government. It’s private organizations all coming together as one team to help people in the time of need.” **Gutierrez:** “That help could be coming from big tech. Tesla founder Elon Musk saying he wants to help rebuild the island’s power grid using solar technology. How long before this project gets off the ground?” **Gov. Ricardo Rossello,** Puerto Rico: “We’re getting our teams together talking already.” **Gutierrez:** “The potential partnership with Governor Ricardo Rossello started last week over Twitter.” **Rossello:** “We can’t be thinking about just putting back up the old system. We need to take this opportunity to remake the system, to be innovative.” **Gutierrez:** “Other tech giants also want in. Google’s parent company is sending massive balloons to restore cell service. Facebook is launching what it calls a connectivity team to the island. But for so many here, recovery seems far off. Joselli says she waited in a gas line for 17 hours the other day. Now she waits for food and water at a grocery store, chugging along on a generator.” **Unidentified Speaker:** “We have to wake up very early to go to the supermarket to get anything.” **Gutierrez:** “She waits for the day she can tell her seven-year-old son they have power once more. Gabe Gutierrez, NBC News, Isabella, Puerto Rico.”

### **NBC: Puerto Rico-Hurricane Recovery.**

[NBC Nightly News](#) (10/8, story 12, 2:15, Snow, 16.61M) reported, “Finally tonight, for all the hardship we’ve been reporting about in Puerto Rico after Hurricane Maria, we want to tell you about a remarkable effort by one man that’s been having a big impact in recent days. He’s one of the most famous chefs in America, and Ron Mott caught up with him in Puerto Rico.” NBC (Mott) added, “Out of chaos, comfort. Offered slice by slice by steaming, heaping mounds. It’s a recipe for recovery, cooked up by famed Chef Jose Andres, who created the World Central Kitchen in the wake of the Haiti earthquake. The non-profit brought relief to hurricane victims in Houston.” Chef Jose Andres: “People of Houston, the best barbecue chicken.” Mott: “Now, to those in Puerto Rico.” Andres: “You create this bond between the giver and receiver. That’s what you want. The people feel like somebody’s really taking care of them.” Mott: “This massive volunteer force isn’t just a nod to his global humanitarian mission, but an ode to the transforming and healing power of food. Does it feel like work or a calling?” Unidentified Speaker: “We’re having fun. It’s all about having fun and helping others, so it’s more of a calling.” Mott: “Chef Andres quickly assembled his team, infused with an energy to nourish the soul as much the body. She says giving back to the community has helped heal her own personal pain.” Unidentified Speaker: “No matter what, I was still living, and I get around because I don’t have my stuff. But it’s okay.” Mott: “This weekend, they came, they ate, smiled even. A quarter million servings so far. Super good, this woman said. And you got a nice couple of bowls of hot food. How good does that feel?” Unidentified Speaker: “Thanks to God.” Mott: “In a place where finding the next meal is a constant worry for many, a chance to relax, to savor a moment.” Andres: “It’s here and this will be forever the biggest step in my life.” Mott: “Fuel for the long road ahead. Ron Mott, NBC News, San Juan.”

### **NBC: Puerto Rico-Hurricane Recovery.**

#### [NBC Nightly News](#)

(10/7, story 6, 1:50, Diaz-Balart, 6.31M) reported, “Two and a half weeks after Hurricane Maria struck Puerto Rico, the government of the island said today that while 56 percent of residents now have running water, the vast majority still do not have power. While many supermarkets have now reopened, people in more remote areas are still calling for help. We get more from NBC’s Mariana Atencio.” NBC (Atencio) added, “In the town of Comerio, people are pleading for water.” Unidentified Speaker: “From the bottom of my heart, please help us, because we’re dying here.” Atencio: “We’re with a group led by San Juan’s mayor and medical teams from as far away as New

York and California. Susan Gillespie is a nurse practitioner from Oregon.” Unidentified Speaker: “It’s a war zone, they need help here.” Atencio: “Have you seen any sign of supplies coming this way?” Unidentified Speaker: “None, zero.” Atencio: “Medicine?” Unidentified Speaker: “Nothing.” Atencio: “The volunteer doctors and nurses climb this mountainous neighborhood called ‘Cielito,’ which means ‘Heaven,’ to deliver supplies and give medical care. There are around 20,000 people here in the city of Comerio. The mayor says 60 percent of the homes – totally damaged after Hurricane Maria. It’s especially tough on the elderly and sick to get the care they need. You have cancer? Across Puerto Rico, so many are struggling, roughly 90 percent of this island still has no power. Slightly more than half have running water. Today, a bipartisan congressional delegation surveyed the damage. For those in this countryside, help can’t come fast enough. How happy are you to see these doctors from the mainland? Are you happy? That’s a smile we wanted to see. After days of despair, today hope in this village called ‘Heaven.’ Mariana Atencio, NBC News, Puerto Rico.”

### **NBC: Puerto Rico-Hurricane Relief Song. NBC Nightly News**

(10/6, story 13, 2:05, Holt, 7.22M) reported, “Finally tonight, more than two weeks after Hurricane Maria slammed Puerto Rico, that US territory remains in dire need. That’s why Lin-Manuel Miranda, Tony and Grammy award-winning creator of the smash hit ‘Hamilton,’ got some of his fellow music superstars together for a song benefiting the relief effort. Tonight, our Gabe Gutierrez has an inside look.” NBC (Gutierrez) added, “If the song was only about a storm, it wouldn’t be so personal. But for Lin-Manuel Miranda, his new single ‘Almost Like Praying,’ inspired by the West Side Story song ‘Maria,’ cuts deeper. Featuring Jennifer Lopez, Gloria Stefan, and Marc Anthony. The music gives a voice to each of Puerto Rico’s 78 towns.” Lin-Manuel Miranda, actor and writer: “Like many people I have family on the island, and what we all experienced if we weren’t on the island was this terrible silence in the wake of the storm. And our social media feeds were full of the names of town.” Gutierrez: “It’s the latest private voice in the hurricane relief effort. Stephen Colbert raising more than one million dollars getting celebrities to post their awkward adolescent pictures. A group called Vieques Love rallying support for Puerto Rico’s hard-hit southeastern coast. From Houston, still recovering itself from Hurricane Harvey --” Bill Baldwin, Harvey Relief Hub volunteer: “And we give back to any in need, as the nation has done so for us.” Gutierrez: “-- to Asbury Park, New Jersey today, where supplies were rushed to the local food bank en route to San Juan.” Unidentified Speaker: “It is devastating.” Gutierrez: “Deedee Montenero grew up in Puerto Rico and didn’t hear from her 75-year-old mother on the island for days after the storm.” Unidentified Speaker: “The pain is so deep that you can’t even express it. I have cried so much in the past couple of weeks.” Gutierrez: “But for Puerto Ricans, from that pain has come pride. Miranda’s tribute helping make sure 78 towns are not forgotten. Gabe Gutierrez, NBC News, New York.”

### **ABC: Puerto Rico-Hurricane Recovery. ABC World News Tonight**

(10/8, story 6, 0:30, Llamas, 14.63M) reported, “An update on the crisis in Puerto Rico. The mayor of San Juan slamming FEMA’s response again. Tweeting, ‘Power collapses in San Juan hospital with four patients now being transferred out. Have requested support from FEMA, nothing.’ And later, ‘Increasingly painful to understand the American people want to help, and the US government does not want to help.’ Today, FEMA Administrator Brock Long called the mayor’s criticism a political noise and said FEMA is making progress every day, working with the governor.”

## **ABC: Puerto Rico-Hurricane Recovery. ABC World News Tonight**

(10/6, story 7, 0:35, Muir, 7.27M) reported, “To Puerto Rico tonight and new numbers from FEMA. More than two weeks after the storm, just 10 percent of the island has electricity back; a little more than half now has drinkable water. President Trump marking Hispanic Heritage Month at the White House today, stressing the federal government’s commitment, and then pronouncing Puerto Rico this way.” President Trump: “We are also praying for the people of Puerto Rico. We love Puerto Rico. Puerto Rico.” Unidentified Speaker: “We love you.” Trump: “And we also love Puerto Rico.” Muir: “The President on Puerto Rico tonight.”

## **CBS: Puerto Rico-Hurricane Recovery. The CBS Weekend News**

(10/7, story 9, 2:00, Ninan) reported, “Shortly after President Trump praised Puerto Ricans this week for the relatively low death toll from Hurricane Maria, it more than doubled to 34. Dr. Jon LaPook took an aerial tour of the island and saw the overwhelming challenges that still remain.” Nick Prouty, Puerto Rico resident: “There is misery all over this island.” CBS (LaPook) added, “For two weeks, resident Nick Prouty has been flying almost daily runs to pick up the sick and drop off supplies.” Prouty: “The roads seem impassable up here.” LaPook: “Even now, it’s hard to measure the staggering toll of the hurricane.” Prouty: “Where do these people go? There’s absolutely nothing left. These houses are absolutely destroyed. They’re in splinters.” LaPook: “Many of the new deaths are from the island’s rural interior, where most people are still without water, without power, and aid is arriving very slowly. estimates are it will take months to restore electricity.” President Trump: “Flashlights, you don’t need ‘em anymore! You don’t need ‘em anymore!” LaPook: “That’s at odds with the President’s upbeat remark about power to a selected crowd in a church. Further inland, we landed near a community hospital in Utuado. With dwindling supplies, Dr. Jose Villafane is struggling to get help for his sickest patients.” Dr. Jose Villafane, Utuado: “As we stabilize them and try to transfer them to another hospital, they are dying in the other settings.” LaPook: “So they end up dying, either on the way to the hospital elsewhere or in San Juan?” Villafane: “That’s true.” Prouty: “There are people who we haven’t recovered yet that are dead in their houses.” LaPook: “As Prouty looks down, he knows there’s more suffering than he can see.” Prouty: “We don’t see it because we can’t get to those people. No one’s going out to them yet. Finding out who’s in there, who’s missing, it literally – it has to happen on a door-to-door basis.” LaPook: “Puerto Rico’s governor told me the rising toll includes drownings and deaths from mudslides that had not been reported previously. Three deaths were from loss of oxygen when the power went off. Dr. Jon LaPook, CBS News, New York.”

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## **POWER / INFRASTRUCTURE / PUBLIC SERVICES**

### **Most Of Puerto Rico Remains Dark Nearly Three Weeks After Storm (Bloomberg)**

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 Rosselló 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 (NY Times)**

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 María’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 Día, a local newspaper. In a visit to the hospital Thursday, the lights were on, and a worker said a backup generator was powering them. But hospital officials declined a request for comment.

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

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

Across the island, the Army Corps of Engineers has set up 34 huge generators so far, running everything from police departments to water pumping facilities to a Prepa office, according to Lisa

Hunter, a spokeswoman for the Corps. Corps officials said on Friday that 177 other generators arrived late in the week, with some of them headed to the United States Virgin Islands.

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

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

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

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

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

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## **Puerto Rico’s Power Restoration Slowed By Miles Of Downed Lines (Wall Street Journal)**

**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 (Wall Street Journal)**

**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 (Reuters)**

By Scott DiSavino

[Reuters](#), October 6, 2017

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## HEALTH / ENVIRONMENTAL

### **FDA: Drug Shortages Possible Due To Puerto Rico Power Outage (AP)**

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.

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### **Puerto Rico Pharmaceutical Manufacturing Slowed By Hurricane Maria (Washington Times)**

By Laura Kelly



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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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## **Hospitals Scramble To Avert Saline Shortage In Wake Of Puerto Rico Disaster (Washington Post)**

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.

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

(Reuters)

By Robin Respaut And Nick Brown

[Reuters](#), October 6, 2017

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## **CHARITY / HUMAN INTEREST / VOLUNTEER EFFORTS**

### **After Hurricane Maria—and Trump’s Visit—Neighbors Help Each Other in Puerto Rico (New Yorker)**

By [Jon Lee Anderson](#)

October 9, 2017

[New Yorker](#)

On Friday afternoon, more than two weeks after Hurricane Maria made landfall in Puerto Rico, and three days after [President Trump’s breezy, condescending visit](#) to the island, ominous black

rainclouds appeared in the sky above the community of Sabana Seca, a strip of houses on the scrubby western outskirts of San Juan. As a damp wind kicked up, a horse galloped, inexplicably, down the neighborhood's main road, a broken tether trailing behind it.

A huge percentage of the island's population still lacked access to power or drinking water—people were [rigging PVC](#) pipes to distribute mountain spring water in some communities where the faucets were still useless—and officials continued to worry about [how to get relief supplies to the places where they were needed](#). The residents of Sabana Seca, meanwhile, were trying to clean up the mess made by Maria as best they could. Along the road, like some kind of miserable yard sale, they had stacked the possessions they'd been able to extract from the mud: sofas, mattresses, refrigerators, chests of drawers, lamps, clothing, toys. Hard-earned objects, all ruined beyond repair.

Two neighbors, Mariano Rico and Alfred Kenneth Rosas, both in their fifties, were outside, eyeing the darkening skies. Both men's homes had been hit hard by the hurricane. Rico, a white-haired man whose two-story house is painted hot pink, was up a ladder with a hammer and nails, attaching a length of corrugated zinc above his upper veranda. Other salvaged pieces of zinc had already served to repair some of the house's roof panels, which Maria had sent flying. When the flooding came, Rico and his wife, Alicia Rivera, who is disabled, had lost most of the belongings that they had on the first floor. The water, they said, had risen to between four and five feet high. But they were stoic, getting on with the task of reassembling their lives. As Rico worked, Rivera leaned on their second-floor balcony, watching him.

In their front yard was a seventies-era Buick, brown and gleaming, which Rico clearly kept in good shape. During Maria, they'd driven the car to the local mayor's office, to escape the water. It had the look of an American car from before the OPEC oil crisis, all supersized steel and chrome. Next to it was a red GMC pickup truck.

I asked Rico, who makes his living as a handyman, if he'd ever before experienced a storm like Maria. He stopped for a moment. No, he replied. In the forty-five years that he'd lived there, there hadn't been another one like that. And he was betting that there wouldn't be another like Maria, because Rivera, who had lived in Sabana Seca all her life, said she had never been in a storm like Maria, either. If a similar storm were to come, he said, they'd clean up and get on with their lives, just like they were doing now.

Rosas, who is Rico and Rivera's next-door neighbor, had come out of his own house to say hello. "Viene otra agua, vecino," he said to Rico, referring to the clouds—"More water's coming, neighbor." Rico smiled and nodded.

Rosas's house, which is also two stories, was in worse shape than Rico's. A piece of tin had been installed to replace an entire section of wall, and one of the upstairs rooms was still open to the elements. Rosas, a big, hale man, said that he and his family were sleeping in a tent on the roof, and joked, "We have our baths both inside and outside now, water has become like our family." He stood next to the remains of a great mango tree that the storm had felled—and which he and Rico had since cut into several large pieces—and a rusty yellow excavator. He works in construction. The storm had flooded the machine; it now needed some new parts, which he couldn't afford. He pointed to a few other vehicles on the street—they'd all been flooded, as well, and would need repair. Like Rico, he'd lost everything that had been on the first floor of his home. His chickens and roosters had drowned, too.

And the mango tree? Rosas wore a sad, fond expression. "Ninety years," he said. "It saw my family grow, and my grandfather and great-grandfather." He laughed. "She gave sweet fruit, too." He made a smacking noise with his mouth, and laughed again. "I thought she'd make it, but she didn't. That tree had a lot of memories. She knew all the family secrets."

Rosas said that he and Rico were friends, good neighbors who would help each other out. No one from FEMA had come by to assist them yet, but a group—the name of which Rosas couldn't

recall—had given him the tent his family was sleeping in. That was something, he said, gratefully. They'd do their best, in the meantime, and get on with their lives.

We said our goodbyes as the rainclouds finally burst forth. Rosas was a joker. As the drops started to hit the ground, he was reminded of the 1995 Kevin Costner film "Waterworld." "It's like that movie, 'El Mundo Agua,'" he said. "Not all is lost. At least we'll have water." He guffawed.

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## **A light amid the darkness, a Puerto Rico church stands up as its community struggles** (Washington Post)

By [Arelis R. Hernández](#) October 7

[Washington Post](#)

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.

Lake Caonillas, in the mountains of Puerto Rico, was hit hard by Hurricane Maria. For days friends and family were unable to reach each other because roads were impassable and there was no cell service. They found comfort in each other, and their faith. (Zoeann Murphy/The Washington Post)

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 Rodriguez, 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.

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## **POLITICS**

### **Politicians With Puerto Rican Roots Challenge Trump in Push for Aid (NY Times)**

By RICK ROJAS OCT. 9, 2017

[New York Times](#)

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."

Continue reading the main story

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.

A version of this article appears in print on October 10, 2017, on Page A14 of the New York edition with the headline: Anguish Turns to Fury For Leaders With Ties To Ailing Puerto Rico. Order Reprints| Today's

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## OPINION

### **Trump To Executive Branch: Don't Worry About Puerto Rico (Bloomberg)**

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

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## **SPANISH**

### **FROM FEMA NATIONAL CLIPS OCT 6-9, 2017**

#### **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.