

Incident Period for Puerto Rico Earthquakes Now Includes May 2 Tremors

Release Date: mayo 12, 2020

PONCE, Puerto Rico –In the aftermath of a May 2 aftershock that damaged buildings and displaced dozens of residents, FEMA has reopened the incident period for the ongoing earthquake disaster in Puerto Rico.

The action means that people and structures affected by the recent seismic activity may be eligible for FEMA disaster assistance.

“No one can predict exactly if or when another big aftershock will be felt in the south,” said Federal Coordinating Officer Alex Amparo. “Since experts believe this series of earthquakes is all part of the same seismic event and could continue, it makes sense to leave the incident period open for the time being. FEMA remains committed to support the Government of Puerto Rico and the continued recovery needs.”

The initial incident period began with an earthquake Dec. 28, followed by a stronger 6.4 mainshock Jan. 7, and a series of aftershocks. A presidential disaster was declared Jan. 16.

However, several strong earthquakes centered along the island’s southern coast were felt on May 2, including one measuring magnitude 5.4.

As the damage from the May 2 earthquakes in Puerto Rico is collected and assessed, FEMA today amended the incident period to encompass the series of tremors that began Dec. 28, 2019 and are continuing.

The damage is significant and has severely impacted already vulnerable buildings, particularly in the Ponce area where some historical buildings were destroyed. The Colosseum, City Hall and the Administrative Services buildings all sustained damage.



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“At a time when Puerto Ricans are most in need, the flexibility of the FEMA incident period is a great relief for many families who are struggling to recover from the havoc of both the earthquakes and COVID-19. We are thankful to FEMA and the federal government for the support that the people of Puerto Rico will continue receiving,” said COR3 Executive Director Ottmar Chávez.

Public health and safety are of paramount importance, especially during the ongoing COVID-19 pandemic, FEMA and the Government of Puerto Rico will continue working with our partners to respond to the needs of survivors who were displaced from their homes or otherwise affected by the earthquakes.

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FEMA’s mission is helping people before, during, and after disasters. Disaster recovery assistance is available without regard to race, color, religion, nationality, sex, age, disability, English proficiency or economic status. If you or someone you know has been discriminated against, call FEMA toll-free at 800-621-FEMA (3362) or 711 for Video Relay Service. Multilingual operators are available. (Press 2 for Spanish.) TTY call 800-462-7585.
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