

# FEMA Continues Hurricane Fiona Response Efforts

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WASHINGTON -- On Sept. 21, President Joseph R. Biden, Jr. approved Puerto Rico Gov. Pedro Pierluisi's request for an expedited major disaster declaration. The declaration authorizes FEMA to provide individual assistance to survivors in 55 municipalities and public assistance in all 78 Puerto Rico municipalities.

FEMA Administrator Deanne Criswell and Gov. Pierluisi will brief President Biden today on Fiona's impacts and the ongoing federal response. FEMA will work with Puerto Rico officials to begin damage assessments in the coming days to determine additional support to survivors and communities.

FEMA's priorities are to support lifesaving and life-sustaining actions, including restoration of power and water systems. FEMA surged hundreds of employees to Puerto Rico to support the response. This is in addition to 700 staff who live and work on the island.

Disaster survivors who live in the 55 declared municipalities can apply for federal assistance at [www.DisasterAssistance.gov](http://www.DisasterAssistance.gov), by calling 800-621-3362 or by using the [FEMA App](#). Survivors using a relay service, such as a video relay service (VRC), captioned telephone service or others, can give the FEMA operator the number for that service.

## Federal and Partner Actions to Support Areas Affected by Hurricane Fiona

- Five FEMA Incident Management Assistance Teams and five Urban Search and Rescue teams are in Puerto Rico to bolster response efforts. Additionally, Mobile Emergency Response Support, Incident Support Base, Staging Management Teams and Mobile Communication Office Vehicle operators are on the island.
- A FEMA-sponsored State Supplemental Response Team is expected to arrive today.



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- Water Distribution Task Force, federal, commonwealth and private sector members are coordinating water delivery to isolated communities.
- FEMA prepositioned supplies on the island including four strategically located warehouses throughout the island, more than 7 million liters of water, more than 4 million ready-to-eat meals, more than 215 generators, more than 100,000 tarps, more than 28,000 plastic covers and more than 10,300 cots and other emergency supplies.
- U.S. Army Corps of Engineers team management and temporary emergency power teams are in Puerto Rico. A joint generator task force was established to prioritize generator requirements.
- FEMA mental and counseling health resources are available to our FEMA personnel many of whom are survivors themselves and from the island. Mental health resources are available to the broader Puerto Rico community, many who are being retraumatized given that Maria was just five years ago.
- The American Red Cross is working closely with the local government to provide support where needed. More than 190 trained Red Cross volunteers are assessing damage and delivering emergency supplies to shelters where possible.
- U.S. Immigration and Customs Enforcement Routine non-criminal immigration enforcement operations will not be conducted at evacuation sites, or assistance centers such as shelters or food banks. The laws will not be suspended, and we will be vigilant against any effort by criminals to exploit disruptions caused by the storm.
- More than 450 members of the Puerto Rico National Guard are assisting the Puerto Rico government's response by conducting search and rescue, commodity distribution, security operations and more. Additionally, U.S. Customs and Border Protection is supporting the island's search and rescue response.
- The U.S. Department of Health and Human Services declared a public health emergency, giving the Centers for Medicare and Medicaid Services beneficiaries and their health care providers and suppliers greater flexibility in meeting emergency health needs. The department also deployed an Incident Management Team, a Health Incident Management Team and Disaster Medical Assistance personnel.
- The U.S. Department of Agriculture Food and Nutrition Service approved a waiver for the Puerto Rico Department of the Family to allow hot foods to be purchased with Nutrition Assistance Program benefits for one week.



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Additionally, the USDA Food & Nutrition Service approved the Puerto Rico Department of Education application to use USDA Foods for congregate feeding for 2,500 at shelters for five days, starting Sept. 21.

## Stay Alert to Continuing Risks

- **Avoid downed power lines:** Do not touch or drive over downed power lines. Always assume a downed power line is unsafe and contact the power company and emergency personnel.
- **Be aware of areas where floodwaters have receded:** Roads may have weakened and could collapse under the weight of a car.
- **Use a generator safely:** Keep generators far from your home. Never use a generator inside a home, basement, shed or garage even if doors and windows are open as these could allow carbon monoxide to come indoors.
- **Stay safe during extreme heat:** Avoid strenuous work or exercise during the warmest part of the day. Use a buddy system when working in extreme heat and take frequent breaks.
- Download the free [FEMA App](#) (available in English and Spanish) to receive emergency alerts and real-time safety notifications, emergency preparedness tips, and disaster resources. Visit [Ready.gov](#) or [Listo.gov](#) to learn how you can keep yourself, your family, and your pets safe.

