

FEMA and Federal Partners Prepare for Catastrophic Category 5 Hurricane Irma

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Staff and supplies pre-positioned in Puerto Rico and U.S. Virgin Islands

WASHINGTON – The Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA) headquarters in Washington, D.C., its Regional Response Coordination Centers (RRCC) in New York, Philadelphia and Atlanta, and FEMA liaisons to the National Hurricane Center (NHC) in Miami, Florida, are preparing for Hurricane Irma, now a dangerous Category 5 hurricane.

According to the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration, Hurricane Irma could cause catastrophic damage as it passes the U.S. Virgin Islands and Puerto Rico, and potentially heads toward southern Florida.

A state of emergency has been declared by the governors in the U.S. Virgin Islands, Puerto Rico, and Florida.

Approximately 124 FEMA staff have been deployed to the U.S. Virgin Islands and Puerto Rico, with an additional 83 staff currently serving in the FEMA call center in Puerto Rico. FEMA has pre-staged meals and water in preparation for the storm, to be provided as requested by Commonwealth and territory partners. Regional Response Coordination Centers in Atlanta, Georgia, New York, New York, and Philadelphia, Pennsylvania, are all activated with interagency partners to monitor Hurricane Irma, and respond as the storm track changes. FEMA regional and national Incident Management Assistance Teams are on the ground in Puerto Rico and the U.S. Virgin Islands, and en route to Florida.

Additional federal efforts underway

The American Red Cross began issuing hurricane preparedness messaging through the Puerto Rico and U.S. Virgin Islands media 72 hours ago, on how to prepare for a disaster like this, and steps people should take to get ready. The Red Cross is prepared to support or open shelters; potential shelter locations have



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been identified and can be used in areas which might be affected by the storm. They have also alerted disaster volunteers about the oncoming storm to be ready for deployment as needed.

The Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) is preparing for Hurricane Irma now, closing down offices in the storm's path and putting out communications in English and Spanish about ways to prepare. They are working to assess and secure superfund sites ahead of the storm.

The Department of Energy (DOE) is closely monitoring the storm and responders have been pre-positioned with FEMA Incident Management Assistance Teams in Puerto Rico and St. Croix. Responders are also deployed to both the FEMA Region II and IV Coordination Centers.

The National Guard Bureau has deployed Joint Enabling Teams to the U.S. Virgin Islands. Puerto Rico and Florida teams are currently in development. Additional resources being readied are Civil Support Teams, Joint Incident Site Communications Capability, medical, and security assets.

The National Park Service (NPS) in the U.S. Virgin Islands began closing facilities on September 1, and all employees are accounted for. NPS is in the process of pulling all its boats and reports that generators are available. In San Juan, Puerto Rico, the NPS anticipates sending personnel to the U.S. Virgin Islands to pre-stage right before the storm in order to help clear roads. This crew can self-sustain for 7 days.

The DHS **National Protection and Programs Directorate (NPPD)** is preparing to deploy communications representatives and other staff from Regions I and II to the U.S. Virgin Islands and Puerto Rico. Staff are also pre-positioned to support response to an East Coast event.

The **Social Security Administration (SSA)** has preemptively closed all of its offices in Puerto Rico and the U.S. Virgin Islands as of 11 a.m. EDT on Tuesday, September 5. An SSA Emergency Response Team, including representatives from New York (Puerto Rico and Caribbean) and Atlanta Regional Offices, will begin meeting today to plan response and recovery efforts in Irma's aftermath.

The United States Geological Survey USGS is in the process of planning for and installing flood sensors in potentially affected areas.



Preparedness

Now is the time for everyone in the U.S. Atlantic territories, and those living along the U.S. gulf and east coasts to prepare for this potentially catastrophic storm. Hurricane conditions are expected in the U.S. Virgin Islands and Puerto Rico Wednesday. Destructive winds, storm surge, heavy rainfall and flash flooding are possible. There is a growing chance of seeing impacts from Irma in parts of Florida later this week.

- **Update your disaster kit.** Have a three-day supply of non-perishable food, bottled water, a battery-operated radio, flashlight, extra batteries, cash, medicines, first aid kit, pet foods, and important family documents.
- **Know your evacuation routes and prepare options for overnight lodging.** Storm surge can cut off evacuation routes, so do not delay leaving if an evacuation is ordered for your area. If you encounter floodwaters, remember – turn around, don't drown.
- **Develop an emergency communication plan,** which includes a phone number for a family member or friend outside the area—a point of contact—in the event of separation.
- **[Download the FEMA mobile app](#)** (available in English and Spanish) for a customizable checklist of emergency supplies, maps of open shelters and recovery centers, disaster survival tips, and weather alerts from the National Weather Service. The app also enables users to receive push notifications reminding them to take important steps to prepare their homes and families for disasters.

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nation we work together to build, sustain, and improve our capability to prepare for, protect against, respond to, recover from, and mitigate all hazards.



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