

Durable Medical Equipment Arrives for Hurricane Survivors in Need

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ST. CROIX, Virgin Islands – The woman at the Herbert Grigg Home for the Aged seemed a bit hesitant as she tried out her new wheelchair for the first time. Having lost her own wheelchair during Hurricane Maria, the survivor had gone without one for several weeks. But once she was able to maneuver the new chair, a huge smile spread across her face.

“It’s wonderful to see people light up from the inside like this,” said Roxann Crawford, who leads FEMA’s Disability Integration team. “Providing durable medical equipment helps them regain some independence, which improves their overall health and well-being.”

Scenes like this may be repeated many times over in the coming weeks as hundreds of assistive medical devices are delivered to hurricane survivors in need – all of it donated by the Atlanta-based relief organization Friends of Disabled Adults and Children (FODAC).

FODAC, which supplies durable medical equipment free of charge to people with disabilities and access and functional needs, is partnering with the Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA) to get this vital equipment delivered to survivors in the U.S. Virgin Islands. The equipment FODAC is providing includes wheelchairs, walkers, shower supports, hospital beds, nebulizers, CPAP machines and hearing aids. The initiative was made possible as a result of another FEMA partnership, this one with the Pass it On Center, a nonprofit organization that matches donors with communities in need. Pass It On is part of the Georgia Institute of Technology, which identifies and promotes the use of appropriate assistive technology for people with disabilities.

To ensure the donated items get to survivors who need it, FEMA’s Disability Integration specialists have been reaching out to survivors who indicated they have unmet needs for durable medical equipment or other assistive technologies when they registered with FEMA.



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“Our partnerships with voluntary and nongovernmental organizations are crucial to this recovery effort,” said Federal Coordinating Officer William Vogel. “Together we do what government entities alone cannot do – meet survivors’ needs.”

Survivors who lack medical equipment or have other accessibility needs should alert FEMA when registering for assistance or speak to someone on FEMA’s helpline.

Survivors have until the **December 18 deadline** to register with FEMA for assistance. Register at DisasterAssistance.gov or by calling **800-621-3362** (for the Helpline request to speak to a representative). Individuals who have a speech disability or hearing loss and use **TTY** should call **800- 462-7585** directly. Those who use **711** or **Video Relay Service (VRS)** may call **800-621-3362**.

These toll-free telephone numbers operate from 7 a.m. to 11 p.m. (local time) seven days a week. Operators are standing by to assist survivors in multiple languages.

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*Disaster recovery assistance is available without regard to race, color, religion, nationality, sex, age, disability, English proficiency or economic status. If you or someone you know has been discriminated against, call FEMA toll-free at **800-621-3362** (voice, **711/VRS** - Video Relay Service) (TTY: **800-462-7585**). Multilingual operators are available (press 2 for Spanish).*

FEMA’s mission is to support our citizens and first responders to ensure that as a nation we work together to build, sustain, and improve our capability to prepare for, protect against, respond to, recover from, and mitigate all hazards.

For official information on the recovery effort following the hurricanes, please visit www.informusvi.com or www.usviupdate.com. Follow us on social media at twitter.com/femaregion2 and www.facebook.com/FEMAUSVirginIslands.

*To donate or volunteer, contact the voluntary or charitable organization of your choice through the National Voluntary Organizations Active in Disaster (NVOAD) at www.nvoad.org. For those who wish to help, **cash** donations offer voluntary agencies the most flexibility in obtaining the most-needed resources and pumps money into the local economy to help businesses recover. The Community*



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Foundation of the Virgin Islands also has the “Fund for the Virgin Islands” at www.USVIrecovery.org.



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