

Preliminary Damage Assessment Report

Puerto Rico – Tropical Storm Ernesto FEMA-4850-DR

Declared November 27, 2024

On October 15, 2024, Governor Pedro R. Pierluisi requested a major disaster declaration as a result of Tropical Storm Ernesto during the period of August 13-16, 2024. The Governor requested a declaration for Public Assistance for 26 municipalities and Hazard Mitigation for the entire commonwealth. During the period of August 30 to October 11, 2024, joint federal, commonwealth, and local government Preliminary Damage Assessments (PDAs) were conducted in the requested municipalities and are summarized below. PDAs estimate damages immediately after an event and are considered, along with several other factors, in determining whether a disaster is of such severity and magnitude that effective response is beyond the capabilities of the commonwealth and the affected local governments, and that Federal assistance is necessary.¹

On November 27, 2024, President Biden declared that a major disaster exists in the Commonwealth of Puerto Rico. This declaration made Public Assistance requested by the Governor available to commonwealth and eligible local governments and certain private nonprofit organizations on a cost-sharing basis for emergency work and the repair or replacement of facilities damaged by Tropical Storm Ernesto in the municipalities of Aguas Buenas, Aibonito, Añasco, Barranquitas, Canóvanas, Ceiba, Coamo, Comerío, Corozal, Hormigueros, Jayuya, Las Marías, Loíza, Manatí, Maricao, Maunabo, Mayagüez, Naguabo, Orocovis, San Lorenzo, San Sebastián, Santa Isabel, Vega Alta, Vieques, Villalba, and Yabucoa. This declaration also made Hazard Mitigation Grant Program assistance requested by the Governor available for hazard mitigation measures for the entire commonwealth.²

Summary of Damage Assessment Information Used in Determining Whether to Declare a Major Disaster

Individual Assistance – (Not Requested)

- Total Number of Residences Impacted:³ -
 - Destroyed - -
 - Major Damage - -
 - Minor Damage - -
 - Affected - -

- Percentage of insured residences:⁴ -
- Percentage of poverty households:⁵ -
- Percentage of ownership households:⁶ -

- Population receiving other government assistance such as SSI and SNAP: -
- Pre-Disaster Unemployment: -
- Age 65 and older: -
- Age 18 and under: -
- Disability: -
- IHP Cost to Capacity (ICC) Ratio: -
- Total Individual Assistance cost estimate: N/A

Public Assistance

- Primary Impact: Emergency protective measures
- Total Public Assistance cost estimate: \$6,681,289
- Statewide per capita impact:⁷ \$2.03
- Statewide per capita impact indicator:⁸ \$1.84
- Countywide per capita impact: Aguas Buenas Municipality (\$5.94), Aibonito Municipality (\$12.45), Añasco Municipality (\$21.99), Barranquitas Municipality (\$7.81), Canóvanas Municipality (\$5.47), Ceiba Municipality (\$29.71), Coamo Municipality (\$5.91), Comerío Municipality (\$4.68), Corozal Municipality (\$8.11), Hormigueros Municipality (\$5.40), Jayuya Municipality (\$16.25), Las Marías Municipality (\$5.16), Loíza Municipality (\$4.70), Manatí Municipality (\$5.64), Maricao Municipality (\$32.09), Maunabo Municipality (\$14.09), Mayagüez Municipality (\$6.58), Naguabo Municipality (\$6.33), Orocovis Municipality (\$11.97), San Lorenzo Municipality (\$16.53), San Sebastián Municipality (\$13.42), Santa Isabel Municipality (\$5.41), Vega Alta Municipality (\$9.38), Vieques Municipality (\$17.20), Villalba Municipality (\$20.03), and Yabucoa Municipality (\$7.61).)
- Countywide per capita impact indicator:⁹ \$4.60

¹ The Preliminary Damage Assessment (PDA) process is a mechanism used to determine the impact and magnitude of damage and resulting needs of individuals, businesses, public sector, and community as a whole. Information collected is used by the State as a basis for the Governor’s request for a major disaster or emergency declaration, and by the President in determining a response to the Governor’s request (44 CFR § 206.33).

² When a Governor’s request for major disaster assistance under the Robert T. Stafford Disaster Relief and Emergency Assistance Act, as amended (Stafford Act) is under review, a number of primary factors are considered to determine whether assistance is warranted. These factors are outlined in FEMA’s regulations (44 CFR § 206.48). The President has ultimate discretion and decision making authority to declare major disasters and emergencies under the Stafford Act (42 U.S.C. § 5170 and § 5191).

³ Degree of damage to impacted residences:

- Destroyed – total loss of structure, structure is not economically feasible to repair, or complete failure to major structural components (e.g., collapse of basement walls/foundation, walls or roof);
- Major Damage – substantial failure to structural elements of residence (e.g., walls, floors, foundation), or damage that will take more than 30 days to repair;
- Minor Damage – home is damaged and uninhabitable, but may be made habitable in short period of time with repairs; and
- Affected – some damage to the structure and contents, but still habitable.

⁴ By law, Federal disaster assistance cannot duplicate insurance coverage. 42 U.S.C. § 5155 and 44 C.F.R. § 206.48(b)(5).

⁵ Special populations, such as low-income, the elderly, or the unemployed may indicate a greater need for assistance. 44 C.F.R. § 206.48(b)(3).

⁶ Ibid. 44 C.F.R. § 206.48(b)(3).

⁷ Based on State population in the 2020 Census.

⁸ Statewide Per Capita Impact Indicator for FY25, *Federal Register*, October 1, 2024.

⁹ Countywide Per Capita Impact Indicator for FY25, *Federal Register*, October 1, 2024.