

Federal Government Continues Hurricane Maria Response and Relief Operations

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WASHINGTON – The U.S. Department of Homeland Security's Federal Emergency Management Agency's (FEMA) continues to coordinate federal support for U.S. Virgin Islands' and Puerto Rico's response efforts. Federal partners are aggressively working to meet and overcome challenges to opening ports and restoring power to bring additional life-saving commodities and personnel into disaster-affected areas.

FEMA Urban Search & Rescue (US&R) task forces rescued 165 individuals and searched over 45 structures. Of those, approximately 100 people were rescued from a collapsing bridge in Puerto Rico today. Four US&R task forces are stationed in the Caribbean with another eight teams en route. The **U.S. Coast Guard (USCG)** is conducting search and rescue operations in St. Croix, and in the surrounding waters, and so far rescued 15 individuals.



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FEMA Urban Search & Rescue teams VA-TF1 & CA-TF6, USFS & BLM Force Protection found a cut-off neighborhood in Puerto Rico via air. Accessed and able to provide medical care. (Sept. 23, 2017)

The **U.S. Department of Transportation (DOT)** successfully opened five airports in Puerto Rico, and two airports in the U.S. Virgin Islands, for military and relief flights to bring in commodities, and lifesaving and life-sustaining resources. Federal partners established a fuel distribution site in San Juan for federal and local entities, to support first responder and critical facility needs.

Flights and sea vessels loaded with commodities are arriving or awaiting airport/port clearance for delivery:



- Six commercial barges transported and delivered meals, water, generators, cots, and other commodities to Puerto Rico and the U.S. Virgin Islands.
- An air bridge is established, flying three flights per day to St. Croix, each carrying approximately 33,000 meals.
- The logistics support ship SS Wright arrived carrying more than 1.1 million meals, and nearly one million liters of freshwater.
- Two shipping barges with 1.2 million liters of water, 31 generators, and more than 6,000 cots arrived in St. Thomas.
- Two additional shipping barges loaded with food, water, and emergency relief supplies are en route to the Caribbean Sea from Florida.
- Millions of additional meals are being flown to Puerto Rico from staging areas in Kentucky and Florida.
- The **Defense Logistics Agency (DLA)** is transporting a shipment of 124,000 gallons of diesel fuel to Puerto Rico, with arrival in the coming days.

Federal Efforts Underway as of September 23, 2017

- The **American Red Cross (ARC)** continues to work with government officials and partners in Puerto Rico and the U.S. Virgin Islands. This includes nearly 180 Red Cross volunteers and staff. They are also [working with the International Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies to bring relief to people on the islands.](#)
- **U.S. Department of Defense (DoD)**
 - The **U.S. Army Corps of Engineers (USACE)** and **National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration (NOAA)** survey crews continue hydrographic surveys of San Juan Harbor to assess channel conditions for lifting port restrictions. Members of the 249th Prime Power Battalion are in Puerto Rico supporting power restoration activities. Additional generators and installation team members are en route to assist with support for emergency temporary power. The first Right of Entry center opened in St. Thomas on September 22, and [the first Blue Roof in St. Thomas was completed today.](#)
 - The **U.S. National Guard Bureau (NGB)** is responding to Hurricane Maria with more than 1,600 service members conducting security and support operations. Additional National Guard personnel are preparing to respond.
 - In Puerto Rico, while damage assessments continue, the National Guard established two Joint Incident Site Communications Capabilities to help restore communication for the military and local communities to utilize around the island. As damage assessments are completed, the National



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Guard remains ready to fulfill the needs of the governor.

- In the U.S. Virgin Islands, the National Guard provided special-tactics personnel who were able to clear airfields and establish tower operations in St. Thomas and St. Croix for military aircraft. Search and rescue operations, security and law enforcement support, as well as route clearance and life-sustainment commodity distribution continue.
- **U.S. Northern Command (NORTHCOM)** remains partnered with FEMA and the governments of Puerto Rico and U.S. Virgin Islands, and engaged in disaster relief and assistance to the areas affected. As assessments of the area continue, and as more air and sea ports are developed, providing medical support to the affected areas continues to be a priority. The Department of Defense is supporting this need with fixed wing aeromedical evacuation from St. Croix and the return of the Army Area Support Medical Company to St. Thomas. Additionally, air traffic control capabilities in St. Thomas will increase significantly with the return of the Federal Aviation Administration tower and Instrument Landing System. The USS Kearsarge Amphibious Ready Group continues beach assessments for ship-to-shore movements, which will allow for key response capabilities to enable route clearance operations and distribution.
- **U.S. Department of Energy (DOE)** is working closely with the Western Area Power Administration (WAPA), the American Public Power Association, the Department of Defense, and FEMA to facilitate mutual aid for the U.S. Virgin Islands and Puerto Rico. Initial damage assessments and power restoration efforts continue on Puerto Rico and the Virgin Islands. DOE is working closely with FEMA and the Defense Logistics Agency to facilitate fuel for generators and response efforts on St Thomas, to alleviate any potential fuel shortages. They are coordinating with the Puerto Rico Electric Power Authority (PREPA), FEMA and industry to transport additional crews to the island to support damage assessments. DOE is posting Situation Reports [here](#), and WAPA is posting updates [here](#).
- The **Environmental Protection Agency** issued a No Action Assurance (NAA) for mobile power generators for hurricane recovery efforts in Puerto Rico on September 22, 2017. This NAA is in the public interest and is issued at the request of the Governor of Puerto Rico.
 - EPA has important resources available online in English and Spanish about floodwaters, hazardous debris, household hazardous waste, and other hurricane impacts. For information and updates, visit:



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www.epa.gov/hurricane-maria.

- The **Federal Communications Commission** is monitoring the status of communications networks in the areas affected by Hurricane Maria and created a [dedicated webpage](#) for daily communications status reports, information, and resources related to the Hurricane.
- The **General Services Administration (GSA)** is assembling a team of skilled employees to deploy to the area as soon as possible to augment their Caribbean-based employees for damage assessments of GSA properties and management of federal agency leases. USA.gov and GobiernoUSA.gov continue to support federal agency messaging on their home pages and are compiling federal agency updates and messaging on their Hurricane Maria pages found at <https://www.usa.gov/hurricane-maria>, <https://gobierno.usa.gov/huracan-maria>.
- The **U.S. Department of Health and Human Services (HHS)** is working with commonwealth and territory officials, and the **Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC)**, to assess medical and public health needs that federal government medical and public health teams can meet. Additional HHS medical teams continue to provide care for dialysis patients who were evacuated from St. Thomas to Miami.
- The **U.S. Food and Drug Administration (FDA)** is [working closely with pharmaceutical and device companies with manufacturing sites in Puerto Rico](#) to prevent shortages of medically necessary drugs and devices.
- **U.S. Coast Guard** damage assessment teams, working with the **U.S. Army Corps of Engineers** and **National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration**, were able to open the Port of San Juan, Puerto Rico, for daylight operations. All other ports in Puerto Rico remain closed while those teams work to ensure the ports are safe for commencing operations. A Coast Guard mobile communications convoy is en route to Puerto Rico to help improve communications across the storm-impacted area. Coast Guard personnel continue to deliver critical FEMA relief supplies to Puerto Rico and the U.S. Virgin Islands.
- The **U.S. Department of the Interior (DOI)** currently has 96 personnel supporting the response under FEMA mission assignments, helping recovery efforts, providing search and rescue teams, storm and flood monitoring information, law enforcement and other assistance. Additional personnel are being deployed, and more than 2,000 others in the department volunteered for surge deployment to all affected areas.



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- **Portlight Inclusive Disaster Strategies** is providing 12 generators to the Puerto Rico Center for Independent Living and The University Center for Excellence on Developmental Disabilities. These will be used to set up power stations for people with disabilities to power their wheelchairs and other assistive technologies. For more information, visit their [webpage](#).
- **U.S. Postal Service (USPS)** facilities on Puerto Rico and the U.S. Virgin Islands are closed—there are no retail services, package or mail pick up at any USPS location. Customers can find the latest service statuses at [USPS Service Alerts](#).



The crew of the Coast Guard Cutter Donald Horsley delivers food and water from FEMA to Vieques, Puerto Rico, Sept. 22, 2017. The crew offloaded 750 liters of bottled water and 1,440 meals. (U.S. Coast Guard photo courtesy of Coast Guard Cutter Donald Horsley)



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