2017 HURRICANE MARIA: Resource Guide

Archived

Generated November 24, 2026 · 6 open facilities · closed facilities are not listed · call before you go: details change quickly

CA

Fuel Relief Fund HQ

Info/Hotline · Open

Non–Profit, Disaster Relief

HQ: 4344 Latham Street, Suite 230,, Riverside, CA 92501

Phone U.S.: 1–909–322–1481
Web www.fuelrelieffund.org
Checks payable to Fuel Relief Fund
Service Temporary

Fuel Relief Fund had to leave Haiti when supportive funds ran dry. They worked long and hard to secure grants to be able to return to continue their urgently needed disaster relief and recovery efforts with fuel, but ultimately it was not to be. They served a vital and life saving purpose for several months after the 1/12/10 Earthquake in Port–au–Prince and its surrounding neighborhoods, such as Croix–des–Bouquets, Grantier, Petion–Ville, Carrefour, Fontamarra, Bel–Air, all of Delmas, Bon–Repos, Cite Militaire delivering fuel for generators and ambulances and so much more.

BLOG: http://fuelrelieffund.wordpress.com/
FACEBOOK: http://www.facebook.com/pages/FuelReliefFundorg/255001598753
TWITTER: http://twitter.com/fuelrelieffund

Services offered: Donations, Disaster Fund; Fuel, * (ANY/ALL Types); Information Resource * (ANY/ALL Types); Information Resource, Online Networking, Blog; Information Resource, Online Networking, Facebook Page/Group; Information Resource, Online Networking, Twitter Page/Twitter Feeds; Support for "All" Disasters
Campaigns: 2005 Hurricane Katrina; 2010 /2011 Haiti Cholera Epidemic; 2010 Haiti Earthquake; 2010 Oil Spill Gulf of Mexico; 2010 US Severe Storms and Flooding; 2011 Hurricane Irene/Tropical Storm Irene; 2011 Japan Earthquake/Tsunami/Nuclear Disasters; 2012 Hurricane Sandy; 2013 Philippines Super Typhoon Haiyan–Yolanda; 2017 Hurricane Harvey; 2017 Hurricane IRMA Response; 2017 HURRICANE MARIA; 2019 "HURRICANE DORIAN"; Do Your Part; Ending Extreme Poverty; Fuel Relief Fund; Helping Yemen Survivors

Updated Nov 15, 2013 · https://reliefdb.org/shelters/5594

OR

Reach Out WorldWide (ROWW)

Info/Hotline · Open

OR

Phone 626–421–6561
Web roww.org
Service Temporary

DEPLOYMENTS
West Coast Wildfires 2020
What: Immediate Emergency Supply Distribution
When: September 2020
Why: West Coast Wildfires

West Coast Wildfires 2020
ROWW is responding to the unprecedented wildfires that are scorching the west coast and is currently in

Phase 1: Immediate Emergency Supply Distribution. We have partnered with Direct Relief and Lowe's Home Improvement to distribute hygiene kits, first aid and emergency preparedness kits, wildfire kits, tarps, EZ ups, pet cages, generators, medical supplies, PPE, and more to the thousands of displaced people all across the State of Oregon.

As active fires die down and recovery needs shift, ROWW will transition to
Phase 2: Response Kits (generators, fuel, tarps, portable heaters, shovels, chainsaw oil, clean up supplies, etc). We hope to send in teams and potentially heavy equipment to help with physical debris removal and clean up.

Our Phase 3: Long Term Recovery may include rehabilitation projects, appliance packages, shed construction, and more to be determined as we assess individual needs.

If you or someone you know are displaced due to the fire and have immediate needs, please contact us for information on how to access these resources from our current Phase 1 response.
https://roww.org/project/west–coast–wildfires–2020/

RESOURCES FOR POTENTIAL VOLUNTEERS
To apply to volunteer, email responders@roww.org and ask for our volunteer application.
https://roww.org/volunteer/

FACEBOOK:
https://www.facebook.com/reachoutworldwide

Reach Out WorldWide is constantly looking for great new volunteers to add to Team ROWW. We recruit all sorts of volunteers, from day volunteers for local events to specialized personnel to lead our teams responding to natural disasters.

We are primarily recruiting chainsaw operators, doctors, nurses, EMTs, paramedics, firefighters, contractors/construction workers, and heavy equipment operators.

Some experience with disaster relief, EMS, military and/or construction is preferred depending on the type of deployment.

Alabama Tornado
If you do not have any relevant experience, that's ok, too! When we travel, we are always looking to recruit local volunteers. You never know when a disaster may strike near you.

We've arrived! The @directrelief supplies are being flown in and our team of volunteers is transporting them to various distribution centers from Eugene to Southern Oregon for victims of the ongoing wildfires. Our teams have also loaded up tons of supplies from @loweshomeimprovement to get people back on their feet. As more and more planes arrive we'll be continue caravanning the loads to those who need it the most. Stay strong everyone!

To get involved please head to the link in our bio!
#ROWW #ReachOutWorldWide #Wildfire #EmergencyResponse #OregonStrong

Also:
To get involved please head to the link in our bio! #OregonFires #Eugene #Talent #Medford #PhoenixOregon #roseburgoregon #Nonprofit #HelpEachOther

Services offered: Cleanup, Mud–Out, Muck–Out, Flood Cleanup, Volunteer Services; Cleanup, Tree Cutting and Removal, Volunteer Services; Cleanup, * Volunteer Services (ANY/ALL Types); Distribution * (ANY/ALL Types); Distribution, Disaster Relief Supplies; Events, Donation Drive; First Responder, Gulf Region; First Responder, International; First Responder, Nationwide (All U.S. Regions); First Responder, West Coast Region; First Responder, Worldwide; First Response Supplies/Items * (ANY/ALL Types); * KITS, MUCK–OUT, FLOOD KITS; NEEDS, Wishlist Available online; Services, Disaster Recovery ; Services, Disaster Relief; Services, Disaster Response; Services, Disaster Response, Recovery, Preparedness & Mitigation; Tarps; Volunteer Opportunities, In General * (ANY/ALL Types); Volunteer Opportunities, International; Volunteers, Short Term Volunteer Opportunities; Volunteer, Volunteer Registry, Online
Campaigns: 2010 Chile Earthquake; 2010 Haiti Earthquake; 2011 Alabama Tornado; 2011 Other Disasters; 2013 Philippines Super Typhoon Haiyan–Yolanda; 2016 Lousiana Flood; 2017 Hurricane Harvey; 2017 Hurricane IRMA Response; 2017 HURRICANE MARIA; 2018 HURRICANE FLORENCE; 2019 "HURRICANE DORIAN"; 2020/2021 Pandemic, Coronavirus/ COVID–19; 2020 Hurricane Laura; 2020 Oregon Fires; Direct Relief International
Updated Sep 20, 2020 · https://reliefdb.org/shelters/10357

PR

Hurricane Maria, Disaster Response resource list/reputable–places–to–donate, Solidarity resources

Info/Hotline · Open

PR

Web Service docs.google.com/document/d/1NQ1LZWqBmFN–F6sWzfjBTs_4Nem9v6Ud7eOf86q_ik8/edit
Temporary

List of resources, posted on the New Economy Coalition's site:

https://neweconomy.net/resources/building–solidarity–economy–nyc
scroll down and see the link of the right.

Here's a direct link: https://t.co/OhU8WJMSqW

or: https://docs.google.com/document/d/1NQ1LZWqBmFN–F6sWzfjBTs_4Nem9v6Ud7eOf86q_ik8/edit

Thanks Arlene Dávila @arlenedavila1 for posting the link on the New Economy Coalition's feed!

Here's the list on 8/25...go to the above links for updates!

This Document Contains (in the following order):
Reputable Puerto Rican Organizations To Donate To (both on/off the island)
Local Specific Item Donation Efforts on the U.S. Mainland
Volunteer Organizations/Registration for Relief Work in Puerto Rico

*NOTE: Efforts to get necessary goods to PR requires work off the island, which is why orgs on the mainland that consistently serve the island (like National Boricua Human Rights Network in Chicago) are so important to support. Also, if you're interested in volunteering, please register for one of the orgs below rather than just showing up on the island. It is important that relief efforts are organized during these difficult times.

Taller Salud:
http://tallersalud.com
This is the link for donations for Irma, but I don't know when they will have something for Maria:
https://www.paypal.com/donate/?token=rqciqVu7pc7L5Dz3ObJpjssU4MMv38Uf3_bPG5Ppro55Do6z_peCCkpQqhYkWzOAYxge-m&country.x=US&locale.x=US
You can also donate directly through their Facebook page: https://www.facebook.com/taller.salud/

National Boricua Human Rights Network
http://boricuahumanrights.org/?page_id=6588
Make checks payable to:
National Boricua Human Rights Network Chicago
Attn: Puerto Rico Hurricane Relief Fund
PAYPAL: PRHurricaneRelief@boricuahumanrights.org

Comedores Sociales de Puerto Rico
https://www.cdpecpr.org/comedores-sociales-de-puerto-rico

Sustainable Farming Support: Organización Boricuá de Agricultura Ecológica de Puerto Rico
A 28-year-old grassroot organization that works and promotes agroecology within the food sovereignty struggle. Boricuá, is the official Chapter in Puerto Rico of the international peasant movement: La Vía Campesina (LVC)- Coordinadora Latinoamericana de Organizaciones del Campo (CLOC). Boricuá, is a network of peasants (campesinos/as), farmers, farm workers, educators and activists that are deeply involved in a national social justice movement that builds a sustainable agriculture platform for small and medium scale peasants and farmers. Recently hurricane María had a great impact in Puerto Rico. The country is completely classified as a disaster zone. All of the agriculture is gone. Even though ageoecology farms have been proven to be resilient, the impact of María was so strong that green landscapes and ecosystems in Puerto Rico are now brown with lots of fallen trees. So, we are asking anyone that can help to donate whatever you can to help our organization and peasant network bounce up again. You can donate directly to the Organización Boricuá bank account, Banco Popular Account: #162039034 or by PayPal: organizacion.boricua@gmail.com

Institute for Socio Ecological Research (ISER) Caribe
My friend Ryan Hamilton is working with www.isercaribe.org to coordinate the purchasing of water filtration units of 60 gallon capacity that can be deployed in affected areas of Puerto Rico. Each system is $200. ISER Caribe is a recognized non profit so all you donations are tax deductible
CUENTA DE BANCO /BANK ACCOUNT INFO
Institute for Socio Ecological Research Inc.
PO Box 3151
Lajas , PR 00667-3151
Via Cabo Rojo Coop
Routing Number 221582310
Account#/ NÚMERO DE CUENTA 1011724826
or click here to donate via paypal
If interested in contributing to this effort please don't hesitate to contact ryanamhamilton@gmail.com with any questions

Maria Fund:
This is being managed by the Center for Popular Democracy
http://www.mariafund.org

Acacia Network
http://donatepuertorico.com

Fondos Unidos de Puerto Rico
tel: (787) 728-8500
http://www.fondosunidos.org/

Caritas Puerto Rico
tel: 787 300-4953
http://www.caritas.org/where-caritas-work/latin-america/puerto-rico/

Fundación Comunitaria de Puerto Rico
tel: 787-721-1037
https://www.fcpr.org/

Maria & Irma: Puerto Rico Real-time Recovery Fund
ConPRmetidos

tel: 787-773-1100
https://www.generosity.com/emergencies-fundraising/maria-irma-puerto-rico-real-time-recovery-fund

Hurricane Maria Children's Relief Fund
https://secure.savethechildren.org/site/c.8rKLIXMGIpI4E/b.9535647/k.A2B9/Hurricane_Maria_Childrens_Relief_Fund/apps/ka/sd/donor.asp

Animal Donations:

Animals of Culebra
https://www.gofundme.com/animals-of-culebra

Save a Gato
https://www.facebook.com/SaveAGato/photos/a.191642147528600.56883.173919355967546/2039442979415165/?type=3
PayPal : SaveAGatoPR@gmail.com
https://www.paypal.com/cgi-bin/webscr?cmd=_s-xclick&hosted_button_id=EK2QUZU4AQYSL

Specific Item Donations
Local Drop Off Donation Locations *NOTE: I do not know much about this doc, so please do your due diligence and look into the org/drop off location to ensure you feel comfortable donating there
https://docs.google.com/spreadsheets/d/1fyalhL8afPuAZ5gPbLI_oevEKGHXrJ7nYglMYY6O03s/edit?usp=sharing

For Volunteers/Para Voluntariado-
*note orgs ask that people not go to Puerto Rico to help on their own as they could create an additional burden

Centro Para el Desarrollo del Voluntariado
https://www.voluntariospuertorico.com/huracanmaria

Project Hope medical volunteers
http://volunteer.samaritan.com/recruiter/index.php?recruiterID=505&class=OppDetails&oppGuid=%7B2967653F-3B97-4308-8F14-FA4FFA0DAAA0%7D&t=Hurricane-Maria-Emergency-Response-Efforts

Puerto Rico Chapter: Voluntary Organizations Active in Disaster
http://prvoad.communityos.org/cms/irma
*volunteers interested in connecting with public services and disaster relief organizations.

Tech Help:
If you have coding, programming, or technical skills, Startups of Puerto Rico has opened a registry to connect with organizations or agencies with pressing needs in Puerto Rico.
This "inventory" of talent will be connected with opportunities to help develop support services or create and innovate new solutions.

Federal Employee Volunteer:
http://prfaa.pr.gov/federalscf/
If available, please send an email to surgecapacityforce@prfaa.pr.gov and include your name, federal agency, position, and location. Also indicate if you are fluent in Spanish, if you have an ICS qualification, and a background in law enforcement, military, search and rescue, or any other prior emergency response participation effort.
Campaigns: 2017 HURRICANE MARIA; Economic Solidarity and Cooperativism; Social Activists/Organizers; Social Change Initiative
Updated Sep 25, 2017 · https://reliefdb.org/shelters/10103

VOX update on Puerto Rico disaster relief

Info/Hotline · Open

PR

Web www.vox.com/science-and-health/2017/9/26/16365994/hurricane-maria-2017-puerto-rico-san-juan-humanitarian-disaster-electricty-fuel-flights-facts
Service Temporary

NON-PROFIT VIEW...no "solidarity" resources identified in this article yet"

source: see link/pictures above.

What every American needs to know about Puerto Rico's hurricane disaster
9 essential things to know about Puerto Rico's humanitarian crisis.
Updated by Brian Resnick and Eliza Barclay Sep 29, 2017, 3:16pm EDT
Irma Maldanado stands with Sussury, her parrot, and her dog in what is left of her home in Corozal, Puerto Rico on September 27. Joe Raedle/Getty Images

* tweet
* share

Early on Wednesday, September 20, Hurricane Maria, a powerful Category 4 hurricane with 150 mph winds, made direct landfall on Puerto Rico, bisecting the entire island and drenching it with feet of rain. What's happened since has been truly catastrophic for Puerto Rico.

There's still no power on the island, with the exception of generators. A few are powering the highest-priority buildings like hospitals, but fuel shortages mean the rest lie unused. In many places there's no water to drink or bathe in or to flush toilets. There's limited food and cell service, and dozens of remote villages have been completely from everything cut off for 9 days.

"Make no mistake — this is a humanitarian disaster involving 3.4 million US citizens," Puerto Rico Gov. Ricardo Rosselló said Monday.

The initial recovery response from the US federal government has been lackluster, and President Trump's comments have not inspired confidence. After dwelling on early in the week the facts that 1) Puerto Rico is an island, and 2) Puerto Rico is in massive debt, the president and his senior officials then went on the defensive, describing the administration's response so far as a "good news story."

This is still a terrible disaster that deserves more coverage and a better coordinated response — and both appear to have been impeded by widespread confusion about Puerto Rico's relationship to the United States and the severity of its current situation. Here's what every American needs to know.

1) 3.4 million US citizens live in Puerto Rico, and they are entitled to the same government response as any state. But half of Americans don't even know that.

Wikimedia Commons

According to a new Morning Consult poll published in the New York Times, only 54 percent of Americans know that Puerto Ricans are US citizens. The poll found 81 percent of those who knew Puerto Ricans were citizens supported sending to aid to the island. Just 44 percent of those who didn't know said the same.

Puerto Ricans have been citizens of the United States since 1917, when President Woodrow Wilson signed the Jones-Shafroth Act. Citizens mean citizens. Puerto Ricans can travel freely to and from the continental United States without a passport. They're protected by the same Bill of Rights as anyone else born in the United States. They vote in presidential primaries.

The island does not get electoral votes in general presidential elections. It also does not have voting representatives in Congress. Jenniffer González-Colón serves as resident commissioner of Puerto Rico, a non-voting member of the US House of Representatives.

If Puerto Rico were a state, it would be the 30th most populated — with more people than Wyoming, Vermont, and Alaska combined.

"[Puerto Ricans] are entitled to the same response from the federal government as the citizens of New York or Kansas would be if they were visited by a natural disaster on the scale of Hurricane Maria," the editors of America Magazine, a Catholic publication, wrote on Monday. "Although the United States has long benefited from the geographical reach they provide … [island territories] have been taken for granted and denied full political representation. Hurricane Maria is a reminder that this two-tiered system of American citizenship is neither democratic nor tenable."

2) Hurricane Maria was like a 50-mile-wide tornado that made a direct hit on the island

NASA Earth Observatory images by Joshua Stevens

This hurricane season has been punishing for Puerto Rico. First, it got clipped by Hurricane Irma, a huge Category 5 storm whose eye passed just north of the island. That storm — which had ravaged several Caribbean islands — left 1 million people without power on Puerto Rico. By the time Maria hit, 60,000 people were still without electricity. That means there are many people on the island who haven't had power for 20 days (Irma passed by on September 7).

Maria was a slightly smaller storm, but it was far, far more devastating. That's because it charted a course directly over Puerto Rico, hit near its peak intensity, and passed around 25 miles away from San Juan, the capital, which is home to about 400,000 people. No nation or territory could suffer such a direct hit without some damage.

"It was as if a 50- to 60-mile-wide tornado raged across Puerto Rico, like a buzz saw," Jeff Weber, a meteorologist with the National Center for Atmospheric Research, says. "It's almost as strong as a hurricane can get in a direct hit."

The path Maria followed through Puerto Rico.

By the record books, it was the fifth-strongest storm ever to hit the US, and the strongest storm to hit the island in 80 years. "The devastation is vast," Gov. Rosselló said in a statement. "Our infrastructure and energy distribution systems suffered great damages."

3) Water, food, and fuel are scarce on the island. The airports are a mess. Power will be out for months in some places.

FEMA

Exact figures on the extent of the damage and the costs of repairs on the island are not yet known. This is partly due to the fact that communications on the island are strained. But it's also because many roads are damaged and it's hard to get around. AIR Worldwide, a catastrophe risk consultancy, estimates the storm caused $40 billion to $85 billion in insurance claims throughout the Caribbean, with 85 percent of those losses in Puerto Rico.

Photos show whole communities with roofs torn off, second floors of houses ripped apart, water flooding the streets, and people resorting to waiting in long lines for clean water and fuel. In reports, the word "apocalyptic" is used often.

More concretely, we do know that Puerto Rico's infrastructure is severely crippled. These are major problems that will make living even in an intact house more difficult in the coming weeks and months.

Power is out across the island — and Puerto Rico's energy system was troubled to begin with

The storm knocked out 80 percent of the island's power transmission lines, the Associated Press reports. And as of Thursday, nearly all of the island's 1.57 million electricity customers were still without power. Many people have generators, and new ones are being distributed, but most homes and businesses are dark because of the ongoing troubles distributing the fuel to run the generators.

In the photos below, NOAA compares what the lights of Puerto Rico looked like from space on a calm night in July, and then compare it to what the island looked like post-Hurricane Maria. The faint lights that remain are powered by gas generators. Also notice the islands St. Thomas, St. Croix, and Tortola are now almost entirely dark.

It could be four to six months before power is fully restored on the island. That's half a year with Puerto Rico's 3.4 million residents relying on generators, half a year without air conditioning in the tropical climate, half a year that electric pumps can't bring running water into homes, half a year when even the most basic tasks of modern life are made difficult.

PREPA, the electric company on the island, has a massive $9 billion debt, as Vox's Alexia Fernández Campbell has explained, and in July it defaulted on an interest payment. For years, it hasn't had the money to invest in modernizing Puerto Rico's electrical systems. Even without hurricanes, power outages are frequent on the island. Making things worse: There aren't enough workers to fix the infrastructure. Young people have been leaving the island in droves as the economy has tightened, and older workers have been retiring en masse, securing their pensions.

Rebuilding the system on the island will be a long and difficult process. Getting the power back on in Puerto Rico "will be daunting and expensive," the New York Times explains. "Transformers, poles and power lines snake from coastal areas across hard-to-access mountains. In some cases, the poles have to be maneuvered in place with helicopters."

Officials are currently prioritizing getting power back on for hospitals.

Fresh water is scarce
A woman collects water from an open road drainage of a natural spring created by the landslides in a mountain next to a road in Corozal, southwest of San Juan. Ricardo Arduengo/AFP/Getty Images

No electricity means no power to pump water into homes, no water to bathe or flush toilets. FEMA said Thursday that 42 percent of people on the island are without potable water. USA Today reported that Arecibo, a town on the northern shore of the island, had only one source of fresh water: a single fire hydrant. Rescue workers have been distributing bottled water, but it's safe to assume many people haven't received any yet.

Cellphone towers are knocked out

The storm knocked out 1,360 out of 1,600 cellphone towers on the island. Many communities have been isolated from the outside world for days, relying only on radios for news. National Guard members told the Daily Beast they were struggling to communicate on the ground, making their ability to respond to the disaster exceptionally hard. "There's no communication, that's the problem," said Capt. Jeff Rutkowski.
Javier Zarracina/Vox

The cellular outage also means that family on the mainland, or abroad, can't get in touch with those on the island to find out if they're safe.

The status of most hospitals is still unknown

FEMA says 1 hospital is fully operational, while 56 are partially operational, and 5 are closed. The ones that are open are running on generators, but there are serious issues with distributing fuel, and only 19 have received fuel deliveries. So there's still limited access to X-ray machines, and other diagnostic and life-saving equipment. Few operating rooms are open, which is scary, considering an influx of patients with storm-related injuries.

"Two people died yesterday because there was no diesel in the place where they were... In San Juan, a hospital," San Juan Mayor Carmen Yulín Cruz told CBS News in an emotional interview Tuesday. "We need to get our shit together."

"I know that leaders aren't supposed to cry...But we are having a humanitarian crisis here," San Juan mayor tells @DavidBegnaud pic.twitter.com/pa7Hd6HZ1n
— CBS News (@CBSNews) September 26, 2017

And the health crisis on the island could grow if power is not soon restored, as Vox's Julia Belluz reports.

"Just about every interaction with the health system now involves electricity, from calling a hospital for help to accessing electronic medical records and powering lifesaving equipment like hemodialysis machines or ventilators," Belluz writes.

Farms are decimated

Agriculture is a small part of the Puerto Rican economy, contributing just 0.8 percent to its GDP and employing 1.6 percent of its labor force. But it was decimated — in a nearly literal sense of the word — by Hurricane Maria.

“In a matter of hours, Hurricane Maria wiped out about 80 percent of the crop value in Puerto Rico,” the New York Times reports. That amounts to a $780 million loss. The island imports 85 percent of its food, but the destruction of its agricultural sector is likely to increase prices and exacerbate the scary prospect of continued food shortages on the island.

Weather radar is down, making it harder to forecast new storms

Actual situation of Doppler radar after Hurricane María.
Situación actual del radar Doppler luego del paso del huracán María. #prwx #usviwx pic.twitter.com/PtljfuaWoY
— NWS San Juan (@NWSSanJuan) September 24, 2017

On Monday, the National Weather Service reported that its Doppler radar station on the island had been destroyed. That’s the radar that helps meteorologists see where thunderstorms and other weather systems are moving in real time. “Not having radar does make future storms more hazardous,” says Weber.

Airports are a hot, sticky mess

Residents of Puerto Rico have had a difficult time evacuating the island. Luis Muñoz Marín International Airport — the island’s main airport in San Juan — reopened to commercial flights Sunday. But residents can expect to wait a long time in uncomfortable conditions if they want a flight. Some airlines reportedly have waiting lists of 20,000 people.

There’s no air conditioning in the airport, the Miami Herald reports, ticketing computers are out, and passengers have to be checked in to flights via telephone. And due to damage to FAA radar and fuel shortages, only a limited number of planes can take off and land in San Juan each day.

Fuel is hard to find
People wait in line to purchase petrol in Arecibo, northwestern Puerto Rico, on September 22, 2017. Hector Retamal/AFP/Getty Images

Without a working electrical grid, Puerto Ricans have had to turn to gas-powered electric generators for energy. But it’s very, very difficult to get fuel on the island. NPR reports on people waiting for six-plus hours in lines for gas. Other stations are completely out of fuel and have been for days.

“Authorities in Puerto Rico say there isn't a gas shortage,” NPR reports. “Instead, they say that distribution has been disrupted by the storm.”

When fuel runs low, lives are put in danger.

The Washington Post reported from Juncos, a municipality in the central eastern region of the island. There, they found a diabetic woman afraid that the refrigeration that keeps her insulin preserved will soon run out, and that there won’t be fuel to restart the generator.
4) Puerto Rico’s economy is in shambles, and the storm will make it worse
Hector Retamal/AFP/Getty Images

As Vox’s Fernández Campbell explains, Puerto Rico’s government is broke. Its infrastructure is aging and in disrepair on a good day. And it can’t borrow money to fix it. In May, Puerto Rico — which has a $103 billion economy — declared bankruptcy, and it has since then been trying to restructure more than $70 billion in debt. The island’s finances are currently controlled by a federal board, which made just $1 billion available for relief, the AP reports.

Certain US policies have contributed to Puerto Rico’s economic deterioration. One of them is the Jones Act (different from the Jones-Shafroth Act mentioned above), an antiquated law that forces Puerto Ricans to pay nearly double for US goods through various tariffs, fees, and taxes. The act stipulates that any goods shipped from one American port to another must be on American-made-and-operated ships. As Matthew Yglesias explains, it means shipping to Puerto Rico is more costly because there’s little competition among freighters.

It’s a “a shakedown, a mob protection racket, with Puerto Rico a captive market,” as Nelson A. Denis, a former New York State Assembly member and author of War Against All Puerto Ricans: Revolution and Terror in America’s Colony, wrote in the New York Times.

On Thursday morning, the Trump administration finally granted the island a temporary waiver from the law’s requirements, which should help somewhat with the immediate disaster relief.

At @ricardorossello request, @POTUS has authorized the Jones Act be waived for Puerto Rico. It will go into effect immediately.
— Sarah Sanders (@PressSec) September 28, 2017

Meanwhile, economic woes have contributed to severe brain drain over the years: The population has dropped by more than 8 percent since 2010. According to the Times: “the cost of living in Puerto Rico is 13 percent higher than in 325 urban areas elsewhere in the United States, even though per capita income in Puerto Rico is about $18,000, close to half that of Mississippi, the poorest of all 50 states.”

The population drain in turn makes it harder and harder for Puerto Rico’s economy to recover. People will likely migrate on account of the storm, which will make recovery more difficult. It’s a classic vicious cycle.
5) Experts believe the death toll could reach into the hundreds
Carolyn Cole/Los Angeles Times via Getty Images

The storm has claimed at least 16 lives in Puerto Rico so far, according to the AP. But John Mutter, a Columbia University professor who specializes in natural disasters and studied the death toll from Hurricane Katrina, expects in the coming days it could reach into the hundreds.

“Being without power is huge,” he says. “Just how quickly they can get it back is still an unknown thing. But it’s extremely important they get it going to suppress the chances of illness following the storm.” Still, he says, we are probably not looking at a tragedy on the scale of Hurricane Katrina, where 1,400 to 2,000 people (depending on whom you ask) died as a result of the storm.

In Puerto Rico, as in any disaster situation, health hinges on electric power: Dialysis, refrigeration for insulin and other medicine, and nebulizers for people with asthma all need electricity to be useful.

But it goes deeper than that: Electricity provides for the sanitation that prevents many illnesses like typhoid from spreading in the first place.

“Across Puerto Rico, people need electricity to get clean water from the faucet and flush the toilet,” Vox’s Julia Belluz writes. “They also need it to keep their air conditioning systems running. Without it, there’s the looming risk of people getting sick from dirty water, waste that can’t be disposed, or heatstroke.”
In 2014, researchers combed through the medical literature and charted the worst impacts of electric grid failures. PLOS

And the storm will be a strain not just on physical health but mental health as well. “Expect a burden of mental health problems which will include depression, post traumatic stress disorder, and it’s particularly going to impact groups who don’t have access to rapid opportunities for recovery,” Sandro Galea, dean of the Boston University School of Public Health, told Vox after Hurricane Harvey hit Texas.

After a major disaster, studies find a 5 to 15 percent increase in the incidence of mental health problems among survivors.

“We all have a threshold that if we watch a loved one swept away in rushing water and drown, that can definitely create post–traumatic stress disorder,” Charles Benight, who studies trauma at the University of Colorado, said.
6) The US government is responding to the disaster, but it’s going slow
US Coast Guard personnel offload relief supplies at the San Juan International Airport on September 22, 2017. Joe Raedle/Getty Images

Puerto Rico is an island, which complicates recovery efforts. Supplies have to be flown in or arrive via ship. Residents can’t drive to a nearby state or city for shelter to wait out the worst of it.

But help is on the island, and more is on the way. Some 4,500 troops and National Guard members are on the ground in Puerto Rico. The Coast Guard and Army Corps of Engineers are working to reopen more ports on the islands.

FEMA has more than 800 people on the ground coordinating relief efforts. It reports that millions of meals and millions of liters of water have been distributed with more arriving each day.

On Friday, the US Navy announced the USNS Comfort, a combat surgical hospital ship, was en route to Puerto Rico.

HAPPENING NOW: #USNSComfort underway from Norfolk, Virgina, for #PuertoRico to support Hurrricane #Maria relief ops. (File photo) @fema pic.twitter.com/jadAVr6tgz
— U.S. Navy (@USNavy) September 29, 2017

Still, the relief efforts will take time to make their way to communities across the island. “I know the FEMA people are working hard and they’re doing their best, so this is a message for President Trump, thank you for calling San Juan yesterday and listening for our mayday call,” San Juan Mayor Carmen Yulín Cruz told CNN on Friday. “But sir, there’s 77 other towns that are waiting. They’re waiting anxiously and will be very grateful to you and to the American people if you continue to step up to the moral imperative that you’ve taken on all over the world to help those in need. So help us.”

And many are arguing that help isn’t coming fast enough, or in high enough quantities.

“Given the size of Puerto Rico and the U.S. Virgin Islands, and the scale of devastation, it may take a task force of 50,000 service members to fully meet the needs of Americans suffering after Maria’s passage,” Phillip Carter, a fellow at the Center for a New American Security, argues at Slate.
7) Trump could be doing much more to help

President Trump approved a disaster declaration for Puerto Rico the day after the storm hit, freeing up federal resources for the recovery. Then for several days through the weekend, he remained silent on the issue, focusing his Twitter feed on a mounting feud with professional athletes.

On Tuesday night, he broke his silence with a series of tweets that focused not on the shocking situation on the ground and the need for aid, but on Puerto Rico’s troubled recent history.

Texas & Florida are doing great but Puerto Rico, which was already suffering from broken infrastructure & massive debt, is in deep trouble..
— Donald J. Trump (@realDonaldTrump) September 26, 2017

...It's old electrical grid, which was in terrible shape, was devastated. Much of the Island was destroyed, with billions of dollars....
— Donald J. Trump (@realDonaldTrump) September 26, 2017

...owed to Wall Street and the banks which, sadly, must be dealt with. Food, water and medical are top priorities – and doing well. #FEMA
— Donald J. Trump (@realDonaldTrump) September 26, 2017

On Tuesday, Trump told reporters he'd travel to Puerto Rico on October 3. "It's the earliest I can go because of the first responders, and we don't want to disrupt the relief efforts," he said. He also said the disaster response on Puerto Rico will be tougher than the one in Texas for Hurricane Harvey or in Florida for Irma "because it's an island."

Trump also amended the disaster declaration Tuesday, increasing the amount of funds available for recovery in Puerto Rico. And he authorized the waiver of the Jones Act.

But as first responders on the ground in Puerto Rico told Fernández Campbell, this isn't enough. Trump should also ask Congress to pass a relief package for Puerto Rico to give FEMA and the island more money to rebuild. He could deploy more military resources to help with search and rescue operations. The number of troops on the ground should be doubled, as Lt. Gen. Russel Honore, who led the military's disaster efforts during Hurricane Katrina, argued Thursday on NPR.

"We can't do this whole thing by ourselves," Ken Buell, director of emergency response for the US Department of Energy, told her.
8) Other Caribbean islands are hurting too
U.S. Virgin Islands Continues Major Recovery Efforts After Hurricane Irma Devastated The Islands St. Thomas. Photo by Chip Somodevilla/Getty Images

As Vox's Julia Belluz summarizes here, many Caribbean islands are going through similar crises after being hit by Hurricanes Maria and Irma. The island of Barbuda has been completely abandoned, and residents still can't return home. Twenty–seven people died in Dominica. And 48,000 people are still without power in the US Virgin Islands.

Throughout these islands, homes are destroyed and people are displaced. And lives will have to start over.
9) You can help

It's easy to feel overwhelmed and numb in the face of such destruction. In fact, it's a frustrating psychological tendency inside all of us: When the number of victims in a disaster rises, our compassion doesn't always rise with it. But remember, "even partial solutions can save whole lives," as psychologist Paul Slovic has said.

Here's how you can help, at least in part. My colleagues Dylan Scott and Ella Nilsen have complied this list of charities accepting donations to help Puerto Rico.

ConPRmetidos: The Puerto Rican organization focused on public–private partnership is aiming to raise $150,000 for relief and recovery. You can give here.

American Red Cross: Usually the first group people think of when giving after a disaster. It says it is providing shelters for those displaced by Irma, and it has thousands of volunteers on the ground. You can give here. (3/4 stars from Charity Navigator.)

Global Giving: A charity crowdfunding site that is attempting to raise $2 million to be used exclusively for local relief and recovery efforts. You can give here. (4/4 stars from Charity Navigator.)

Salvation Army: The Christian charity is emphasizing its intentions to help with long–term recovery. You can give here.

Americares: The nonprofit focused on medicine and health is seeking to provide emergency medical supplies and other basic resources to first responders and others. You can give here. (4/4 stars from Charity Navigator.)

It's also a good idea to do some research before giving to a charity. Not all of them have a great track record of making sure your money directly goes to helping others. Vox's Dylan Matthews has a great list of advice here.
Campaigns: 2017 HURRICANE MARIA
Updated Sep 29, 2017 · https://reliefdb.org/shelters/10107

WaterStep (solar water purification pumps/install/training for disaster sites) Puerto Rico, Africa, Asia, etc

Volunteer Camp · Open

PR

Web waterstep.org/waterstep–ground
Service Temporary

Services offered: Sanitation, Services, Water Tank Installation; Sanitation, Supplies, Hand Pump (Well); Sanitation, Supplies, Water Purification Tablets; Sanitation, Supplies, Water Treatment/Purification/Filtration Supplies/Equipment * (ANY/ALL Types); Sanitation, Supplies, Well Pump (Electric)
Campaigns: 2017 HURRICANE MARIA
Updated Oct 28, 2017 · https://reliefdb.org/shelters/10108

Other locations

00 FEMA DRC Locator (Disaster Recovery Centers) Find Open DRCs

Info/Hotline · Open

FEMA Disaster Recovery Center

Phone (800) 621-3362 OR website current status
Web egateway.fema.gov/ESF6/DRCLocator
Hours varies by location
Serves Nationwide
Eligibility Impacted by Federally Declared Disasters
Service Temporary

To find an Open DRC, got to the website above, or go directly to FEMA's very useful "DRC Locator" and enter your location to find an open DRC:

2011 Note: This appears to be a VERY ACCURATE and up to date tool/database. We'll still keep listing separate entries, if only to provide local news that's not listed in the FEMA locator.

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Open DRCs – CHECK WEBSITE FOR Current Status!!!

Please note that we are updating this page on a weekly basis as new DRCs are opened and existing DRCs are closed. We recommend that you tune-in to your local media for the most up-to-date information on area openings and closings.
About DRCs

A Disaster Recovery Center (DRC) is a readily accessible facility or mobile office where applicants may go for information about FEMA or other disaster assistance programs, or for questions related to your case.

NOTE: You can register for assistance at a DRC or you can register online or by calling 1 (800) 621-FEMA (3362). The TTY number is 1 (800) 462-7585 for those who are speech- or hearing-impaired.

Some of the services that a DRC may provide:

* Guidance regarding disaster recovery
* Clarification of any written correspondence received
* Housing Assistance and Rental Resource information
* Answers to questions, resolution to problems and referrals to agencies that may provide further assistance
* Status of applications being processed by FEMA.
* SBA program information if there is a SBA Representative at the Disaster Recovery Center site.

***

FOR DISASTER RELIEF or Government Programs 800 333 4636

To find out if you qualify for assistance:

http://www.fema.gov/news/disaster_totals_annual.fema

Choose your state. Choose the button for whatever storm you are interested in. Note that it may be under "Emergency Declarations", the second set of declarations, or scroll down to see all lists. Then choose the button for "designated counties" to see if your county is there. Note the box on the right hand and choose the "tab" for "individual assistance" to see if your county is qualified to receive federal funds for individuals. Note that "Category B" declarations usually don't have any funds available for individuals. Only for towns and cities.

INTERNAL NOTE: November 2012: took this web page out: http://www.fema.gov/assistance/opendrcs.shtm And replaced it with the above.

Services offered: Assistance, How to, Navigate Disaster Relief Resources; Assistance, Referrals * General Information & Referral; Financial Assistance, Emergency Financial Assistance; Financial Assistance, ** Financial Assistance (ANY/ALL Types); Financial Assistance, Housing, Rental Assistance; Grants * (ANY/ALL Types of Financial Grants); Grants, Post Disaster (For Rent/Belongings/Home Repairs/Rebuilding, etc.); Information Resource * (ANY/ALL Types); Information Resource, Map; Information Resource, Resources Available to Disaster Survivors; Information Resource, Situation Reports & Status Reports; Services, Disaster Recovery ; Services, Disaster Relief; Support for "All Local" Disasters
Campaigns: 2011 Alabama Tornado; 2011 Georgia Tornados; 2011 Hurricane Irene/Tropical Storm Irene; 2011 Massachusetts Tornado; 2011 Mississippi Tornado; 2011 Missouri Tornado; 2011 North Dakota Flood; 2011 Other Disasters; 2011 Spring – Tornadoes-Floods-Wind Storms; 2011 Texas Wildfires; 2011 Tropical Storm Lee; 2012 Hurricane Sandy; 2017 Hurricane Harvey; 2017 Hurricane IRMA Response; 2017 HURRICANE MARIA; Government, FEMA / Department of Homeland Security; Government, FEMA, DRC (Disaster Recovery Center); Government, FEMA (this item ONLY for actual FEMA/HQ contacts/ entries); Government, Small Business Administration (SBA)
Updated Oct 2, 2020 · https://reliefdb.org/shelters/890