



GOVERNOR OF PUERTO RICO

OFFICE OF THE GOVERNOR

PRESS RELEASE

Governor Rosselló urges to evacuate flood-prone areas before Hurricane Maria passes through Puerto Rico

(September 18, 2017 - San Juan) Governor of Puerto Rico, Ricardo Rosselló, declared a state of emergency and activated the National Guard, as the National Hurricane Center issued a hurricane watch for Puerto Rico this morning due to Hurricane Maria.

Additionally, an emergency declaration request was sent to US President Donald J. Trump last night, prior to the passage of the hurricane through the local area. The governor warned that flood-prone areas and vulnerable structures must be evacuated today due to weather conditions beginning to deteriorate from tomorrow Tuesday at noon.

Rosselló reminded citizens that they can consult the temporadadehuracanes.pr.gov website to identify the flood-prone areas.

Mayors should give priority to the evacuation of the communities of Playita in Salinas, Juana Matos in Cataño, Barrio Islote in Arecibo, and Amelia in Guaynabo.

"Our call is for people to evacuate areas that are prone to floods and landslides, in addition to vulnerable structures, because hurricane Category 3 winds are expected. We are informing citizens that it is time to seek refuge with a family member, friend, or move to a state shelter because rescuers will not go out and risk their lives once winds reach 50 miles per hour," said governor Rosselló.

According to Ernesto Morales of the National Weather Service, Maria could pass through the local area as a Category 3 hurricane with winds of 115 to 125 miles per hour and could bring between 12 to 18 inches of rainfall.

The hurricane will move at 8 miles per hour when it passes through the local area and, according to the models, the hurricane could enter through the southeast of the Island. It is expected that due to the slow movement of the system, the Island could experience hurricane winds for 24 hours.

He added that hurricane winds extend for 25 miles, therefore, all Puerto Rico will experience hurricane conditions.

Meanwhile, the Puerto Rico Housing Department reported that there are 450 shelters with capacity for 62,714 refugees, and up to 125,428 in emergency capacity.

The shelters are located around the Island and at the Convention Center. This means that there are six fewer shelters than those enabled for the passage of Hurricane Irma because those schools have no electric service.



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At the moment, there are 192 people in shelters after the passage of Hurricane Irma (51 in Canóvanas, 8 in Vieques, and 128 in the Convention Center).

On the other hand, the main medical health facilities—including the Puerto Rico Medical Center and the Diagnostic and Treatment Centers (CDT, per its Spanish acronym) of Vieques and Culebra—have electricity service and work is being done to provide them with alternative power generation. It was reported that there will be two doctors in Vieques and two in Culebra to serve the population during the hurricane.

Likewise, eight construction cranes were identified and ordered to be lowered because winds of more than 120 miles per hour are expected. Three companies have already confirmed that they will be dismantled today.

It was informed that Law 20 of the Puerto Rico Department of Public Safety and Law 211 recognize the powers of the Executive to ensure public safety; therefore, failure to follow security orders in an emergency is considered a serious offense.

Rosselló urged mayors to alert during the day whether there are cranes in their municipalities that endanger life and safety.

The Coast Guard ordered that the ferries that serve the islands of Vieques and Culebra should be in safe port in San Juan today, Monday, at 8:00 p.m., so the last trips to these islands will leave from Fajardo today at noon.

As for the pay tolls, they will not be issuing fines during the passage of the atmospheric system.

Regarding the electric power service, the Puerto Rico Electric Power Authority (PREPA) will continue reconnecting clients as long as the weather conditions allow it, while the emergency preparedness plans are being implemented before Hurricane Maria passes through the Island.

In 10 days, PREPA employees have worked without rest and at risk to their lives to restore service.

There are currently 1.4 million customers with electricity service, for a total of 96%. Meanwhile, 62,000 customers have no electricity, for a total of 4%. Of these, 46,401 are in the metropolitan area.

There have been 30 reported cases of people intoxicated by the misuse of power generators, so people should be aware of the dangers of operating these types of equipment.

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