

**BUREAUCRATIC CHALLENGES TO HURRICANE  
RECOVERY IN PUERTO RICO**

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**HEARING**

BEFORE THE

SUBCOMMITTEE ON NATIONAL SECURITY

OF THE

COMMITTEE ON OVERSIGHT  
AND GOVERNMENT REFORM  
HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

ONE HUNDRED FIFTEENTH CONGRESS

SECOND SESSION

—————  
MARCH 22, 2018  
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**Serial No. 115-74**

Printed for the use of the Committee on Oversight and Government Reform



Available via the World Wide Web: <http://www.fdsys.gov>  
<http://oversight.house.gov>

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U.S. GOVERNMENT PUBLISHING OFFICE

30-943 PDF

WASHINGTON : 2018

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## **BUREAUCRATIC CHALLENGES TO HURRICANE RECOVERY IN PUERTO RICO**

**Thursday, March 22, 2018**

HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES,  
SUBCOMMITTEE ON NATIONAL SECURITY,  
COMMITTEE ON OVERSIGHT AND GOVERNMENT REFORM,  
*Washington, D.C.*

The subcommittee met, pursuant to call, at 10:01 a.m., in Room 2154, Rayburn House Office Building, Hon. Ron DeSantis [chairman of the subcommittee] presiding.

Present: Representatives DeSantis, Hice, Lynch, and Welch.

Also Present: Resident Commissioner Gonzalez-Colon and Delegate Plaskett.

Mr. DESANTIS. The Subcommittee on National Security will come to order.

Without objection, the chair is authorized to declare a recess at any time.

We're here today to talk about the bureaucratic challenges to recovery after one of the most devastating hurricane seasons in history. Exactly 6 months ago yesterday, Hurricane Maria, a monster of a storm, struck our fellow Americans in Puerto Rico. The island sustained deadly 155-mile-an-hour winds and 20 to 30 inches of rainfall in a period of just 24 hours. Sadly, lives were lost as a result.

Now, the President took action by deploying the full weight of the United States Government. Within 6 days of Maria's landfall, more than 10,000 Federal employees were deployed to aid in the recovery.

Puerto Rico's residents were completely without electricity. Thousands of homes and businesses were destroyed. Individuals found themselves with no power, no water, no way to communicate with one another. Emergency response crews have operated around the clock to restore these critical services ever since, but there's still more to do.

Thanks to the hard work and generosity of countless people, thousands of meals and gallons of water have been distributed, children are back in school, and the most vulnerable again have access to medical care.

But we need to do more. As of last week, there were still as many 150,000 people without power across the island. Interruptions due to overloads or equipment failures still happen virtually weekly.

Additionally, 96 percent of the island now has access to potable drinking water, but when you look at the different regions, you see,

for example, that 17 percent of the population in the western portion of the island are still lacking their own safe water supply.

Eighty-eight percent of the gas stations are up and running, 92 percent of grocery stores are open, but two-fifths of the roadways are still either closed or impassable. And more than 890 generators are still the primary source of power for some key facilities, including the wastewater treatment plants and the San Juan financial district.

In the aftermath, over 6 months, due to the lack of basic services, hundreds of thousands of citizens in Puerto Rico found themselves making the hard choice to relocate due to the need to find jobs because their workplaces were out of business, so they could send their kids to school and care for their elders. They have moved to many States. One of the many points of entry has been my State of Florida where there's been a major effort to offer relocation assistance.

Many of these citizens await normalization to return to the island, while others are surely staying for the long-term, but all of them want to know when will their hometowns and their families be able to fully stand back on their feet. They do not forget Puerto Rico, and neither do we.

The Federal Emergency Management Agency is the lead coordinator on all things disaster-related, overseeing the historic inter-agency effort underway in Puerto Rico. We want to hear FEMA's perspective on what went right and what could have been done better and what still needs to be done.

Mr. Michael Byrne, the assistant administrator for field operations, is joining us here today to shed some light on FEMA's role in the recovery.

While we have heard a lot about the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers' role in the effort to restore power to Puerto Rico, the Department of Energy is actually the lead agency for Emergency Support Function #12, the Energy Annex. The Department is responsible for facilitating the restoration of damaged energy systems and components, which was certainly needed in Puerto Rico.

We have a representative here today from Energy's Office of Electricity Delivery and Energy Reliability to discuss the progress being made on the ground and the work yet to be done. So I want to thank Mr. Parks for being here.

These two officials will help us shed light on what it will take to get the power fully restored, and we will want to know what it will take to make the part of the task so that the effort is continued without interruptions.

Another critical element of restoring Puerto Rico is the access to safe, drinkable water and the removal of solid waste. Mr. Peter Lopez from the Environmental Protection Agency is here to testify about EPA's role in ensuring the residents of Puerto Rico can and will have access to safe drinking water, and what the Federal, State, and local authorities need to do to ensure this in the future.

We also have Scott Aaronson from the Edison Electric Institute. EEI represents all U.S. investor-owned electric companies. In response to a request for assistance, EEI coordinated with its members to deploy incident management teams in support of power restoration efforts across the island. Through this agreement, industry

efforts coordinate with the Puerto Rico Electric Power Authority and the Army Corps to restore power to the people of Puerto Rico.

All told, almost 6,700 Federal personnel, civilian and military, are currently supporting the recovery and restoration efforts in Puerto Rico and the U.S. Virgin Islands. Thousands more from nongovernment and charitable organizations have come forward to help get Puerto Rico back on its feet.

So we want to discuss what lessons we've learned from this devastation before the next hurricane season is upon us. We also want to hear what changes are being made to ensure we do better going forward and that the lessons learned to help the Nation be better prepared for such catastrophic events.

And Puerto Rico, I mean, they're going to face another hurricane season here in just a few months, and I think it's important we solve all these problems by then.

So I want to thank you for your efforts to date and for coming to answer our questions.

And with that, I will yield 5 minutes to the ranking member, Mr. Lynch.

Mr. LYNCH. Thank you, Mr. Chairman. I would like to thank you for convening this hearing to examine the progress of Federal hurricane relief and recovery efforts in Puerto Rico.

I'd also like to thank our witnesses for your willingness to help the subcommittee with its work.

It is the mission of the Federal Emergency Management Agency, also known as FEMA, to, quote, "lead America to prepare for, respond to, and recover from disasters with a vision of a Nation prepared," close quote.

The critical role of FEMA as our Nation's coordinating Federal entity in response to all domestic disasters demands that the agency operate at maximum efficiency in order to mitigate the devastating effects of national emergencies on the safety and security of the American people.

In the aftermath of the landfall of two Category 5 hurricanes, Irma and Maria, just 2 weeks apart on Puerto Rico in September of 2017, FEMA has led Federal relief and recovery efforts to provide emergency food and water, temporary housing, healthcare, power grid restoration, and other basic services to the survivors of this continuing humanitarian crisis.

Regrettably, however, the Agency's mission has been greatly impaired by many of the same oversight challenges that undermined the failed Federal response to Hurricane Katrina back in 2005. Puerto Rico and its 3.5 million American citizens deserves better. I think we all agree on that.

As reported by the Select Committee to Investigate the Preparation for and Response to Hurricane Katrina in 2006, FEMA logistics and contracting systems did not support a targeted, massive, and sustained provision of commodities—that was the finding—to affected Gulf residents.

The Agency did not have advance contracts in place that anticipated what supplies would be needed in the wake of a hurricane. According to the Select Committee, this, quote, "led to chaos and the potential for waste and fraud as acquisitions were made in haste," close quote.

Our own committee hearings into Katrina contracting in 2006 revealed instances where debris removal contractors would arrive at a Federal dumpsite, check in, and then drive away, only to return later with the same truckload of debris and receive double payment.

The Federal Government also spent millions of dollars on contracts with companies to install temporary blue plastic sheeting on damaged homes. These blue roofs were billed to the American taxpayer but never installed.

Despite the lessons learned from Hurricane Katrina more than a decade ago, we are once again receiving a similar report of waste, fraud, and abuse in Federal contracting relating to the Puerto Rican relief effort.

Nearly 1 month after the hurricane hit the island, FEMA awarded \$156 million contract to a one-person company owned by Tiffany Brown, Tribute Contracting LLC, to provide 30 million emergency meals.

Ms. Brown received a contract despite her failure to fulfill at least five previous and much smaller Federal contracts. This is one woman. Those previous contracts included a 27,000 Federal Prison system contract that was canceled because she could not deliver the required beans, flour, and spaghetti, and other food.

As the sole employee of her company, Ms. Brown sought help in fulfilling her new FEMA contract and hired a wedding caterer with 11 employees to freeze dry meals.

In a letter sent to FEMA last month, members of the Senate Government Affairs Committee also underscored that Ms. Brown's initial nine-page bid appeared to be plagiarized from several readily available sources on the Internet.

While FEMA eventually canceled the contract after Ms. Brown could only deliver 50,000 of the required 30 million meals, the residents of Puerto Rico, the American taxpayer, and this committee are left asking how FEMA could have awarded the contract in the first place.

Similarly, in October of 2017 the Agency awarded two contracts, totaling \$30 million, to a newly formed Florida company, Bronze Star, LLC, to provide emergency tarps and plastic sheeting for repairs in Puerto Rico. The company was owned by Richard and Kayon Jones, two brothers operating out of a single-family house. They had never received a Federal contract or delivered these materials before. FEMA also eventually canceled the contracts in November and admitted that it had not performed due diligence.

President Trump has graded the Federal relief and recovery effort in Puerto Rico as, quote, "great," close quote, "amazing," close quote, "tremendous," and "a 10 out of 10." I don't think so. It may have been a 10 for Tiffany Brown and the Jones brothers, but it surely hasn't been a 10 for the people of Puerto Rico or for the U.S. taxpayer.

In light of these and other reports, congressional oversight will serve an even more critical role in ensuring that our massive recovery effort will not be further impeded by a failure to properly vet Federal contractors.

I strongly urge the Agency to comply with this committee's request for documents pertaining to the Federal preparedness and re-



sponse to Hurricanes Irma and Maria in Puerto Rico and the U.S. Virgin Islands. This includes a bipartisan document request by our full committee chairman, Chairman Gowdy, and Ranking Member Cummings over 5 months ago.

I would also urge the leadership of this committee to organize a bipartisan oversight delegation to the damaged areas, as we did in 2005 following Hurricane Katrina. I know that the Massachusetts delegation, led by Senator Elizabeth Warren, were there in January and brought back a very informative report. That would allow us to conduct direct oversight of Federal recovery efforts, receive firsthand accounts from the affected people, and hopefully get this right.

Thank you, Mr. Chairman. I really do appreciate you holding this hearing. And I look forward to discuss these and other issues with our witnesses. And I yield back the balance of my time.

Mr. DESANTIS. I thank the gentleman.

The chair notes the presence of our colleague from Puerto Rico, Jenniffer Gonzalez-Colon. And without objection, I move that she be recognized and allowed to participate in today's hearing.

There being none, I would like to take this opportunity to actually recognize her for an opening statement.

Miss GONZALEZ-COLON. Thank you, Mr. Chairman. And with that, I want to begin this saying thank you to you, Chairman DeSantis and Ranking Member Lynch, for agreeing to have this very important hearing on Puerto Rico and agreeing to have this meeting on the challenge of the recovery process on the island.

And, Mr. Chairman, I want to thank you, particularly on behalf of my 3.4 million American citizens living in Puerto Rico, because of your steadfast leadership and support in the aftermath of the Hurricanes Irma and Maria, not only for the residents of the island, but also for the hundreds of thousands who have since the hurricane been forced to move to your home State of Florida.

And one of the main issues we still face on the island is the great anxiety and the frustration among all the citizens in the island over the time it has taken to get the power being restored.

One of the main issues is in the private sector, the individuals and businesses had to rely on generators at high cost and environmental impact. It has caused considerable business losses from closures, limited hours, and cost overruns.

Specifically, the people with medication pumps, respirators, and the like, it has caused considerable situations. They are in municipalities where no resident had power until late January. And we are talking about more than 100,000 people still without power. And that's one thing.

I want to say, also, that I want to thank the witnesses that are here today to give us some light about that recovery process. And with that, I want to say thank you to Mr. Byrne. He has always been available to all my calls in all that recovery process.

And I want to thank you, because I know you've been away from home many hours, and your people from FEMA. And I know you're doing your job.

We still need more. And I hope this hearing will help us out to establish what is needed from Congress, what is needed from the Federal Government.

Same thing to the rest of the Federal agencies. Over the last 3 weeks, residents of the island have been subject to great stress and worry upon learning that many repair and construction crews have ended in terms of their contracts or are being relocated to higher-priority locations.

There is some shock on the island and dismay at the impression that the mission is winding down before the job is finished and the apparent lack of a concerted effort to explain what is happening.

A rural working family without electricity for 6 months does not want to hear of standard protocols or contract restrictions. They want to see full effort directed to reconnecting every remaining home everywhere.

And we're talking about everywhere in the island, not just the metropolitan area on the northern side of the island. We're talking about the central part or the towns where the hurricane made landfall.

I stated in another hearing last week, and I will say it again, I just want you to imagine if your own hometown here in the mainland will be without electricity for 2 months, 3, 4, 6 months, without power, with also failing communications, with the only assurance that, "We are working on it."

What will happen? The people of Puerto Rico have been admirably patient, but are justifiably tired. If we were a State having five congressional district and two Senators, who will not leave a State, nobody will leave a State without power for 6 months.

And now we're facing the next hurricane season in 3 months. So that's the biggest challenge that we're facing. That's the reason this hearing is so important for us.

We are now over 90 percent capacity online, but still less 80 percent of transmission and distribution lines at a full load. That means that the Corps of Engineers estimated that 95 percent of the capacity will be up by the end of March, but that does not necessarily mean that the 100,000 people will have power in their houses by the end of August of this year.

So that's my biggest challenge, and that's the reason we need to know the reality. That's the reason we need to know what do we need to have a 30-day timeframe in terms of FEMA, Corps of Engineers, all the Federal agencies to make that happen. If it's assigning money, if it's amending the rules, if it's amending the resources in terms of another CR, what do we need to make that happen?

For that, we need to bear in mind that rebuilding needs to be done in such a manner as to consider the possibility of such a catastrophic event happening again. Hurricane season starts, as we already said, in 3 months, and we have presented with other colleagues from both sides of the aisle amendments to open up the Stafford Act limits so we can be more flexible and not just patch up what is broken, but rebuild to update standards, Section 20601 of last month's CR.

There is also \$2 billion in that continuing resolution specifically meant for improvement of the power grid. We also know that that's not even close to what we need. But at least that's a start, and we must maintain the sense of urgency that sometimes is missing.

With that, I will yield back the balance of my time. I will save the rest for the questions.

Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

Mr. DESANTIS. Great. I thank my friend from Puerto Rico.

Now, you just heard that votes have been called. I've got five of you to give opening statements. So I think it's probably wise that we just briefly recess this. We'll go vote. It's probably going to be a 30-minute evolution. Probably no earlier than 10:45.

And so I appreciate the witnesses' indulgence on this. Any time you do these hearings, if we did it 2 o'clock yesterday, we would have had votes then.

So the subcommittee will recess at the call of the chair. We plan to return immediately at the conclusion of votes.

So the committee stands in recess.

Mr. DESANTIS. The subcommittee will come to order.

I appreciate the indulgence of the witnesses as we tackle the omnibus omnibus bill.

It's my pleasure to introduce our witnesses. We have Michael Byrne, Assistant Administrator for Field Operations at the Federal Emergency Management Agency; William Park, Senior Advisor to Assistant Secretary at the Office of Electricity Delivery and Energy Reliability at the U.S. Department of Energy; Mr. Peter Lopez, Regional Administrator for Region 2 at the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency; Mr. Scott Aaronson, Vice President for Security and Preparedness at EEI; and Staff Sergeant Johnathan Sutton, U.S. Army, retired, a volunteer in Puerto Rico during this recovery effort.

Welcome to you all.

Pursuant to committee rules, all witnesses will be sworn in before they testify. Please stand and raise your right hand.

Do you solemnly swear that the testimony you're about to give is the truth, the whole truth, and nothing but the truth, so help you God?

Okay. Please be seated.

All witnesses answered in the affirmative.

In order to allow time for discussion, please limit your testimony to 5 minutes. Your entire written statement will be made part of the record.

As a reminder, the clock in front of you shows the remaining time. During your opening statement, the light will turn yellow when you have 30 seconds left and red when your time is up.

Please also remember to press the button to turn your microphone on before speaking.

And with that, I would like to recognize Mr. Byrne for 5 minutes.

## **WITNESS STATEMENTS**

### **STATEMENT OF MICHAEL BYRNE**

Mr. BYRNE. Thank you. Good morning, Chairman DeSantis, Ranking Member Lynch, Representative Gonzalez-Colon, and members of the subcommittee.

My name is Mike Byrne, and I'm the Federal coordinating officer in Puerto Rico. Thank you for this opportunity to testify.

In the emergency management community, we talk about needing to be prepared for the big one. Last fall, Puerto Rico experienced the catastrophic impacts that we train our entire careers for.

Hurricane Maria is the fifth-strongest storm, and it's the strongest storm to strike Puerto Rico in nearly a century. The storm left nearly all of Puerto Rico's 3.5 million people without power, and the lack of backup generators shut down other critical infrastructure, like water treatment plants and hospitals.

Communications were decimated, hindering initial operations. Seaports, airstrips were severely damaged, resulting in limited initial access to bring in commodities. Roads and bridges were washed away, cutting off isolated, hard-to-reach communities.

Following the devastation of this catastrophic storm, FEMA and the Commonwealth and our other Federal partners took immediate action. We established the largest domestic sea bridge operation in U.S. history, delivering more than a billion dollars in commodities such as food, water, tarps, and construction materials. These commodities were delivered by air, off-road vehicles, and often by foot, making it the largest and longest commodity delivery mission in FEMA's history, and it is still going on.

Also, one of the largest medical response missions. More than 4,700 medical personnel deployed and cared for more than 38,000 survivors. FEMA mission-assigned 80 Federal agencies with more than 700 distinct mission assignments, supporting power restoration, temporary power, debris removal, et cetera, all of the different response functions that we do.

At the height of the response, there were nearly 19,000 Federal personnel deployed to Puerto Rico working around the clock with territory and local officials.

The U.S. Army Corps of Engineers, mission-assigned by FEMA, installed more than 1,900 emergency generators. To put that context, previously the most installed was 310 during Katrina. We still have over 800 of those still working.

While there's lots of work to be done, we have seen significant signs of progress. More than 90 percent of the power has been restored, with crews working around the clock in treacherous, mountainous terrain to work on lines as quickly and safely as possible.

PRASA reports nearly 99 percent of their customers have water restored. More than 6.4 million cubic yards of debris has been removed. All 68 hospitals are back in operation and have been since mid-November. More than \$10 billion has already been spent, between FEMA and SBA assistance programs, that has been approved for the response and recovery efforts.

We are also committed to identifying solutions around housing, from direct financial assistance to direct repairs. We're working every avenue possible to restore housing.

In order to meet the long-term recovery needs and move into recovery, FEMA and our partners are implementing the structure and functions of the National Disaster Recovery Framework in Puerto Rico. We've established 12 sectors to holistically address the magnitude of the damage across these systems and how we can combine and leverage resources to more effectively and efficiently restore these systems.

Thanks to authorities given to us by Congress in the Bipartisan Budget Act last month, we can now provide assistance funding to Puerto Rico for critical services to replace or restore infrastructure to industry standards without regard to their pre-disaster condi-

tions. We can also replace or restore components not damaged by the disaster when it is necessary to restore the entire system to industry standards. These new authorities are critical to ensuring we help build back a more resilient Puerto Rico.

We're also greeting ready for the 2018 hurricane season. We've already hired over 1,500 local hires on the island, Puerto Ricans. It is actually 52 percent of my workforce right now, and I plan to get to 90 percent by the 1-year anniversary.

We're also doing training. We're also resupplying our warehouses with stockpiles, adjusting our national-level contracts. We're also going to be doing a significant amount of training and exercises. In fact, we have three major exercises scheduled before the end of June.

Hurricanes Irma and Maria, along with all the other 2017 disasters, highlight the importance of preparing for the worst. As Administrator Long unveiled last week, FEMA's strategic plan includes the goal of building a culture of preparedness and readying the Nation for catastrophic disasters.

I encourage Congress and Americans across the country to partner with us as we look to get the Nation more prepared. I appreciate the opportunity to appear before you today. I look forward to your questions.

Thank you.

[Prepared statement of Mr. Byrne follows:]

3.9.18-FEMA Cleared

STATEMENT  
OF  
MICHAEL BYRNE  
ASSISTANT ADMINISTRATOR, FIELD OPERATIONS DIRECTORATE  
FEDERAL EMERGENCY MANAGEMENT AGENCY  
U.S. DEPARTMENT OF HOMELAND SECURITY  
BEFORE  
THE  
COMMITTEE ON OVERSIGHT & GOVERNMENT REFORM  
SUBCOMMITTEE ON NATIONAL SECURITY  
U.S. HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES  
WASHINGTON, D.C.

“Bureaucratic Challenges to Response and Recovery in Puerto Rico”

Submitted  
By

Federal Emergency Management Agency  
500 C Street, S.W.  
Washington, D.C. 20472

March 21, 2018

## **Introduction**

Good morning, Chairman DeSantis, Ranking Member Lynch, and members of the Subcommittee. I am Michael Byrne, the Assistant Administrator for the Field Operations Directorate within the Federal Emergency Management Agency's (FEMA) Office of Response and Recovery and the Federal Coordinating Officer for the Hurricane Irma and Maria response and recovery in Puerto Rico. On behalf of U.S. Department of Homeland Security (DHS) Secretary Nielsen and FEMA Administrator Long, thank you for the opportunity to discuss DHS and FEMA's response and recovery efforts in Puerto Rico following the devastating hurricanes in 2017.

## **2017 Hurricane Season**

Last year's historic hurricane season was a true test of the Nation's ability to respond to and recover from multiple concurrent disasters. Three major hurricanes—Harvey, Irma, and Maria—made landfall along the Gulf Coast, in the Southeast, and in Puerto Rico and the U.S. Virgin Islands. The impacts of these events were substantial. Approximately 26 million people live in counties and municipalities that received disaster declarations as a result of these three storms—roughly eight percent of the entire U.S. population. With the addition of the Wildfires in California, this was FEMA's most demanding year in its 40 year history.

In order to deliver disaster assistance to such a large and dispersed number of survivors, FEMA has worked in concert with our federal partner agencies; state, local, tribal, and territorial governments; and also non-governmental organizations (NGO) and the private sector to ensure a unity of effort that serves the needs of disaster survivors.

Unity of effort is required for disaster response and recovery on any scale. It has been—and will continue to be—especially crucial during response and recovery efforts following last year's hurricane season. All levels of government, non-profit organizations, private sector businesses, and even survivors—each drawing upon their unique skills and capabilities—will need to work together to meet the needs of disaster survivors.

## **Hurricanes Irma and Maria: Impacts and Federal Response**

### ***Hurricane Irma***

On September 6, 2017, the eye of Hurricane Irma made landfall in the British Virgin Islands, just north of the USVI, as a catastrophic Category 5 hurricane. Extreme winds and heavy rainfall ravaged the USVI, particularly St. Thomas and St. John. Hurricane Irma then continued on its path of destruction, passing just north of Puerto Rico on September 7—still as a Category 5 storm—leaving more than one million customers without power.

President Trump approved an emergency declaration for Puerto Rico on September 5, making available Federal assistance for debris removal and emergency protective measures. The President approved a major disaster declaration for Puerto Rico on September 10, making available Federal assistance through FEMA's Individual Assistance, Public Assistance, and Hazard Mitigation Grant Programs.

FEMA's National Response Coordination Center (NRCC) was activated to a Level I (the highest level of activation, with all Emergency Support Functions activated) prior to Hurricane Irma's impacts on the USVI and Puerto Rico. Federal personnel were also pre-positioned in Puerto Rico to coordinate with territorial and municipal officials. This included FEMA staff that operate out of the Caribbean Area Division office located in San Juan, regional personnel from FEMA's Region II (which has responsibility for both Puerto Rico and the USVI), as well as Incident Management Assistance Teams (IMATs) that were deployed to the territory. Additional federal resources and personnel were strategically staged just outside of the storm's path, including ships from the U.S. Coast Guard and the Department of Defense. Once the storm had passed, these additional federal resources and personnel flowed into the territories as part of a unified federal response.

### *Hurricane Maria*

On September 19—only two weeks after Hurricane Irma hit—the eye of Hurricane Maria passed just south of the USVI on its way to making landfall in Puerto Rico on September 20. The Commonwealth was devastated by Hurricane Maria's powerful winds and heavy rainfall, which severely damaged communications and power grids, destroyed homes, and downed trees across both islands. In its wake, Hurricane Maria—the fifth-strongest storm ever to impact the United States and territories, and the strongest storm to strike Puerto Rico in nearly a century—left nearly all of Puerto Rico's 3.5 million people without power or communications.

President Trump approved an emergency declaration for Puerto Rico on September 18, making available Federal assistance for debris removal and emergency protective measures. President Trump approved a major disaster declaration for Puerto Rico on September 20, making available Federal assistance through FEMA's Individual Assistance, Public Assistance, and Hazard Mitigation Grant Programs. The federal government also immediately launched a massive and unified response and recovery operation, building on efforts from Hurricane Irma.

One day after Maria made landfall in Puerto Rico, there were already more than 2,000 federal staff on the ground in Puerto Rico supporting response and recovery operations. These included a National Incident Management Assistance Team (N-IMAT), Disaster Medical Assistance Teams (DMATs) and FEMA Urban Search & Rescue (US&R) taskforces that were prepositioned to operate immediately following the storm's landfall. At the height of the response efforts, more than 19,000 federal staff from 80 federal agencies (including approximately 3,000 FEMA personnel) were deployed in support of Puerto Rico working around the clock with territorial and local officials to stabilize the situation.

### **Helping Survivors Recover**

FEMA and the Commonwealth of Puerto Rico established the largest domestic sea-bridge operation in U.S. history, delivering more than a billion dollars in commodities, such as food, water, tarps, and construction materials, to Puerto Rico in support of disaster survivors. These commodities were delivered by air, off-road vehicles and on foot, making it the largest and longest commodity delivery mission in FEMA's history.



In one of the largest medical response missions ever, more than 4,700 medical personnel deployed and cared for more than 38,000 survivors.

In total, FEMA has approved almost \$10 billion in response and recovery efforts, in addition to the more than \$1 billion approved and dispersed to disaster survivors by the U.S. Small Business Administration.

FEMA mission-assigned 80 federal agencies with more than 700 mission assignments, supporting power restoration, including temporary power and transmission and distribution line repair, debris removal, temporary roofing, response operations, oil and hazardous material clean-up, disaster case management, and technical expertise and support.

More than \$1.2 billion in FEMA grants are in the hands of homeowners and renters. Survivors are receiving funds for rental assistance or to repair their homes, and to cover other needs such as eligible medical expenses and loss of personal property.

#### **Power Restoration Efforts**

##### ***Temporary Power***

Power restoration has been a top priority for FEMA following Irma and Maria. On September 22, 2017, FEMA mission assigned the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers (USACE) to provide emergency power generation to the Commonwealth. Since beginning the temporary power mission, USACE has installed more than 1,900 emergency generators in Puerto Rico. The Hurricane Maria temporary power mission is the largest disaster generator mission in U.S. history.

FEMA, along with its federal and NGO partners, has also worked closely with the Governor and agencies in Puerto Rico to ensure that temporary power support continues to be prioritized for critical facilities such as hospitals, police and fire stations, communications facilities, and water treatment plants.

##### ***Emergency Power Grid Repairs***

In order to provide a stable power solution for survivors, FEMA has also supported restoration of the electrical power grid on Puerto Rico. On September 28, FEMA issued a mission assignment to USACE to assist the Puerto Rico Electric Power Authority (PREPA) with interim repairs to segments of the electrical grid to allow temporary restoration across the island. Specifically, USACE was tasked to help restore temporary power and “lead planning, coordination and integration efforts in preparation to execute electrical power grid restoration in Puerto Rico due to impacts caused by Hurricane Maria” and to “develop and execute applicable temporary repairs to the electrical grid to allow interim restoration of system segments as directed by FEMA until the full electrical grid restoration can be implemented.”

As assigned by FEMA, USACE leads the federal effort to repair the hurricane-damaged electrical power grid in support of the Commonwealth of Puerto Rico. USACE is partnering with

PREPA, the Department of Energy (DOE), and FEMA to restore safe and reliable power to the people of Puerto Rico.

Puerto Rico has 2,400 miles of transmission lines across the island and 30,000 miles of distribution lines with more than 300 sub-stations. As of March 7, PREPA reports more than 91 percent or approximately 1.35 of the 1.47 million pre-storm customers who are able to receive electric power have their service restored.

In addition to USACE, FEMA has also mission-assigned the DOE to assist with power grid restoration. The DOE is providing subject matter expertise and technical assistance in support of power grid damage assessments and power restoration efforts in Puerto Rico, in coordination with USACE. Additionally, the DOE is also working to identify various options for the long-term restoration and resilience of Puerto Rico's electric grid.

### **The Road to Recovery: Delivering FEMA's Infrastructure Assistance Programs**

#### ***Public Assistance in Support of Power Restoration***

PREPA is ultimately responsible for the permanent repair of power generation, transmission, and distribution infrastructure. However, FEMA and its federal partners (including USACE and DOE) are closely supporting their efforts.

FEMA is primarily supporting the restoration of the Puerto Rico power grid through its Public Assistance program. As of March 9, FEMA has approved nearly \$1.3 billion in Public Assistance emergency work for Puerto Rico.

FEMA is also working with Puerto Rico on the development and execution of Public Assistance permanent work projects, which will include the restoration of utilities—including power. As of March 9, \$245 million dollars in federal assistance has been obligated for emergency repairs related to electrical utilities in Puerto Rico.

On February 9, the President signed into law the Bipartisan Budget Act of 2018. Under authorities given to FEMA in this law, FEMA may provide Public Assistance funding for critical services to replace or restore the function of a facility or system to industry standards without restrictions based on their pre-disaster condition. The law further allows FEMA to provide assistance for critical services to replace or restore components of the facility or system that are not damaged by the disaster when it is necessary to fully effectuate the replacement or restoration of disaster-damaged components to restore the function of the facility or system to industry standards.

FEMA will continue to work with our partners to effectively integrate and implement all of our disaster assistance programs in support of power restoration efforts in Puerto Rico to include working with the U. S. Department of Housing and Urban Development on its authority under the Bipartisan Budget Act of 2018 to provide up to \$2 billion in funding for enhanced or improved electrical power systems.

#### ***Public Assistance Alternative Procedures in Puerto Rico***

On October 30, 2017, the Commonwealth of Puerto Rico elected to use Public Assistance Alternative Procedures for all large project Public Assistance funding for permanent work pursuant to section 428 of the Stafford Act. Under authorities granted to FEMA in the Sandy Recovery Improvement Act (SRIA), Public Assistance Alternative Procedures allow applicants to request and obtain funding based on certified cost estimates to repair, restore, or replace a damaged facility. Once FEMA and the applicant agree on the damage assessment, scope of work, and estimated costs, a Public Assistance grant can be obligated. Prior to Alternative Procedures, a grantee would have to fund the project and seek reimbursement upon completion of established milestones. Alternative Procedures is a good option for governments that may not have the ability to pay for these projects up front.

The goals of the Public Assistance Alternative Procedures are to reduce costs, increase flexibility in the administration of assistance, expedite the delivery of assistance, and provide financial incentives for the timely and cost-effective completion of Public Assistance projects. The alternative procedures also allow Public Assistance applicants to retain funding when there are cost overruns and utilize those funds for eligible additional hazard mitigation measures and for activities that improve future Public Assistance program permanent work operations.

Pursuant to the Governor's election of section 428, FEMA will administer Public Assistance permanent work projects in Puerto Rico using the Alternative Procedures. As a condition of receiving funding under these procedures, the President required that the Commonwealth establish a grant oversight authority supported by third-party experts to perform the responsibilities of the grant recipient. On October 23, 2017, the Governor of Puerto Rico ordered the creation of the Central Recovery and Reconstruction Office (CRRO) of Puerto Rico. The CRRO will provide the required grant oversight authority. FEMA will also require that any cost estimate over a pre-determined amount will be reviewed by a third-party independent expert.

#### *Long-Term Recovery*

Puerto Rico faces a challenging road to recovery. These devastating hurricanes struck after a decade of economic and fiscal crisis that had already led to the exodus of more than 10 percent of Puerto Rico's population, and that exodus has only accelerated since the hurricanes. The long-term recovery of Puerto Rico depends on addressing the causes of Puerto Rico's extremely low labor force participation rate and related fiscal crisis. A vital first step is the hurricane recovery mission.

As both the Federal Coordinating Officer and the Federal Disaster Recovery Coordinator for Puerto Rico, I continue to work closely with the government of Puerto Rico and federal response leadership to facilitate disaster recovery coordination and collaboration between federal, territorial and municipal governments, private sector entities, and voluntary, faith-based, and other NGOs.

In order to meet the long-term recovery needs of Puerto Rico, FEMA has fully implemented the structure and functions of the National Disaster Recovery Framework (NDRF) to ensure that

federal recovery efforts remain coordinated and effective across all six Recovery Support Functions (RSFs). For this disaster, FEMA created a strategic solutions-based sector approach to recovery, expanding upon the six RSFs to bring together support for key areas of impact.

In particular, FEMA has leveraged the NDRF and the Recovery Support Function Leadership group to support the Infrastructure Systems RSF, which is led by USACE. In Puerto Rico, the Infrastructure Systems RSF has been subdivided into five sectors in order to address the magnitude of damage across multiple infrastructure systems. These sectors are: Energy/Power; Public Buildings; Water; Transportation; Communications/IT.

Each of the remaining RSFs, Housing, Economic Recovery, Health and Social Services, Natural and Cultural Resources and Community Planning and Capacity Building, coordinates support for its corresponding sector. In addition, there is an overarching sector for municipalities, which includes resources and support from all six RSFs.

### **Conclusion**

Within one month's time, FEMA was responding to three major hurricanes, two of which hit Puerto Rico within two weeks. By the end of 2017, FEMA registered more than 4.7 million survivors for individual assistance—more registrations than for Hurricanes Katrina, Rita, Wilma, and Sandy combined. The Agency has also distributed more than \$2 billion in individual assistance to survivors, processed 133,000 flood insurance claims, and paid out more than \$6.3 billion to policyholders across the country.

In addition to providing financial support, FEMA also deployed thousands of our employees, mission assigned nearly 14,000 staff and service members from various offices of the Department of Defense, and—for the first time ever—the Secretary of Homeland Security extended the DHS Surge Capacity Force to all federal agencies in order to deploy approximately 4,000 employees from across 36 federal departments and agencies. We have also welcomed hundreds of new FEMA Local Hire and Reservist employees to assist with recovery efforts. I cannot recall a more challenging hurricane season, nor a more impressive whole community response, in my history of emergency management.

The road to recovery will be a long one, but FEMA will continue to work with its Federal, state, territorial, tribal, and local partners, as well as Congress, throughout the recovery process. Though the power grid in Puerto Rico was significantly damaged, we continue to see progress in power restoration every day. We will also be in the impacted communities for as long as we are needed.

I am grateful for the opportunity to appear before you today to discuss this important mission, and I am happy to respond to any questions the Subcommittee may have at this time. Thank you.

Mr. DESANTIS. Thank you.  
Mr. Parks, you're up for 5 minutes.

#### **STATEMENT OF WILLIAM PARKS**

Mr. PARKS. Chairman DeSantis, Ranking Member Lynch, Representative Gonzalez-Colon, and other members, thank you for the opportunity to be here today.

The mission of DOE's Office of Electricity Delivery and Energy Reliability is to develop innovative solutions to ensure that our Nation's energy infrastructure remains reliable, affordable, and resilient. In order to fulfill this mission, we leverage the technical capabilities of the national laboratories, the power marketing authorities, and partnership with the private sector.

Our organization is the lead for providing energy-related expertise to FEMA, interagency partners, and the administration emergency response activities. We're the coordinating agency for Emergency Support Function 12 under the National Response Framework and the sector-specific agency for energy under Presidential Directive 21.

In addition, we're the primary agency for infrastructure systems recovery support function under the National Disaster Recovery Framework.

The impacts of these hurricanes, as mentioned, adding to their pre-existing conditions of the grid in Puerto Rico has led to an unprecedented restoration period. The significant damage done to the electricity sector and the complicated nature of an island response created major logistical challenges, as mentioned by Mr. Byrne.

In the wake of these, DOE has received \$17 million in mission assignments from FEMA to provide technical assistance for hurricane response and recovery. In addition, we received \$13 million in the supplemental funding for response and recovery activities. This gives us the opportunity to help the Commonwealth incorporate resilience and reliability into the new Puerto Rico grid.

The hurricane season of 2017 serves to highlight the need for a continued and adaptive focus on energy system resilience. The presence of responders at utility operations and early engagement with utilities is crucial, especially in the presence of Federal and State emergency operation centers.

The administration has conveyed in numerous hearings that Congress should revisit the Stafford Act, and recovery efforts would focus on resilience and investments that will mitigate further damage. As mentioned, having the flexibility to do more than just restore back to pre-existing conditions in a situation like Puerto Rico is crucial.

We also brought in the power marketing authorities with their knowledge of building systems. Long-term deployments have really stressed our capacity, as this has been the longest deployment that we've ever had, at 6 months.

We are working on a plan to develop Puerto Rico's grid, listing actions and options for building in greater resiliency, power quality, and reliability. It will include developing a power flow model for Puerto Rico that allows better both grid planning and grid operations. This will inform FEMA's overarching comprehensive plan as required in the supplemental funding legislation.

DOE has also engaged in Southern States Energy Board to provide support to the Puerto Rico Governor on territorial regulatory and policy issues to set up the best structure for going forward in the future.

I am grateful for and impressed by the hard work of the emergency responders and recovery experts during this hurricane season.

Over the next several months, our primary focus in Puerto Rico will be working with our partners to support the ability of the power grid and the critical infrastructure to withstand future events in a reliable, resilient, and affordable manner.

Thank you, and I look forward to your questions.

[Prepared statement of Mr. Parks follows:]

**Written Testimony of William Parks, Senior Technical Advisor  
Office of Electricity Delivery and Energy Reliability  
U.S. Department of Energy  
Before the  
Subcommittee on National Security  
Committee on Oversight and Government Reform  
U.S. House of Representatives**

**March 21, 2018**

Chairman DeSantis, Ranking Member Lynch, and distinguished Members of the Subcommittee, I appreciate the opportunity today to discuss the challenges to hurricane response and recovery efforts in Puerto Rico

Upon being sworn into his current position as head of the Office of Electricity Delivery and Energy Reliability (OE) last fall, Assistant Secretary Bruce Walker's first order of business was to travel to Puerto Rico and the U.S. Virgin Islands (USVI). Arriving on October 23<sup>rd</sup>, he spent the next two weeks assisting with the response and recovery efforts. It was imperative for our office to see firsthand the destruction wrought by Hurricanes Irma and Maria and to understand how the U.S. Department of Energy (DOE or Department) could continue to best assist our fellow Americans.

The mission of OE is to develop innovative, cutting-edge solutions to ensure that our Nation's energy infrastructure remains reliable, affordable, and resilient. In order to fulfill this mission, DOE leverages the technical capabilities of the National Laboratories and partnerships with key private sector stakeholders to focus on early-stage research and transformative projects.

Our organization is also the lead for providing energy-related expertise to the Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA), interagency partners, and the Administration as part of DOE's emergency response activities. DOE serves as the coordinating agency for Emergency Support Function #12 - Energy (ESF-12) under the National Response Framework and as the Sector-Specific Agency (SSA) for Energy under Presidential Policy Directive 21. In addition, DOE is a primary agency for the Infrastructure Systems Recovery Support Function under the National Disaster Recovery Framework (NRDF). As the lead for ESF-12, DOE is responsible for providing information and analysis about energy disruptions and for helping to facilitate the restoration of damaged energy infrastructure.

**Hurricanes Irma and Maria Response**

In early September, Hurricane Irma, the second major hurricane to make landfall in the United States last year, swept through the Caribbean and into the southeast United States, causing billions of dollars in estimated damages, millions of customer power outages, and tragically, numerous fatalities.

Just two weeks later, before Puerto Rico and the U.S. Virgin Islands had recovered from Irma, Hurricane Maria made landfall in Puerto Rico as a dangerous Category 4 hurricane, bringing powerful winds and major flooding that rendered much of the Commonwealth's transmission and distribution infrastructure inoperable and left virtually all 1.5 million electricity customers on the island without power.

In Puerto Rico, restoration efforts continue, and as of March 19, 93% of customers have been restored and all 78 municipalities are at least partially energized.<sup>1</sup> In the U.S. Virgin Islands, restoration efforts are nearing completion, with 99% of eligible customers restored and a "No Customer Left Behind" campaign underway to ensure restoration of all customers impacted by the storms.

The significant damage to the energy sector caused by these hurricanes in Puerto Rico and the USVI and the complicated nature of an island response created significant logistical challenges as well as a response and recovery timeline that is longer than a Continental United States (CONUS) event. In a CONUS event, the electricity sector has well established mechanisms to provide mutual assistance, as demonstrated during Hurricanes Harvey and Irma. This highlights the need for power system operators to carry out robust pre-event planning and coordination. The movement of crews and equipment to non-contiguous parts of the United States, in this case Puerto Rico and the USVI, is far more challenging. At the height of the response to these territories, 1,500 mainland mutual assistance crews and support personnel were deployed, along with 5,000 contractors under U.S. Army Corps of Engineers. Further, the near-total loss of power after Hurricanes Irma and Maria made communications on the island quite difficult.

In the wake of these catastrophic events, DOE has received \$17 million in mission assignments from FEMA to provide technical assistance for hurricane response and recovery (Irma: 6 mission assignments, \$2.3 million; Maria: 11 mission assignments, \$14.7 million). Additionally, DOE has received \$13 million in supplemental funding from Congress for response and recovery activities already conducted, as well as for funding project activities to assist Puerto Rico as they rebuild their energy infrastructure. This provides DOE the opportunity to help the Commonwealth incorporate increased resilience and reliability into the new Puerto Rico electric grid through the utilization of current OE programs and activities.

Over the course of the 2017 hurricane season, the Department provided personnel to support the National Response Coordination Center and several Regional Response Coordination Centers in support of FEMA response operations. This included bilingual public information personnel to

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<sup>1</sup> <http://status.pr/Home>



provide life safety and life sustaining communications, subject matter experts as part of FEMA's Incident Management Assistance Teams, as well as technical advisors in electrical distribution, transmission, generation, energy efficiency, renewable energy, and related topics to advise the United States Army Corps of Engineers (USACE) on the assessment, planning, and reconstruction of the electrical grid in Puerto Rico.

During the response to Hurricane Maria, DOE has deployed 94 responders and recovery efforts in Puerto Rico are still underway. DOE continues to maintain close coordination with FEMA and ten subject matter experts from the Power Marketing Administrations remain deployed to provide technical support to USACE with restoration planning, cost estimates, validation, and quality assurance. DOE has also deployed a responder under the NDRF to support FEMA recovery activities and continues to coordinate with industry to facilitate additional mutual assistance.

ESF-12 responders deployed to both the USVI and Puerto Rico came from DOE sites across the country, including available personnel from both the Western Area Power Administration (WAPA) and the Bonneville Power Administration. In the U.S. Virgin Islands, DOE deployed ESF-12 responders to both St. Croix and St. Thomas to support FEMA, as well as 25 personnel and 10 line-trucks from WAPA, to provide mutual assistance through multiple DOE mission assignments from FEMA. The crews from WAPA were tasked with supporting the restoration of the transmission system on St. Thomas, which was completed in November 2017, and the ESF-12 responders on the USVI were demobilized in January 2018.

A team from the National Renewable Energy Laboratory was also deployed to the USVI to perform a power generation assessment under a FEMA mission assignment. DOE worked closely with the USVI and private sector partners to facilitate additional mutual assistance from industry.

Additionally, through DOE-funded projects, we are leveraging the expertise of our National Laboratories to develop potential long-term solutions to improve the resiliency of the Puerto Rican infrastructure. I want to assure the Subcommittee that DOE will continue to support the work needed to restore power to Puerto Rico. I'd also like to thank all of the utility crews and responders for their dedication and hard work in restoring power.

With every event, industry is the front line. The Department's activities as part of our SSA, ESF-12, and responsibilities include coordinating the response, exchange of information, waiver facilitation, and identification of unmet needs. Our goal is a safe, effective, and efficient response and recovery. Hurricanes and similar events have well established and exercised roles and responsibilities for electric sector coordination between industry and DOE.

It is also important to recognize industry's unwavering support of the American citizens in Puerto Rico and the USVI, in addition to their recovery efforts. Our coordination, with the Subsector Coordinating Councils—especially the Electric Subsector CEO coordination—has been very effective. Our work with state, local, and territorial governments, the Oil and Natural Gas Subsector Coordinating Council, the North American Electric Reliability Corporation, and the Electricity Information Sharing and Analysis Center has been critical to the response and

recovery efforts. These partnerships have demonstrated success in coordination after Hurricane Harvey and Irma and with respect to Hurricane Maria, there were tough lessons that we are still learning from this response and recovery.

#### **Lessons Learned from 2017 Hurricane Season**

The hurricane season of 2017 serves to highlight the need for a continued and adaptive focus on energy system resilience. The recent severe weather events, changing resource mix, and dynamic nature of grid technologies—including changes on the demand side—are bringing grid resilience to a new, more prominent place in the national dialogue. Specifically, as we keep one eye on day-to-day reliability and resource adequacy, we must also do better to incorporate resilience into the discussion.

The Department is finalizing a 2017 response season after action report and preliminary findings indicate the presence of responders at utility operation centers and early engagement with utilities is critical, in addition to presence at the Federal and state emergency operations centers.

For oil and natural gas critical infrastructure, the biggest challenges are issues around anti-trust and information sharing, e.g., the Department utilized GasBuddy and other public tools for gasoline station status and refinery status information was obtained by the Energy Information Administration per the National Petroleum Council Report.

Specifically as relates to the USVI, direct support by the Power Marketing Administrations was important to response efforts. Island response efforts highlighted the challenges of movement of equipment and crews outside CONUS. Additionally, long term deployments stressed the Department's capability to support recovery efforts and the issue of dedicated staff versus volunteers should be revisited.

The Department continues to assist the territories as they work to rebuild their energy infrastructure. We are working to consolidate the various plans for rebuilding Puerto Rico's grid and providing input into one overarching, comprehensive plan, per the supplemental funding legislation. DOE will continue to provide advice and counsel to Puerto Rico as they work toward a more reliable and resilient grid. Such efforts have enormous long term benefits, as we have seen with other utilities in other jurisdictions.

#### **Resilience**

As part of a comprehensive effort to reduce the impact of severe weather events, utilities in three hurricane-prone regions invested hundreds of millions of dollars over the last several years to improve their systems, including advanced communicating technologies across their transmission, distribution, and customer systems to mitigate and recover from grid disturbances.

In Florida, while it's difficult to compare storms, during Hurricane Wilma in 2005, more than 11,000 Florida Power and Light poles fell or snapped, and 241 substations experienced major

damage while close to 100 transmission structures were damaged. However, grid hardening since Wilma limited the damage to less than 1,500 toppled poles, no major damage to substations, and no damage to transmission structures during Hurricane Irma.

In mid-to-late August 2017 in Houston, at the peak of outages, 306,000 customers were without power in Texas and Louisiana from Hurricane Harvey, whereas when Hurricane Ike hit Houston in 2008, 2.1 million customers were knocked offline. Some of this dramatic reduction was due to CenterPoint Energy's enhanced physical and remote operational protections to prevent damage at the vast majority of their 250 substations. CenterPoint's investment also built out their capability to safely reroute power around damaged grid equipment to maintain connections for more customers.

The immense challenges that New Orleans faced in the aftermath of Katrina were intensified by electric grid failures. System-wide power outages made it difficult to resume essential recovery activities such as flood control operations, water supply and treatment, transportation, emergency response, and banking. Even Memorial Medical Center had its backup generator fail 48 hours after the storm.

In January 2016, researchers at Sandia and Los Alamos National Laboratories teamed up with the City of New Orleans and other partners through DOE's Grid Modernization Laboratory Consortium to identify grid modernization priorities to minimize the negative consequences to particularly vulnerable communities. The analysis identified the lifeline services that receive greatest benefit from improved power resilience, and subsequently, identified clusters of high-impact infrastructure in those areas that can be served by advanced microgrids.

As a result of this research, the City of New Orleans is now equipped with a prioritization and implementation plan, developed in conjunction with the local utility and community stakeholders, to protect the grid that serves areas of most critical need.

### **Conclusion**

I am grateful for the hard work of DOE's emergency responders during the 2017 hurricane season. We have made progress, but there is still more to do. Over the next several months, DOE's primary focus in Puerto Rico will be working with our partners to support the mission of restoring the power grid and critical infrastructure.

Secretary Perry and our DOE team look forward to a thoughtful conversation focused on our response to this season's hurricanes, and on the reliability, affordability, and resilience of the electricity system from hurricanes, as well as other extreme weather events.

Thank you, and I look forward to your questions.

Mr. DESANTIS. Thank you.  
Mr. Lopez, you're up for 5 minutes.

**STATEMENT OF PETER LOPEZ**

Mr. LOPEZ. Thank you, Chairman. And in the interest of time, I will try to consolidate my remarks. You have the full testimony in front of you.

So good morning, Chairman DeSantis, Ranking Member Lynch, Representative Gonzalez Colon, members of the subcommittee.

My name is Pete Lopez. I'm the Regional Administrator for Region 2, which comprises New York, New Jersey, Puerto Rico, U.S. Virgin Islands, and eight federally recognized Indian nations.

Mr. LOPEZ. So I'm very pleased to be part of this assemblage today.

Just to put it in perspective, my experience in New York State, as a State assembly member, gave me the opportunity to be involved in intense storm-related recovery. In my region, Northern Appalachian, we were impacted by Hurricane Irene and Tropical Storm Lee. And just to put it in perspective, my family was homeless, my parents homeless. We struggled with many of the similar issues impacting Puerto Rico.

The challenge, of course, of geographic isolation and the socio-economic conditions also gave me a sensitivity and an understanding of how complicated it can be to respond when you have an isolated and economically disadvantaged community. So, effectively, the more disadvantaged, the slower and more painful the recovery.

On a personal note, I also have family on the island. And I can tell you, as I work with my colleagues, and I'm very pleased with their engagement, we take this personally.

Mr. LOPEZ. We are galvanized by their struggles, and we are working intensely to provide results.

I traveled to the islands last fall. Actually, I took off in October just as the storms were hitting. We made our initial visit. And the issue there was to focus not just on structure and function, but also on coordinating and seeking problem-solving opportunities, be creative with our problem solving.

I plan to go back in the next few weeks to engage as we transfer between response and recovery, each being a little bit different. So with that said, we have been very pleased to work with FEMA, Army Corps, other colleagues, our State and Federal partners, our local partners. We realize that the work is not complete and that this will be a long time—a long journey, just to sum it up.

So in terms of our actions, we have spent roughly \$69 million. We have other funds that we are working to engage with as we move into recovery. You will see a listing of all the work that we have done, a sampling of it. Just in highlighting, we have addressed chemical and hazardous waste facilities, Superfund and oil sites. We have addressed water treatment plants, sewer treatment plants, ambient air monitoring, hazardous waste, hazardous household waste, vegetative debris. The list goes on. Coast Guard, partnering with them to remove oil and hazardous substances. We are very focused, and we will remain committed.

So as we move forward, we are very pleased to be part of the response protocol under FEMA. We are actively engaged, and are not lead on issues, but we are helping support, almost like wing men. I guess that is the best way to describe us. We are tucked right in there and working collectively.

So the other thing that is of note as we move forward is that there are very serious issues, and I just want to highlight this quickly. As we rebuild, we also want to make sure there is capacity from the local governments to be sustainable as well. So in terms of their management structure, their organizational structure, the financing of solid waste landfill, maintenance over time, those are serious issues to us, and we will be helping to support that as well.

So in sum, our success depends on our communication, our integration, State, Federal, local level, and our creative thinking. So we thank Congress for the resources, and we are doing our best. We will continue. Public safety, health of the environment matters, and we are right there.

Thank you.

[Prepared statement of Mr. Lopez follows:]

**Testimony of  
Peter D. Lopez, Regional Administrator  
U.S. Environmental Protection Agency, Region 2  
before the  
Subcommittee on National Security  
Committee on Oversight and Government Reform  
U.S. House of Representatives**

**March 21, 2018**

Good morning Chairman DeSantis, Ranking Member Lynch and members of the Subcommittee. I am Pete Lopez, Regional Administrator for U.S. EPA's Region 2, which covers New Jersey, New York, Puerto Rico, the U.S. Virgin Islands and eight federally-recognized Indian Nations. Thank you for the opportunity to appear today to discuss EPA's important role in helping Puerto Rico and the U.S. Virgin Islands following Hurricanes Irma and Maria.

**EXPERIENCE WITH IRENE AND LEE:**

In my years of experience as a New York State Legislator, I was intensely involved in a response to a devastating storm like Irma and Maria. In 2011, upstate New York was hit by Hurricane Irene and Tropical Storm Lee. Here, my parents and family members were left homeless and six out of seven counties in my district were placed in states of emergency. My region was devastated by these storms, which was particularly challenging given the geographically isolated areas and socioeconomic conditions. Throughout my experience with Irene and Lee, I developed an understanding of how complicated it can be for isolated areas to recover, and I learned that the more disadvantaged the community, the slower and more painful the recovery.

**HURRICANES IRMA, MARIA AND THE CARIBBEAN:**

Let me turn to EPA's response and the continued recovery efforts in Puerto Rico and the U.S. Virgin Islands. I traveled to Puerto Rico and the U.S. Virgin Islands last October and plan to return next month. The focus of the trip was not to simply observe EPA's work, but to also strengthen relationships with the Commonwealth, Territory and local officials and find creative solutions to pressing local problems.

Responding to hurricanes in the Caribbean presents some unique challenges. The logistical challenges of the island setting and pre-existing weaknesses in the state of the infrastructure in Puerto Rico and the U.S. Virgin Islands, along with economic struggles of both governments, have been greatly exacerbated by these two hurricanes. EPA has worked closely with the local governments and with FEMA, the U.S. Corps of Engineers and others to make systems operational. This effort has been largely successful, but the work is not complete and there is much to be done.

I am proud of EPA's efforts in the Caribbean. Over the past seven months, EPA has deployed more than 730 people to Puerto Rico and the U.S. Virgin Islands and spent more than \$53 million on our efforts. Some of the work that EPA has accomplished includes:

- o Assessing a total of 300 chemical and hazardous waste facilities – 177 in Puerto Rico and 123 in U.S. Virgin Islands as well as a 32 Superfund and oil sites in Puerto Rico and four in the U.S. Virgin Islands;
- o Rehabilitating the Puerto Rico Environmental Quality Board (PREQB) Analytical Laboratory in Monacillo in order to restore it to its fully operational capacity;

- Here, we completed infrastructure, equipment and training needs evaluations and have ordered necessary lab equipment, supplies, and services, including a permanent backup generator which, once installed, will be critical in ensuring the conduct of important lab operations. The lab is scheduled to be back online in late May.
- EPA, working with Puerto Rico and U.S. Virgin Islands governments, completed more than 200 wastewater treatment plant and pump station assessments in Puerto Rico and more than 30 in the U.S. Virgin Islands;
- EPA also worked with the Puerto Rico government to help assess all 114 drinking water plants in Puerto Rico and assessed more than 500 small drinking water systems, many of them cistern systems, in the U.S. Virgin Islands;
- EPA took approximately 240 samples from drinking water systems in Puerto Rico in coordination with the Puerto Rico Aqueduct and Sewer Authority (PRASA) and sampled 228 water systems not run by PRASA. EPA also completed assessments of 237 non-PRASA systems. In the U.S. Virgin Islands, EPA took about 2,400 drinking water samples, mostly from cisterns;
- EPA also performed curb-side pick-up and established 40 household hazardous waste and debris collections centers in Puerto Rico and the U.S. Virgin Islands. Under the household hazardous waste program, EPA collected over 173,000 items in Puerto Rico and over 135,000 items in the U.S. Virgin Islands, and much of this includes hard to dispose of electronic waste;
- Working with the government of Puerto Rico, EPA has assessed 19 ambient air monitoring sites in Puerto Rico that were shut down as a result of the hurricanes;



- Working with the Commonwealth and Territory, we developed a list of damaged equipment, identified replacement needs, and prepared cost analyses to rebuild and restart the networks. PREQB has restarted several of its monitors and requested a FEMA mission assignment to restore its remaining sites. The equipment is in the process of being ordered;
- EPA worked with the U.S. Coast Guard to remove oil and hazardous substances from 327 of the total 377 sunken vessels.

**MOVING FORWARD TO RECOVERY:**

As the agency now turns its full focus to recovery in Puerto Rico and the U.S. Virgin Islands, we recognize that there are deeper economic challenges than most states in mainland United States, so capacity building and measurable positive environmental outcomes are our main goals as we begin our recovery work. To that end, the EPA is developing a *Hurricanes Irma and Maria Recovery Framework for Puerto Rico and the U.S. Virgin Islands* that will complement the Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA) led interagency effort to compile a comprehensive recovery strategy for rebuilding from the storm events.

Moving forward, EPA is already working jointly with FEMA, the Office of Management and Budget (OMB) and other partners to further assess disaster recovery needs and develop a joint 180-Day Plan for Puerto Rico and a joint Recovery Support Strategy for the U.S. Virgin Islands. Building on our response work under specific mission assignments from FEMA, our collective recovery efforts moving forward are focused on such critical sectors as:

- PRASA and non-PRASA drinking water facilities in Puerto Rico;

- PRASA's Wastewater facilities in Puerto Rico;
- U.S. Virgin Islands Water and Power Authority (WAPA) facilities;
- U.S. Virgin Islands Waste Management Authority's wastewater facilities;
- Impaired stormwater infrastructure in Puerto Rico; and
- Open dumps and landfills in both Puerto Rico and U.S. Virgin Islands, including operations and capacities assessments.

In addition, EPA is collaborating with the Department of Energy (DOE) providing technical assistance to determine the viability of solar energy projects in both Puerto Rico and U.S. Virgin Islands. This will include assessing whether Brownfields, closed landfills, Superfund sites and other open areas have any potential for solar power. Here, we will be reaching out to the government of Puerto Rico and local government and communities to determine whether the islands of Culebra and Vieques would be good candidates for a potential microgrid pilot.

Access to clean drinking water and the support of wastewater infrastructure will remain a top priority. Among the initiatives already identified, we are helping to develop and implement resilience strategies for drinking water and wastewater facilities in both Puerto Rico and the U.S. Virgin Islands, including a strategy to reduce the clogging of drinking water intakes during heavy rain events, especially in Puerto Rico. We will also look into the viability of connecting schools that do not have sewers to PRASA wastewater systems, as well as aiding smaller, non-PRASA drinking water systems to sustainably get them back on their feet.

EPA has been focused on strengthening solid waste infrastructure and closing open dumps for years, and we will continue to do so. Key to improving the solid waste crises in both the U.S. Virgin Islands and in Puerto Rico is to help those governments develop and implement solid waste management plans and local disaster debris management plans. We also want to encourage the reduction of waste by helping to implement composting pilot projects and recycling capabilities for both Puerto Rico and U.S. Virgin Islands. EPA wants to do what we can to equip Puerto Rico and the U.S. Virgin Islands with resilient and sustainable energy sources.

Recovery will be a long road, and the funding and process associated with recovery is very different from the funding for response. The viability of EPA's recovery plan relies heavily on our strong partnership with FEMA and fellow agencies, as well as with the relationships we have with the governments of Puerto Rico and the U.S. Virgin Islands, local communities, non-governmental organizations, and professionals. It is our goal to fully engage with our partners to make the recovery of Puerto Rico and the U.S. Virgin Islands successful, impactful, and long lasting.

These collaborative efforts will enable all of us to better safeguard the health and safety of the people of Puerto Rico and U.S. Virgin Islands while helping them sustainably protect their natural resources. Thank you again for the opportunity to testify today. I look forward to any questions the Subcommittee might have on EPA's important role in emergency response and recovery efforts.

Mr. HURD. Thank you. Mr. Aaronson, 5 minutes.

#### STATEMENT OF SCOTT AARONSON

Mr. AARONSON. Thank you, Chairman DeSantis, Ranking Member Lynch, Representative Gonzalez-Colon, and members of the subcommittee, it is a privilege to be here to discuss power restoration in Puerto Rico. And I will also abbreviate my remarks as best I can in the interest of time. I will also direct you to the pictures that we are going to have rolling. Pictures really are worth 1,000 words to understand the level of devastation and the amount of restoration work that is going on.

I am here today testifying on behalf of the Edison Electric Institute member companies, which is all the Nation's investor-owned electric companies.

When duty calls, EEI's companies, crews, and contractors bring decades of experience and unique capabilities to restore power for those affected by natural disasters. That spirit of mutual assistance is a hallmark of our industry and was on full display throughout the historic 2017 hurricane season as all segments of the industry worked closely with our Federal partners in response to Hurricanes Harvey, Irma, and Nate, as well as the wildfires ravaged the Western United States. And that coordination continues today in support of the people of Puerto Rico.

As has been noted, 2 days ago, we marked the 6-month anniversary of the day Hurricane Marie made landfall. This devastating category 4 hurricane impacted all critical infrastructure on the island, including the energy grid. The magnitude of destruction to the grid is unlike anything we have ever seen on the U.S. mainland, making this power restoration mission more difficult than other missions. As of today, the Puerto Rico Electric Power Authority, or PREPA, reports that more than 93 percent of the 1.47 million customers who can receive electricity, have had their power restored. It is important to note that one customer is equal to one electric meter, but that one meter may serve several people.

That progress could not have been made without the partnership of PREPA, FEMA, the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers and its contractors, and the many mutual assistance crews who worked tirelessly to restore power for the people of Puerto Rico. And while there has been significant progress, nobody deserves to be without power for this long. EEI, our member companies, and the rest of the industry, remain committed to this mission in helping our fellow citizens on the island.

To that end, I would like to explain our industry's role and the challenges we had faced in supporting power restoration. PREPA made its initial ask for mutual assistance from the mainland industry on October 31. Since then, nearly 60 investor-owned electric companies and public power utilities have committed personnel, equipment, and materials to the efforts.

Within days of receiving the request for mutual assistance, two industry storm bosses, or incident response experts, were deployed to Puerto Rico to assess the situation on the ground and develop a comprehensive restoration plan. It should be noted that a contingent of industry crews from New York, including EEI member

crews, has been on the island since October from agreement between Governors Rossello and Cuomo.

Our November 22, Governor Rossello appointed Carlos Torres, who is formerly of Con Edison, as the power restoration coordinator to oversee the multi-pronged restoration effort, and to align the work of industry, PREPA, the Army Corps, and others committed to the mission. This unified command has been instrumental in managing the large complex restoration safely, while ensuring crews, capabilities, and materials are being used effectively. It really is a shared effort that has embodied the motto one team, one mission.

Applying lessons learned on the mainland, an incident command structure was created for PREPA that include an incident command staff in San Juan, and seven incident management teams, or IMTs. The arrival of crews from mainland electric companies was the culmination of months of critical, but much less visible work, necessary to make this effort a success.

In most deployments, workers load their equipment into their trucks and set out on the roads to help. In this case, nearly 20 barges were needed to get trucks and equipment to Puerto Rico. And workers had to be flown to the island. All told, more than 3,000 workers from the mainland industry have been a part of this mission. Companies from across the mainland also had sent stocks of critical materials, including poles, transformers, insulators, wire, and other necessities to ensure crews had equipment and material compatible with the island system. It is important to understand that companies committed to this mutual assistance effort are doing so at cost, on a not-for-profit basis.

As of today, about 900 mutual assistance workers remain on the island. In every single restoration, a point is reached where a substantial amount of work is completed, and the amount and type of workers needed to complete the job is reassessed.

The restoration plan ensures that crews will now converge into the hardest-hit areas, and that the right number of workers remain actively engaged and continue to work safely and as quickly as possible. This deliberate rightsizing of the workforce is typical. As is the case with all restorations, the final customers will be the most difficult and time-consuming to restore.

In this case, the terrain on the island is a recurring challenge. While the response in Texas and Florida to Hurricanes Harvey and Irma were extremely efficient, we were reluctant to compare storms, as each has unique challenges. It is natural to suggest the response in Puerto Rico should have been executed as it was on the mainland, but there are significant differences that made the situation on the island unique. For one, you cannot preposition crews on the island for fear that responders would become victims. Then there is the challenge of getting people and equipment to the island.

Finally, material availability is imperative. We stockpile equipment on the mainland and made as much available to PREPA as possible. But their energy grid had some unique components, and their stockpiles were diminished.

Our industry's mantra is to be better today than we were yesterday, and better tomorrow than we are today. While it is difficult

to extrapolate too much from such an anomalous event, we will be undertaking a full after-action study to ensure we glean lessons that can help preparations on the mainland, and to prevent a similar long-term recovery should Puerto Rico be impacted by another catastrophic hurricane.

Again, I appreciate the opportunity to be here and for the subcommittee's interest in this important topic. And I look forward to your questions.

[Prepared statement of Mr. Aaronson follows:]

**“Bureaucratic Challenges to Hurricane Recovery in Puerto Rico”**

**Scott Aaronson**  
**Vice President, Security and Preparedness**  
**Edison Electric Institute**

**March 21, 2018**

Chairman DeSantis, Ranking Member Lynch, and members of the Subcommittee, thank you for the opportunity to testify. My name is Scott Aaronson, and I am Vice President for Security and Preparedness at the Edison Electric Institute (EEI). EEI is the association that represents all U.S. investor-owned electric companies. Our members provide electricity for 220 million Americans and operate in all 50 states and the District of Columbia. The electric power industry—which includes investor-owned electric companies, public power utilities, and electric cooperatives—supports more than 7 million American jobs and contributes \$880 billion annually to U.S. gross domestic product, about 5 percent of the total.

Yesterday marked the six-month anniversary of the day Hurricane Maria made landfall in Puerto Rico. On September 20, 2017, this devastating Category 4 hurricane swept over the island, impacting all critical infrastructure, including the energy grid. Puerto Rico has 2,400 miles of transmission lines across the island and 30,000 miles of distribution lines with 300 substations. It is estimated that at least 80 percent of the grid was affected by the storm.

As of March 18, the Puerto Rico Electric Power Authority (PREPA) reports that 93 percent of customers—or approximately 1.37 million out of 1.47 million customers—who can receive electricity have had their power restored.<sup>1</sup> While significant progress has been made to restore power, nobody deserves to be without electricity for this long, and EEI and our member companies remain committed to helping our fellow citizens in Puerto Rico.

The Unified Command, consisting of PREPA, the Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA), the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers (USACE), and the island’s Power Restoration Coordinator, estimate the date to restore electricity to 95 percent of customers across the island to be March 31; the 90-percent milestone was reached on March 8. Reaching 95 percent restoration in remote areas with mountainous terrain, like Arecibo and Caguas, will take until mid-April and late-May respectively.

The damage caused by Hurricane Maria is unlike anything we have ever seen on the mainland United States, and this power restoration mission is more difficult than other restoration efforts. Hurricane Maria caused historic damage to Puerto Rico’s infrastructure, creating considerable logistical challenges that complicated how crews, equipment, and materials were mobilized.

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<sup>1</sup> It is important to remember that there will be some customers who will not be able to receive power due to the severity of damage to their homes and businesses. As of March 17, PREPA reported that current load was 91.6 percent of the average pre-storm load.

My testimony seeks to explain the role that EEI member companies and the industry on the mainland have played in the power restoration mission; enumerate the complexities and challenges on the island; and identify lessons that can be gleaned from this extraordinary event.

**Mutual Assistance Is in Our Industry's DNA**

Mutual assistance is a cornerstone of electric company operations during emergencies and is essential to contingency planning. Electric companies affected by significant outages often turn to the mutual assistance network—a voluntary partnership of electric companies from across the country and Canada—to help speed restoration whenever and wherever assistance is needed, when it is safe to do so.

Typically, when major natural disasters occur, electric companies utilize the mutual assistance process to increase their workforce. Crews do not arrive automatically; a formal request for mutual assistance must be made by the affected electricity provider. The recipient of the aid pays for it, and companies providing mutual assistance are compensated, at cost, for providing service.

Each segment of the industry—investor-owned, cooperative, and public power—has a mutual assistance network of crews and contactors. This shared responsibility and cooperative spirit are hallmarks of our industry and were on display throughout the historic 2017 hurricane season. All three networks work together to ensure customers, regardless of their electric company's ownership type, have their power restored as quickly as possible.

While there is an understandable urge to compare storms, the reality is that each storm is different and has its own set of unique circumstances and challenges. In this case, juxtaposing the responses to hurricanes Harvey and Irma with the response to Maria in Puerto Rico illustrates the value of mutual assistance and how preparation enables effective restoration. It also demonstrates the need for resilient infrastructure and ongoing investments in the energy grid, the importance of having a plan in place for response and recovery, and the value of a strong industry-government partnership.

Hurricane Harvey

Harvey, a Category 4 hurricane, was the first major hurricane to make landfall in the United States since Hurricane Wilma in 2005. The storm brought historic flooding to southeastern Texas, including nearly 52 inches of rain in some locations, and strong winds in places not impacted by flooding. The daily peak outages during Harvey were around 350,000 customers. However, an estimated 1.4 million restorations occurred throughout Texas and Louisiana due to flooding and the slow-moving nature of the storm.

More than 10,000 electric power industry workers from at least 21 states mobilized to restore power to customers impacted by Harvey. Throughout the storm, affected electric companies coordinated closely with federal, state, and local governments to assess damage and to expedite power restoration, where it was safe to do so. The CEO-led Electricity Subsector Coordinating Council (ESCC)<sup>2</sup> also held daily coordination calls for industry and government to ensure unity of effort and unity of message around the storm and associated restoration activities.

<sup>2</sup> The ESCC is discussed in more detail later in this testimony.



During Hurricane Harvey, electric company investments in smart grid technologies helped companies respond faster to major outages. Digital infrastructure, including smart meters, helped companies to identify where outages were occurring. Drones were deployed by companies to speed damage assessment, and real-time water monitors in substations provided an advanced warning of flood threats, which helped to mitigate damage to the energy grid.

#### Hurricane Irma

Irma, a Category 4 hurricane when it made landfall in Florida, was the most intense storm to hit the United States since Hurricane Katrina. More than 7.8 million customers were impacted in Florida, Georgia, Alabama, South Carolina, and North Carolina at the peak on September 11, 2017. (Before hitting the mainland, Irma skirted Puerto Rico on September 6, leaving more than 1 million people without power.)

More than 60,000 workers were involved in the restoration, coming from more than 250 electric companies across the United States and Canada. This was one of the largest power restoration efforts in U.S. history. That effort resulted in 95 percent of customers being restored within one week. The speed of the recovery was noted by the U.S. Energy Information Administration:

“About 15% of customers were without power at noon on September 10, and power outages peaked at 3:00 p.m. on September 11, affecting 64% of customers. In contrast, Hurricane Wilma moved quickly across the southern part of the state, knocking out power to 36% of customers in Florida. Although the percentage of Florida customers without power during Irma was significantly higher than during Wilma, the rate of electric service restoration has been more rapid. Five days after Irma’s landfall, the share of customers without power had fallen from a peak of 64% down to 18% (a recovery rate of about 9% of customers per day). Power outages during Wilma declined from 36% of customers to 16% by the fifth day after landfall (an average recovery rate of about 4% of customers per day). ... Since 2005, Florida Power & Light and other utilities in the state have made significant investments to improve their hurricane preparedness. These utilities have upgraded electric infrastructure, including replacing wooden utility poles with concrete poles. Utilities have also deployed smart grid technologies, which provide more timely and more accurate information about outages and can help utilities better target restoration efforts.”<sup>3</sup>

As was the case throughout Hurricane Harvey, EEI and the industry worked through the ESCC to coordinate with the federal government, other segments of the industry, and critical infrastructure operators.

#### Hurricane Maria

Maria made landfall in Puerto Rico as a Category 4 hurricane with maximum sustained winds of 155 mph. Soon after landfall, President Trump signed a major disaster declaration for Puerto Rico to provide federal assistance with the storm response and recovery efforts. On September 26, the President announced that the federal government would cover 100 percent of the costs associated with debris removal and various emergency protective measures in Puerto Rico for the first 180 days of the response mission. On February 23, the President extended the 100-

<sup>3</sup> <https://www.eia.gov/todayinenergy/detail.php?id=32992>

percent cost share for emergency protective measures, including emergency power restoration, an additional 60 days.

In the initial days and weeks after Maria, the government's focus was on damage assessments, life-saving rescues, and medical missions, as well as providing emergency support, temporary power, food, water, and other commodities for devastated communities. At the same time, Puerto Rico Governor Ricardo Rosselló entered into intergovernmental agreements with the governors of New York and Florida, which led to electric power industry subject matter experts, damage assessors, and crews from New York and Florida being deployed to Puerto Rico to conduct damage assessments and assist with the initial response efforts.

PREPA did not make an official request for mutual assistance until October 31, when EEI and the American Public Power Association (APPA) received a letter asking for support on the island. On November 4, PREPA expanded its aid request to include the National Rural Electric Cooperative Association (NRECA).

Since then, EEI, APPA, and NRECA have been working together and with our member companies, PREPA, and federal government partners to support this mission. Companies from across the country have responded to the call for help. Nearly 60 investor-owned electric companies and public power utilities have committed crews, equipment, and/or materials to the emergency power restoration mission.

Following is a brief timeline of the mutual assistance response.

#### November-December 2017

Within days of receiving the request for mutual assistance, two incident response experts from the electric power industry were deployed to Puerto Rico to assess the situation on the ground. Carlos Torres, who retired from Con Edison in late October as the Vice President of Emergency Preparedness & Business Resiliency, and Manny Miranda, Senior Vice President for Power Delivery at Florida Power & Light Company, arrived in Puerto Rico on November 3. They began assessing storm damage; met with officials from PREPA, FEMA, and USACE; and started to formulate a comprehensive restoration plan for the island.

On November 22, Torres was appointed by Governor Rosselló to serve as the Power Restoration Coordinator to oversee the multi-pronged restoration effort. As a first step, an incident command structure was created that included a command staff based in San Juan. An incident command structure did not exist at PREPA prior to Maria. Incident command structures commonly are used to manage large restoration efforts on the mainland and are essential to effective, efficient, and safe power restoration.

Because mutual assistance plans were not in place in Puerto Rico as they were in Houston and Florida (during Hurricanes Harvey and Irma), the command staff team first had to build operating infrastructure—logistics, coordination, supply chains, housing and food, etc.—before deploying crews. Applying lessons learned on the mainland, the team recommended that PREPA create seven regional incident management teams (IMTs) to expedite the restoration. These

IMTs (see map) arrived in December and continue to work with PREPA to coordinate and support the restoration effort.

This first wave of mutual assistance was designed to enhance the organizational structure and to get needed equipment and materials to the island.



#### January-March 2018

With the incident command structure and regional IMTs in place and fully staffed, the industry deployed additional crews, equipment, and materials in January to accelerate the ongoing power restoration efforts across the island. Nearly 1,500 additional restoration workers and support personnel from investor-owned electric companies were deployed to the island to work under the direction of the seven IMTs; public power utilities also sent mutual assistance crews.<sup>4</sup> Nearly 20 barges carried more than 1,000 trucks and other equipment. The arrival of crews from mainland electric companies was the culmination of months of critical—but much less visible—work necessary to make this effort a success.

In addition to sending crews, trucks, and equipment, companies also identified and shipped from their stocks critical materials, including wood and concrete poles, transformers, insulators, wire, and other hard-to-manufacture components. It is important to note that some of the material needed on island was time-consuming to manufacture and the availability of some supplies and materials was strained due to the earlier hurricanes and the wildfires on the mainland.

The deployment of additional crews represented the next phase in the mutual assistance response. With this new wave, the power restoration workforce grew to more than 5,500 and included the resources already working on the island from PREPA's own crews, the contingent of crews from New York who were working as part of the intergovernmental agreement, and crews mobilized under contracts awarded by USACE.

<sup>4</sup> Overall, approximately 3,000 industry lineworkers and support personnel have been involved in the restoration effort on the island.

As of March 18, 93 percent of customers across the island had their power restored, and we believe that the resources, equipment, and people put in place under the organizational structure helped to accelerate the restoration process and timeline.

The deployment of mutual assistance crews was facilitated by a memorandum of understanding (MOU) agreement that was developed by APPA, EEI, and NRECA. The MOU is structured on existing mutual assistance agreements and allows electric companies on the mainland (that are members of APPA, EEI, or NRECA) to enter into emergency agreements to provide resources and workers to PREPA on a not-for-profit basis. The MOU signed by PREPA and the companies providing mutual assistance also requires that this assistance be provided on a not-for-profit basis.

As of this writing, some mutual assistance crews have finished their mission and have returned to the mainland, while others continue to work to restore power to the people of Puerto Rico. As of March 16, about 900 mutual assistance workers remained on the island. It is common in any restoration effort (in Puerto Rico or on the mainland) for mutual assistance crews to be released at this point in the restoration. The restoration plan ensures that crews now will converge into the hardest-hit areas and that the right number of crews/workers remain actively engaged and continue to work safely and as quickly as possible.

In every single restoration, a point is reached where a substantial amount of work is completed and the amount and type of workers needed to complete the job are reassessed. In many cases, more people simply does not mean that work gets completed faster. This is especially true in Puerto Rico's mountainous regions with their narrow roads, where only so many trucks and so many workers can fit into one space at a time. Access to materials, not the size of the workforce, at times has slowed the restoration, but we have seen a steady improvement in materials being delivered to the island, and the remaining crews are well-positioned to continue making progress.

Again, this deliberate right-sizing of the workforce is typical, and companies continue to rotate in fresh crews from the mainland electric companies. As is the case with all restorations, the final customers are the most difficult and time-consuming to restore; in this case, the terrain on the island is a recurring challenge.

**Partnerships: Key to Restoration**

A restoration of this complexity and magnitude demands a response to match it. The partnership among our industry, PREPA, and the government has been critical. This is truly one team with one mission, and we are unified in our effort. So, if there is one message that I leave the Subcommittee with today, it is that strong partnerships result in strong response and recovery.

EEI and the industry appreciate the Administration's ongoing support throughout the emergency response mission. In particular, President Trump's extension of the 100-percent cost share allowed crews already on the island to continue working without interruption.

One of our key partners, the Department of Energy (DOE), is the presidentially and congressionally directed Sector Specific Agency (SSA) for the energy sector. DOE has been a

partner with us at every step, and we thank the agency for its role in ensuring unity of effort across government and industry responders.

A key reason for our strong industry-government partnership is the threat to energy grid security and our shared responsibility to protect infrastructure critical to the life, health, and safety of Americans, as well as to our national and economic security. As noted earlier, the ESCC was integral to the effective restoration following Harvey and Irma; it also was essential in the effort to get crews from industry on the mainland to Puerto Rico.

The ESCC is comprised of the chief executive officers of 22 electric companies and nine major industry trade associations, including EEI, APPA, and NRECA. This group—which includes all segments of the industry, representing the full scope of electric generation, transmission, and distribution in the United States and Canada—serves as the principal liaison between the federal government and the electric power sector, with the mission of coordinating efforts to prepare for, and respond to, national-level incidents or threats to critical infrastructure.

The ESCC meets three times a year with senior government officials to identify emerging security issues and to develop plans to mitigate those threats. Those “blue sky” meetings help to prepare the industry and government for response efforts.

#### **Future Storms: Lessons Learned**

In our industry, our mantra is that we want to be better today than we were yesterday, and better tomorrow than we are today. This means that, after storms, we compile lessons learned and create strategies to close gaps and identify areas for improvement.

The industry routinely drills and exercises for all threats as they constantly strive to apply lessons learned and to enhance their response and recovery capabilities for the benefit of customers. As an example, since Superstorm Sandy, the industry has worked even more closely together and with government partners to apply lessons learned from that significant storm, to streamline restoration efforts, and to improve how the industry prepares and responds safely to large-scale major events that cause significant outages.

Companies also continue to make significant investments to harden the energy grid and to make energy infrastructure more resilient. Since Superstorm Sandy in 2012, investor-owned electric companies have invested more than \$230 billion in transmission and distribution systems.

While it is too early to launch a formal examination into lessons learned from Hurricane Maria, there are a few practices on the mainland that could have allowed for a more efficient restoration in Puerto Rico.

Assessments: Knowing specifically what part of the energy grid is damaged, and where that equipment is located, is the first step in any restoration. Damage assessments allow crews to know where to work and to prioritize more effectively. The damage assessment process was hampered in Puerto Rico, first because of impassable roads and other logistical challenges, then because different organizations did their own assessments in their own ways. The creation of the “unified command,” bringing together the Power Restoration Coordinator, PREPA, FEMA,

USACE and its contractors, and mainland crews, was a critical step to achieving a common understanding of the damage and, thus, to developing a master plan to fix the system.

Pre-positioning of Crews: Hurricanes, while devastating, typically are forecast in advance and give electric companies time to plan. When responding to Irma in Florida, for example, crews mobilized days in advance and were pre-positioned just outside the impact zone to go to work once the storm cleared. While pre-positioning is a profound challenge in an island situation—companies do not want crews to become victims—it is a key element to initiating a quick restoration process.

Access to Equipment and Materials: Having access to materials is critical to any restoration. There were limited equipment reserves (e.g., poles, wire, transformers, etc.) in place in Puerto Rico prior to Maria and certainly not enough to support an emergency power restoration effort of this magnitude. This dearth of materials on the island, combined with the strong demand for material on the mainland and the fact that materials from the mainland had to be flown or barged to Puerto Rico, made everything more time-consuming. Companies on the mainland, particularly those in hurricane-prone areas, stockpile as much material as possible so that mutual assistance crews have what they need to support the recovery. Again, this was not the case in Puerto Rico.

Investments in Grid Hardening: As noted, investments in grid hardening and smart meters in Texas and Florida reduced the number of outages and expedited restoration efforts following Harvey and Irma. There were no such investments made in Puerto Rico, and vegetation management had not been done in years.

While there are many conversations underway about the future of Puerto Rico and the structure of its electric company, we are focused on the short-term emergency power restoration and on restoring power to those customers still in the dark.

Thank you again for having me here today, for the Committee's interest in Puerto Rico, and for your support of the restoration. I look forward to your questions.

Mr. DESANTIS. Thank you. Staff Sergeant Sutton, you are up, 5 minutes.

**STATEMENT OF JOHNATHAN SUTTON**

Mr. SUTTON. Good morning, Chairman, ranking members, Miss Gonzalez, thank you for the opportunity to be here today. I initially flew over to Puerto Rico on the 26th of September, and I stayed all the way until December 2 of 2017. From getting over there, I pretty much—you know, I went on my own accord. I was actually living in Maui, Hawaii, at the time. Never heard anything about anything on the news about the devastation, what is going on, you know, how bad this actually was. I ended up getting ahold of a few military members that I knew were already over there, and they went ahead and sent me current active photos, videos, and anything that I could possibly get my hands on over there.

I went on my own accord. Touched down. As soon as I got in the airport, I honestly felt like I was the only person coming into Puerto Rico trying to bring aid, you know, just as a regular person. My flight, you know, obviously can fit over 400 people, but, you know, there was 10.

I came in. As soon as I touched down, I found the, you know, FBI. Located homeland security. You know, identified myself. You know, let them know, Hey, I have a, you know, security clearance with DOD. You know, I am retired military. I was working with 82nd Airborne Division, working alongside with Special Forces groups and have been deployed multiple times. And I am here to volunteer, whatever you need. You know, told them my capabilities of being able to rebuild homes, provide power, AC. Anything you need, I can make it happen.

They said they didn't need any help. Apply online. So I said, Okay.

I went on my own accord. Went throughout Puerto Rico. You know, ran into a few police officers. Their big advice was, you know, You need to be really careful because you are not from around here.

Right now, there is no communications outside the airport, period. Our communications are just here. The moment you leave the airport, I can't tell you what is going to happen to you. There was obviously looting. People being killed over the small amount of dollars they do have in their pockets. And moving around the city was practically impossible. Curfews were in place. Limited supplies, limited fuels, and people are very desperate.

There was multiple times that I would go throughout Puerto Rico, and, you know, it is just a mad house. You know, people would either rush your car, rush your vehicle, you know, just trying to get whatever supplies you got on you.

There is multiple times I would go out with, you know, people. And, honestly, it would be, like, too late. A lot of people, you would show up, say, Hey, I heard you had an elderly member or a child here. We are here to help you out. And, unfortunately, they passed away the night prior with dehydration, malnutrition, and a lot of people throughout the months became more devastated to the point where they took their own lives by either jumping off mountains or cliffs because they knew nobody was going to come. Nobody was

coming. It had been months. And to be without power, being without water, being without food, it was honestly probably harder than any deployment I have ever been on in my life to see the amount of, you know, suffering, human suffering.

And, you know, we were all looking for answers. I myself, you know, moved into a church member's home in Dorado. To paint a little better picture for you for Dorado and Bayamon, that is probably the—probably one of the worst side you could probably go in. Probably one of worst rough areas of D.C. you could ever think of, New York, L.A., wherever you want to think of. And being a guy that is not from the island, obviously it is not very safe for myself. I took the chance, took the risk, because I knew these people were in need, and they definitely needed some assistance.

Throughout the months, you know, I did everything I could from getting medical supplies, getting food to people in hard-to-reach areas. And every single time I would go out, I would be the first person that anyone would ever see. They would let me know, hey, I haven't seen the mayor. I haven't seen FEMA. I haven't seen Red Cross. Can you help me?

And, you know, I would definitely go out of my way, working with local hospitals, working with local organizations. Honestly, I did it all myself. I tried helping out with FEMA. I would work with them to try to deliver their supplies for them. And a lot of the responses that I would get would be, There is a lot of political things happening here, and I can't make this happen. Can you do it for me? And they would give me addresses, the locations, and I would go to them and make that happen for anybody on Puerto Rico.

I would even, you know, take messages from random people over the internet, say, Hey, this is my address. My grandfather, you know, hasn't seen anybody. He is a retired veteran. Can you help me out? And I would go out of my way to make that happen. And honestly, the 3 months that I was there, I mean, I have no words to really describe, you know, the devastation that is currently out there. And that is still currently going on, so—

Mr. DESANTIS. Thank you.

Mr. SUTTON. Thank you for your time.

I look forward to your questions.

[Prepared statement of Mr. Sutton follows:]



March 20, 2018

To whom it may concern,

I am writing in the concern of how Puerto Ricans and residents in Puerto Rico are being care for by Federal Emergency Agency (FEMA) and the overall actions and assistance provided from 26th September 2017 to 02 December 2017 that I personally observed while on ground volunteering for a non profit organization to provide humanitarian relief efforts throughout the island of Puerto Rico.

I flew in from Maui, Hawaii after I saw the hurricanes hit the island and did not hear anything on the news or news feeds about the current conditions of the island of Puerto Rico. I personally volunteered on the FEMA, and Red Cross, Team Rubicon, Wounded Warrior Project websites but did not get selected or asked to go to Puerto Rico to assist with relief efforts even when I emailed them directly and told them I was already on ground out in Puerto Rico and have no problem directing or standing up their organization, if they were not in Puerto Rico yet. I would only get emails about helping out in Texas.

So I called a friend of mine in the Puerto Rico National Guard to see what the conditions were out on island. He advised me "not to come, Johnathan it is very bad, if you do not have to come don't!" I said to him "I will see you in 72 hours, I need to square a few things away and I need to withdraw as much money as I can to have it on hand and rent a satellite phone and have the phone overnighted to me before I fly out to Puerto Rico, and I'll be there soon"

So I bought my own ticket and paid over \$250 in baggage fees that United Airline would not wave for me without an official letter knowingly I was heading to Puerto Rico and I explained why I was going to Puerto Rico and showed them all my hurricane supplies like gallons of water and other supplies to bring with me to the island as it was not my first experience with hurricanes since I have lived in Virginia Beach, Virginia all my life before the military and have been through Hurricane Floyd, and a few other hurricanes in the 1990's, and on the 26th of September I flew from Maui to San Juan, Puerto Rico.

The moment I landed in San Juan the airport was absolutely running on bare minimum power, no lights, no air conditioning and a lot of security forces were in the airport and hundreds of people were awaiting to get on any flight out of Puerto Rico. I felt like my flight, and the people on it were the only few people trying to get into Puerto Rico as it was the first available flight I could find that flew in to Puerto Rico.

After getting my bags I found Homeland Security, Federal Bureau of Investigations (FBI), and Red Cross at the sectioned off portion of the airport next to the police station upstairs. I identified myself as a retired veteran with a security clearance to a few members of the teams out there asking them if they needed any assistance, I am here to volunteer. They told me no, and a few spoke to me and advised me that there were zero communication capabilities outside of the airport and it was very dangerous out on this island as there was looting, killing, and the island is out of control, and very unsafe for a

person like me and “I need to keep my head on swivel.” They did not have any answers for me or the island as it was already six days after the hurricane had hit the island.

They told also told me “be careful because you stick out and people are being killed over the few dollars they do have in their pockets.”

I spent the next few hours to find a friends family in Aricebo with all the money I had in my pockets to just get out there to hand them a satellite phone that I brought with me to communicate throughout the island.

I then went on my personal mission to find any organization or group on ground to volunteer for them, for an undetermined amount of time. I knew there would not be any flights out of Puerto Rico for quite sometime and was used to these conditions of not knowing when I would be leaving with the military and knew the dangers I was putting myself in being a disabled veteran who has multiple disabilities to include Post Traumatic Stress Disorder (PTSD), anxiety, chronic depression and many physical injuries from multiple airborne operations while serving on duty and knew that I had to bring enough supplies that would last me through November.

I was well aware of my medical conditions but had to put them aside to help others because when I spent over 48 hours on ground, I knew no help was coming anytime soon and there were thousands who were without lights, running water and food, and all supplies and food that was available and or not destroyed was being stolen or eaten very quickly as I also knew everything became hectic on island and supplies for everyday life were eventually going to run out.

I spent the first two days in Aricebo at my friend’s families house after getting them in contact with family members in the the upper states who were concerned of their families well being. Aricebo was destroyed beyond recognition as I visited Puerto Rico the year prior in July and all around the island and the ride into Aricebo looked like a tornado came through the island and there was no vegetation on any of the trees, mudslides were evident and remittances of the water levels and high power winds, and large trees were down everywhere and or on the side of the road just enough for cars to pass through, and it was an absolute disaster zone on island. I did not recognize where I was going and it was very difficult and dangerous to travel into the Aricebo area, as I had to avoid many tree limbs, and trunks to just get in and even running over a few to get into the area where my friend’s family lived.

All telephone lines were down or destroyed, and houses were missing and or the floor frame was all that was left and only the heavy appliances were left in place or they were down the side of the mountain. People were spending all day in line to only get only 10 dollars of gas and to get water to drink it was another all day mission to just get whatever water bottles and jugs filled. There was a curfew in place as well to try to prevent looting, and to try to keep people safe.

My friend’s brother in law was a police officer, he briefed me that the police are able to full up their tanks, as well as military but the citizens could not. They could also skip the whole line and fill up whenever they wanted to. But there were also officials taking supplies, and running around the island for themselves and their families. Not boasting about it but just being honest with me. He was no like that, he only used his fuel

appropriately, and he was on a 24 hours on shift, and off duty for 12 hours and came back to Aricebo when he could to his wife and his new board baby, and every other day he went to the country side to check on his mother.

48 hours later, I left Aricebo to go back into Carolina, Puerto Rico where my friend in the Puerto Rico National Guard was living to devise a plan to get with any non profit or government organization, as I held a clearance and had the knowledge of how to provide power with being a power generation mechanic, rebuild homes, provide clean living conditions and to do all I can physically to bring aid to people even if it meant going door to door to bring people food, water and supplies. I would stay until I could not be of assistance anymore on island or until I felt like there was no more that I could do.

There was no cell phone service, or internet, or power and with limited fuel and basic necessities many people were not doing well and being desperate for any help, or supplies very fast. I knew I had to do something because it was clear no one was there that was going to help or had the skills I already knew and or to keep looking for answers until they found them.

My friend lived next to the Intercontinental Hotel at the Coral Beach Apartments where all federal, FEMA, Homeland Security and anyone who was flown into help were staying. Their parking lot were always full of all SUV's (especially the Jeeps) were all reserved and rented out the them. I could not find one Jeep on island for myself. But the odd note is most were parked at the Intercontinental hotel overflow parking lot with their agency decal on the windshield in the parking lot. All the nice hotels, and resorts (with 24 hour power) were all booked by all federal agencies to house their employees.

After every agency turned me away or just said "apply online", I found a non profit organization that was on island called the Tree of Life Counseling & Care Foundation (TOL) out of Orlando, Florida, just by luck in a line to get coffee at a shop in Carolina, and told the project director my story about coming to the island to help a friend and that I was looking for an organization to volunteer for since no governmental organization would take me on or was able to respond back to me or anything. I understood a hurricane hit Texas and that was also the agencies focus as well but a week without out everyday supplies is vital to anyone especially elderly, children, infants, and I knew most people living on Puerto Rico were not well off and were struggling to put food on the table and pay their bills as it was, because as the economy there is not all that great from the beginning.

So adding two hurricanes to hit the island would devastate the whole island. It defiantly did. I was a new volunteer with that non profit and was brought on my first day to find volunteers on island. So I did, I did not know much Spanish and did not know what areas were safe or not. I was told to go to Bayamon, Toa Baja, Toa Alta to find volunteers.

Little did I know where I was is a very unsafe area and picked up on all the signs of not being in a area that would be safe for a non resident or non Puerto Rican, white American, who did not know enough Spanish other than basic phrases.

Luckily I ran into a young man in Toa Baja who knew I meant no harm and was just wanting to find help to bring aid to the people of Puerto Rico. I told him who I was and who I was working for and he took me to his youth pastor in Dorado. It took over two

hours to make it (usually it only takes 10 minutes to get to Dorado from Toa Baja). The roads were flooded and hard to navigate and most roads were closed going in due to the extremely high water levels that flowed over the main bridge into Dorado.

Finally I made it to this young man's youth pastor's house. The pastor was from the New York, Chicago area in the upper states and knew English, so I was in luck. I knew I was in another part of Puerto Rico that was not a very safe area to be in. I told him my story about coming to the island and meeting up with this non profit organization and what I was able to provide and all I needed was volunteers and my non profit organization that I was volunteering for has three containers of food, water and everyday supplies already on the way from Jacksonville, Florida.

He was amazed with my story, a saw it as a blessing that I arrived as the church was praying to help out the island in a bigger way but they did not know how or what they could do more to bring more aid because they did not have enough supplies to help as much as they wanted to. So he called the Pastor of the church over to his house and explained "he might want to come quickly because their prayers have been heard and answered"

a few hours later the pastor showed up to his home and he explained in Spanish everything I told him as the pastor and his wife showed up (they are both pastors), so they both did not English well enough to speak it so he interpreted for me.

The pastor immediately looked at me and knew I meant well and said "what do you need, and how can we help you?" The man interpreted for me and told me everything the pastors were saying.

The pastors went ahead and explained they had a church full of people and he knew more pastors and more churches full of people ready to volunteer. If I needed I could have over 50 people making care packages, and preparing bags of groceries and help deliver it all. He would even open his church to me as a storage place for all the supplies inside the containers. He told me he would do whatever it takes to help me with what I needed to be successful.

Two weeks passed and I spent those weeks preparing the church for the delivery of the containers. We also scouted out all the burros who were in the highest need and people who did not have anything. Each time we went somewhere new on the island and each time the citizens would say "You are the first to arrive", "We have yet to see anyone, not FEMA, not the mayors, not Red Cross, no one." Most homes were unlivable, missing roof, everything washed downside the mountains, nothing left in the homes, water level marks to the ceilings, you could tell that there were mud slides that come into these people's homes, mud level marks on curtains, and nothing in their homes and everything they owned were outside on the curb waiting for trash to come take it away because it was completely destroyed these citizens were left with nothing and had lost everything they owned inside their homes and even their cars were completely destroyed.

I was mind blowing no one had come out to these areas and I made it a point to go to the ghettos and burros where mayors and or funds do not usually go to, because I knew that where people would need the most help. I even went and spent all day trips going on top of the mountains in Corozal, Utuado, Cominero, where people were trapped up there

with no way to remove trees, mudslides and other hurricane rubbish to see if there was anyone alive up there. Surprisingly they were still alive. Most people made ti down the mountains with their own chainsaws's just citizens coming together to bring aid. I myself and my family would go out to places to pull, cut, and removed trees out of the roads so people could get out of their neighborhoods. Weeks would go by and trash and hurricane rubbish would just be piling up in neighborhoods and around Puerto Rico and the trash companies were not running or picking anything up. Most people do not know how to or had the means to clear all the trees out of the roadways. It was clearly not like the rest of America where companies would remove all that like in Texas or Virginia or anywhere else. I would conduct interviews with people and recorded several interviews and all said the same things. "You are the first I have seen, not FEMA, not Red Cross, no one has come for days." Their homes were completely destroyed and damaged.

Then finally the TOL's containers arrived and they were delivered to the church. It was quite a blessing to see this and we were all grateful to see a container that could feed over 1,500 families arrive. As everyone outside of San Juan were without power, water, food, and basic supplies to live and have been since September 20th of 2017. It was now October 15th. Everyone in the church came together with the money that they did have to give to one another and the community and the church was housing over 20 people who have completely lost their homes.

To paint a better picture, this was Bayamon. It is the ghetto like the ghetto's of Washington DC, Philadelphia, Los Angeles, and any other ghetto's where most people are working hard for less than 10 dollars an hour. It is not safe to be there if you are "white" or "not Puerto Rican" These people didn't have much but they came together. I told everyone my story and knew I was came to help. They were amazed and accepted me from day one and we are still in contact today and I check on them daily.

We download the containers and then mapped out all the places we would go. I personally visited each burro of Puerto Rico and delivered, managed, arrange food drives and had a team of over 40 plus volunteers from church members from Fe y Gracia in Bayamon, Puerto Rico. We as a team came together on the 30th of September of 2017 to do so with their supplies they had already gathered and with the containers that arrived only two made it. One of them were stolen by a company called "Godfather Trucking" in Puerto Rico and the owner stole the goods and kept it for himself. I do not know the whole story of why the third container was not delivered. Please contact TOL to find the reason for that.

So we then mapped out all the hard hit areas, and we would spend countless hours and days delivering food, water and supplies all over the island. From North, South, East, and West. We delivered over 300 bags of food everyday to different burros throughout Puerto Rico. The project manager and the other members of TOL had to return to Orlando to go fundraise more, ask for more donations and left me in charge of all operations out in Puerto Rico. So I took charge and kept doing missions daily until we ran out of supplies.

I would go to many places, and many people would have the same story, these citizens would cry when they saw me and my church members come to their area and just hand them a bag of groceries and a case of water because they have been without. The supply points around the island could not feed enough, nor was there enough food and water for

everyone many people went without food, many times I arrived to places and they were in morning because their loved ones passed away from malnutrition, or dehydration. Many elderly and children passed away during the months of October, and November because these agencies were failing these people and not helping. Not going to these hard hit areas or properly disturbing the supplies throughout the island. I would go to places in Corozal and many people committed suicide because they were trapped and it had been days before they saw us. I still live with these stories today in my heart and they haunt me along with everything I had experienced within the military from my deployments.

Many people came to me and my pastor and said they did not know what to do anymore and wanted to kill themselves because they know the Puerto Rico mayors, and governors would not do anything but help themselves to the supplies that would come in and not care for their citizens.

They were right. Many mayors would have a collection point for the supplies, but somehow those supplies never made it to the burros that were not well off, or areas that hold citizens that do not vote often. Not to be political but it was on going trend that the ghetto's or not so nice off areas where not reach all over the island. I would go inside their homes and talk to them and of course started picking up on Spanish and had a church member help interpret for me. Nothing was in these citizens homes they had to use bottles of water to try to clean their homes from the mud slides.

But places like San Juan had power, food, running water, ready for tourist to arrive and look like things were fine. They had all bars, restaurants, and all tourist areas looking clean, cut lawns, streets were clean and looking well taken care of like a hurricane never hit Puerto Rico. But the rest of Puerto Rico like Aricebo, Salinas, Utuado, Lajas, Guayama, Comerio, Toa Baja, Toa Alta, Bayamon looked like a tornado ripped though there and it was a third world country and trash piling up and trees and shrubs everywhere, power lines mangled, no running water, kids playing in what they didn't know was contaminated water. Where was the balance? Where was the mayors helping other mayors? Where was the help to make other places look like San Juan, where power was restored and looking good or back to normal? Something was not right and I highly question that. Why was the mayor of San Juan not helping other mayors and constantly on commercials and in Washington DC when other needed help and the job was yet to be done in Puerto Rico? The job out there to bring change to the island is no where close to being done.

I would go to groceries stores, it would take over two hours to get in and there was a time limit to get in and get what you needed and you had to leave and it was cash only. The stores were not stocked at all and did not have everyday supplies or enough food to feed everyone.

Throughout the weeks FEMA and Red Cross would start being noticeable around the island but this was now November. I had already been all over the island three times and ran out of my supplies before they made it anywhere close the hard hit areas.

The supply points would be "you come to us" only and they failed to realized they didn't have any money or cars or means to come into San Juan, or to the collection points, or road were completely destroyed or had huge holes in them like in Barranquitas and

Corozal, and Utuado where bridges collapsed and or washed away and or had huge holes in them where a bull dozer or tank wouldn't be able to cross and it was almost impossible for many to make it down the mountain being trapped up there or it would just be simply too much to come to the collection points.

Many had lost their cars due to the floods. Mud was on the roof of the cars, trucks and SUV's, how were these people going to come FEMA, or Red Cross? Poor execution on all for these citizens.

I went to Utuado several times and the bridge was missing to an area called "the forgotten" where a galvanized cable and zip line was placed by the army engineers to get supplies to them and there was no way off that section because the bridge gave way and collapsed and washed away. There were still sticks and trees under the remaining bridge. The river waters of the Rio Grande raised so high I think it was a miracle those people were still alive, mud slides were all over Utuado.

I quickly became known as "the Puerto Rican Gringo" yes you may laugh or think it was funny but I held that name and title with pride because I felt and many Puerto Ricans felt like I was the only one or few out there who gave a damn and was out there to help the people and wanted nothing in return, no money, fame, nothing just wanted to serve the lord and the people of Puerto Rico and to those who needed the most and never took anything and just gave until I couldn't give anymore. I started doing Facebook Lives and conducting interviews with Fox 5 news in Washington DC via Skype and on Telemundo to try to spread awareness and raise donations and to try to get more containers of supplies of "REAL FOOD" out to Puerto Rico because what supplies that were given out were Meals Ready to Eat (MRE's) military food or the meals in a box called a "care package with beans and non Puerto Rican food that the people of Puerto Rico eat, and I myself would never feed my kids or my parents or anyone I know. It looked like someone went to gas station and put random items into the boxes and called it a "care package" but to me it was a "slap in the face" to the people of Puerto Rico.

The saddest part was when cell phone services came back around the island we would all see how Hurricane Harvey and Texans were being cared for and that was "first class" compared to how Puerto Ricans were being treated.

I myself moved in with my now family in Puerto Rico on the 30th of September in Dorado and we took showers out of a water bucket we would fill up with garden water if it was running and take a cold shower in the dark with using a "red solo cup" or cup to hold the water over our heads. We would have to ration the use of fuel for generators and food was what we could find. I ate what they ate. I slept on the floor on an air mattress for over 70 days. Eventually Costco was getting supplies and that was highly rationed, like only two cases of water per card member and things were starting to get better sort of around Thanksgiving. More generators were coming available but by then people are so used to being without power or running water they didn't care to buy them.

I saw many drink and fill their buckets and water containers full of mountain water but were not knowledgeable and they were so desperate for water they did not realized many dead animals, humans, and human waste have contaminated the water. There was not any filtration systems use until about November and then a company called "Veterans 4"

another fellow retired military member a Marine started going around cleaning the water through a filtration system. Many just took the chance to drink the water as is and I ran into several who did not care and were sick from the water, because they had to and didn't have the means to clean the water or boil it or knew about putting bleach in the water to sanitize it. They were not getting help and there was clearly not enough beach tablets for everyone.

Many people started to recognize me because well I am white and remembered me as "the Puerto Rican Gringo" and they would "rush" or run up to me and many would run up to my car and I would be done with handing out supplies within seconds. I have videos to show the lines where people would be lined up at supply points as they would wait for over 4 hours and just be told "we are out for today, we cannot hand out more supplies or there is only so much we can hand out, or ran out completely." I saw people jump out of their cars while still in motion to just get a case of water from my car because there was not enough at any of the collection points on the west side of the island in many places like Mayaguez, Cabo Rojo, Lajas, Yauco, Anasco, Hormigueros. As I would visit those cities the level of desperation, and lack of supplies these people had were like no other, they did have anything and there wasn't anyone but these non profit organizations and good citizens coming to the island to bring aid to people really making a difference. Doing way more than FEMA, Red Cross or the local mayors were doing.

In Salinas, and Santa Isabel, the stores would not be able to get shipments of anything like rice, water, beans or anything that was a usual thing Puerto Ricans usually consume on a daily basis or just would be everyday common supplies to live. I would visit several homes in that area where flood levels were high and most communities down there were elderly and many people would hug the cases of water I would deliver because it had been days since they have seen or had clean drinking water and were taking a risk by drinking the water from water they pumped out of the wells in their backyard. I myself boiled and put a little bit of bleach into the water and had to do so because in the military that is what you do with potable water when you do not have tablets to sanitize the water.

Most homes had military MRE's and that is all the food they could get on the west side of the island. So when I showed up with everyday common supplies like Goya beans, rice, canned foods, peanut butter, water bread from the markets, cheese, and a case of water I was really helping out. I would visit the emergency command center in Utuado and I would speak to the EMT team and FEMA directors out there and they never left the command center no matter what time I arrived they were in that RV where that was the only place on island that had internet. Most agencies that were of any importance that could help out, were there and would stay there all day and not leave but yet did not have any communications throughout the island besides a little bit of a walky-talky here and there but cell phone service in November was non-existent in these vital areas where any rain that would come would instantly start a small landslide and flood and these government officials did not have an answer to when any form of communication, radio's or cell phone services would come back on or even when there will be more supplies coming.

They had a room somewhat full of supplies but honestly my one container would easily exceed their supply and they were asking me if I could find them where more baby formula, adult diapers, baby diapers, or real food to help stock them up. I was blown



away by FEMA asking me for help when they are the ones with all the funds, capabilities to sign large contracts, or could respond back to Washington DC to explain the situation out in Puerto Rico was not as easy as it seems or sounds and could ask for additional help or aid from other agencies to properly assist the citizens of Puerto Rico. But they didn't.

There was even a cases where I had several citizens who were in desperate needs of medical supplies and I was easily able to get my hands on diabetic medications via donations, and working with local hospitals and doctors out there and getting medical supplies to people who were not able to get medical aid. I even had a an extreme case where a woman was in high need of an oxygen tank to be filled due to having been poisoned by agent orange years prior and was on 24 hour oxygen and had extreme issues breathing on her own and was on a ventilator and needed a air purifier because her's was destroyed by the flooding up in Utuado and she lived less than five minutes from the emergency command center in that "forgotten village" and she was visited several times by military, FEMA, and all sorts of people who "said" they could get her an air purifier or get her oxygen tank filled and she kept a log of all numbers, names and what their position was or title was and over 30 people with governmental positions left her and never returned.

I was able to get her an air purifier from Costco with donations and worked with San Pablo Hospital to get her oxygen tank filled and returned the tank to her within a day. I very surprised that citizens were left with a lot of promises but no one or government agency seemed to be out there to truly help. I am just a retired veteran and another American citizen with no means other than donations and a good heart and believer in the lord, but I was able to be more affective than governmental agencies that have the means, funding, and it is their job, and they are paid to bring aid to devastated places like Puerto Rico. They clearly failed to do their job. I know in the military if I failed to do my job at that level, or in this position of power or rank, I would demoted, and or held responsible, and held accountable for my neglect of duties, court marshaled and relived of all my duties.

The overall failures out there cost many citizens their lives, or drove people to a point to little or no hope, and even today there are still no answer of when the island will be going back to a somewhat normal state before the hurricanes hit the island. This sadly could have been easily handled better. There was a lot of issues with the Jones Act, FEMA not releasing supplies from the ports, food spoiling because they didn't do thing right at the ports and they held on to all income containers. There were citizen suffering and many officials on ground did nothing about it, time and time again I was used to deliver supplies for FEMA or Red Cross as they would tell me "I cannot deliver these supplies to this area, but you can, it is too political and I have too much red tape to get an approval to disperse supplies throughout the island. We cannot handle or deliver to everyone."

That needs to change immediately and there needs to still be aid out in Puerto Rico and start pushing for rebuilding projects out there and working with electric companies to create a real power grid where it is easy to restore power out there and of course the water supply system needs to be fixed as well. I have seen where human waste is being dispersed into the ocean and with my background and degree within Environmental Sciences this most likely and Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) violation and highly

not safe or okay and or sanitary. Things need to change and I know it starts at the top and work it's way down.

I am also suggesting that the mayors to be looked at and or questioned because their all around neglect of duties to their citizens whom they swore to protect and provide aid and put their needs before theirs own. They clearly did not and provided aid to their family, their friends, and honestly there is and was not one citizen that trust their local mayor or any mayor in Puerto Rico, due to what seems to me is a common thing stated and clear evidence of corruption going on. Many have seen or watched to include myself, mayors miss use their positions and take FEMA supplies, and drop supplies off at their homes and citizens would be without. Many mayors like the mayor of Corozal would be very well groomed when their neighbors were not, and many were quick and easily told me well into October and even in November that they had not seen any mayor, governmental official, and would say FEMA and Red Cross have yet to come by or help.

I would ask the mayors about these situations and of course introduce myself, and what capabilities, explain my military background and what supplies I have, and asked what I could do for them to help them and their citizens out more and they would state, "they are lying and we have seen everyone, and everyone is okay." So I would challenge this and the same day I asked the mayor of Corozal and several other mayors I would go to the mountain tops or around their districts and that not the case. I was invited into their homes and there were no food, running water, no power still, and no trash or food wrappers of any kind that would match the supplies they had at their collection points.

I was sadden to see how things are not right in Puerto Rico, and these are official governmental positions, or FEMA directors, and Red Cross directors, military not doing their jobs and helping their citizens and bring aid to people they swore to protect and to help in a time like this when you have to look outside your own personal issues or problems or what you and your family are without and give to the people. But give until you cannot give no more. Go to congress, go to Washington DC and knock on senators, law makers, people who can instantly make a change and or bring change to these peoples lives, even go to the presidents office and or write letters to bring change to these people.

These are American citizens, and "we" (FEMA, other citizens, mayors out there in Puerto Rico, Puerto Rico governmental officials, power and electric companies, people responsible for making contracts, and many more agencies out there or involved with restoring and bring aid to Puerto Rico) have failed these American citizens in Puerto Rico, not to mention several military veterans that live out in Puerto Rico that fought and or died for the country that I love dearly.

We have to fix this and bring changes to the island that are long term solutions and stop having excuses of why or how something did not get done or corrected and take care of our fellow citizens and be able to say "we did all we could do and we took care of our fellow American citizens in Puerto Rico."

These are my concerns, what I observed and this is my official testimony, and my experiences while I was in Puerto Rico.

Sincerely,

Johnathan Sutton

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Johnathan C. Sutton". The signature is written in a cursive style with a large, prominent initial 'J'.

United States Army  
Staff Sergeant (Retired)  
82nd Airborne Division  
4th Brigade Combat Team  
782nd Brigade Support Battalion  
Senior Parachutist Jumpmaster  
"Airborne All The Way, Fury From the Sky"

Mr. DESANTIS. I appreciate it. Thanks a lot.

The chair is now going to recognize my colleague from Puerto Rico for the first round of questions. So you are recognized for 5 minutes.

Miss GONZALEZ-COLON. Thank you, Mr. Chairman. And thank you all members, the panel. I will try to be brief.

The first question will jump directly to Mr. Mike Byrne.

What do we need to complete the restoration of power in 30 days?

Mr. BYRNE. I think where we are at right now in power is, if it was easy, it got done already. And even the easy part was hard in Puerto Rico because of the challenges of the terrain and challenges of the conditions.

Miss GONZALEZ-COLON. I know that part. And I know also—I just got 4 minutes now. But what do we need? Is it money? Is it resources?

I do know you reimbursed the government—I mean, PREPA for the resources and the contracts they are doing with the mutual assistance agreement. We know the Corps of Engineers is going to continue to have some conflicts until April 7. My concern is that that higher end process will take some time. And you still got a lot of those contractors on the island until April 7. And we got still a lot of municipalities in the center part of the island, and we don't have all the materials on the island yet. And although Corp of Engineers is saying that the island will be 100 percent recover, in May or June, the reality is that when I sat with those personnel, they were saying July, they say in August, and maybe more than that. And I don't want to, you know, lie to my people back home. I know you do neither, you know. What do we need to make a plan for a 30-day re-powering of the island?

Mr. BYRNE. I, quite frankly, have the trust in the unified command that has been in place for the last 6 months. They have been able to do difficult things. And they are—have a plan now. And, again, in fact, talking to Carlos Torres, that we both know and respect and the work he is doing there. He said, Mike, the hard part to do is the stuff we are doing now, and it is like working on a car engine. You can bring in lots more mechanics, but you can only get so many hands into the vehicle at one time.

So we are focused on that. And if the smart people at PREPA or at the Corps or any of those contractors can come up with a way or—to do this faster, you know we are going to support it. I am going to support it 1,000 percent.

Miss GONZALEZ-COLON. What about the materials?

Mr. BYRNE. We are going to continue to provide materials and get them in. As you know, we had challenges with material. There was other disasters going on. There was—you know, we were making material, and 30 days later it was getting put to use in terms of things. But, again, we are not going to let up until we get all the material we need and get that last mile. You know, as we have talked about, some of these houses are up a road that got washed out that are, you know, way in the back that—where we have to get to. But, again, we are not going to stop until we get to that.

Miss GONZALEZ-COLON. I will ask you to have, again, another meeting with the Corp of Engineers and new people from FEMA,

and the people from PREPA, to see how we can maybe cut some red tape in terms of knowing if we can make a plan of—you know, cut those long months and days and have actually, you know, a final expectation, how long it will take to the people. People don't know how long they need to wait to actually have power again in their homes. And you know that. I mean, you are living on the island. You know how it has been living there.

My next question will be, because I am running out of time. What deadlines have passed or are approaching to such things as aid applications, or 100 percent Federal funding? And those terms are statutory or administrative. I know, and I want to thank the people from EPA for answering my letter in terms of 100 percent Federal assistance in the removal of debris, and thanking the President for allowing the new waiver for 60 days and making that happen. Thanking the administration for that. And I just received the letter on the 19 of March. That is one of the questions.

The second one would be for the whole panel in terms of the Department of Energy. I know you are helping the Government of Puerto Rico, specifically PREPA. One thing is patching up what we have. Is the system going to be strong enough to resist even a tropical storm in August, or even to face another hurricane season in 3 months? Are we rebuilding? Are we patching up? I mean, what is the next step to re-powering the island and make a better system?

Mr. PARKS. So the first job was to get restoration, and that is what Mike has been talking about. We are looking at both short-term and longer-term things that are needed to really get that resiliency built into it. And as you saw, the San Juan blackout a couple weeks ago as an indication that some of this equipment has probably been—has a life expectancy that is reduced as a function of going through it.

So the teams, Army Corps, FEMA, our people on the ground, are putting up as much as they can the best systems with the equipment they have and everything. But some of those things over the next few years may fail prematurely. And part of what we want to do is make sure that we are constantly increasing things, like inspection schedules and all of these routine maintenance things that are accelerated so we can predict and understand how fast we need to replace things relative to their normal life.

Those are the kind of things that need to happen. We need to make sure that there are contract paths for getting things like microgrids in place. There are clear ideas of how to best serve some of the rural communities and that they understand options, and those decisions can be made.

So those are the kind of things you need to think about. I think the key is vigilance now, and vigilance as we go forward and not—even if there is not another major event this summer, you want to continue to work toward making sure you have that resiliency and those things like the maintenance schedules set up and in place and operating.

Mr. DESANTIS. Thank you.

The gentlelady's time is expired.

The chair now recognizes the ranking member of the subcommittee, Mr. Lynch, for 5 minutes.

Mr. LYNCH. Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

I want to thank the witnesses again.

Staff Sergeant Sutton, thank you for your service to your country, and also for your willingness to pitch in at your own expense. And I just think that your involvement here was heroic, and we really appreciate it. I am sure the families of Puerto Rico appreciate that as well.

Mike Byrne, let's talk about the decision of FEMA to award the contract for providing 30 million meals to victims in Puerto Rico to Tiffany Brown, a single person. She had a little LLC that she set up. So we got all these people without food, without water.

A month after the storm, so 30 days out. They have already have been without food for a month. And we award \$156 million contract to Tiffany Brown. And she is already on the website, on your website, as having defaulted on a previous small contract for \$27,000 to provide beans and rice and spaghetti. She has already belied up on that one. She is on the website in default. She can't do that. So we give her a contract for \$156 million. How does that happen? How does that happen?

Mr. BYRNE. So we went through our normal contracting. We went through—followed the Federal procurement practices.

Mr. LYNCH. That was anything but normal. That has to be abnormal, right?

Mr. BYRNE. You know, we issued about just under 2,000 contracts during that period of time. And the block that that particular contract was in, we did end up awarding six other contracts to other suppliers, so we were able to meet the demand. Didn't really impact our demand. And we also held this individual and this company accountable. We did not pay them \$156 million, we only paid them for what they delivered—50,000.

Mr. LYNCH. You hired them and you didn't hire somebody else who could do the job, so I don't want to gloss over that. But, I mean, my point is that she should not have got that contract in the first place. One, for capacity. Just one person. She hired a wedding caterer, you know. You know, this was a disaster. So there was a sense of urgency that I don't think is being shared by FEMA, to be honest with you. And then she has got a prior history here.

So here is what I am thinking. I mean, we have companies that provide meals ready to eat to our military, and they do a good job. Now, we don't need meals ready to eat because, you know, they are more expensive because they have got to last for 5 years. However, we got companies that do that type of thing.

Why wouldn't we reach out to one of those companies, have them bid, or just, you know, buy the stuff or arrange for acquisition through one of those companies, and then we will replace it later if we have to. But the thing is, we shouldn't have waited 30 days to get the bid out. And then once it got out, we shouldn't have given it to Tiffany Brown. And, you know, I am not even mentioning the Jones Brothers who got the contract for plastic roofing.

Mr. BYRNE. So we did distribute over 63 million meals. And even this week, we are still distributing every day, tens of thousands of meals out there. But, look, we are all about getting better. And if there is anything we can do to improve and make sure that we are doing better and we don't even let even one of our 2,000 contracts

slip through the cracks and not be effective, then we will do that. We will certainly work to get better at that.

Mr. LYNCH. Let me just say. You know, my background is construction management. I was an ironworker for 20 years. That is what I got my degree in. And we usually had a list of qualified bidders, people that had a history and a record and a reputation for doing the right thing and doing it effectively and so that when the job came up, we had a pool of people that we could actually reach out to that we could rely upon. And you don't operate that way. And, you know, we also have performance bonds where we have the contractor post a performance bond where if they go belly up, we just grab their bond, and we go on to the next person. I don't see that going on at FEMA.

Mr. BYRNE. Well, we dealt with this contract quickly and effectively. And we—

Mr. LYNCH. Effectively?

Mr. BYRNE. We did away with it, sir.

Mr. LYNCH. Are you kidding me?

Mr. BYRNE. We stopped the contract.

Mr. LYNCH. No, no. Firing the person is not handling the contract effectively. Having them go belly up and non perform and then you fire them, that is not effectively. Picking a good contractor that provides the relief that the taxpayer paid for, that is efficiently, right?

Mr. BYRNE. Well, we did manage to do that for the vast majority of the—again—

Mr. LYNCH. Except for this \$156 million contract. I don't know. I am not hearing what I thought I would be hearing after seeing what is going on here.

I yield back.

Mr. DESANTIS. The gentleman yields.

The chair now recognizes himself for 5 minutes.

Mr. Byrne, with this new language about allowing the rebuilding to go up to industry standards, not necessarily just the status quo anti, is that going to be a benefit for Puerto Rico specifically? Because wasn't their infrastructure really degraded? And so, yeah, it was a very bad storm. But because some of it wasn't up to industry standards, the damage was that much worse?

Mr. BYRNE. Yes, Mr. Chairman. This language that you guys give us really is going to streamline our process and enable us to do the right thing. I mean, just imagine the discussions we would have of "he said, she said," of what was the condition before, what wasn't, what was old, what was new. We now don't have to worry about that. We are just focused on doing the right thing.

And there was one other thing that you called for in the legislation for us to develop a plan, with the Commonwealth of Puerto Rico, to bring in the best and the brightest to design the right solution, not just project by project, but what is the right solution for the whole infrastructure system? And we are going to—we have 180 days to put that together, and we are going to let that be our guide as to how we build this back better and stronger.

Mr. DESANTIS. So they needed attention on the infrastructure even before the storm. And so having to go through as painful as this has been, on the back side, is it your expectation that we will

a much stronger infrastructure system there in terms of the electricity and the water than we had previous to the storm?

Mr. BYRNE. Yes. That is exactly the opportunity that is in front of us. We are going to be vigilant. We are going to be direct. We are going to make sure that we use, when we bring in, some of the experts, my colleagues on the panel with me, to get their advice from their smart people so that—you know, we are not the experts in power. We are going to rely on the experts in power to tell us what the right thing to do. And we are going to use the authorities you gave us to end, and the funding you gave us, to make sure it happens.

Mr. DESANTIS. Good. Well, we want to see that put to use. And we want the folks back on their feet.

I am going to yield the remaining time I have to my friend Jennifer, and so I will recognize her now.

Miss GONZALEZ-COLON. Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

Again, another question is regarding the deeds or titles of the home—of the owners of those homes, and that, you know, Mr. Byrne. That is one of the major problems we got on the island. The people have having a lot of difficulties applying for housing and individual assistance as they cannot command their home values, or even the homeowners, because they are leaving and—lands that were family owned or living there from a lot of years. And I actually filed a bill with Congressman Espaillat that addressed this issue. I just want to know if FEMA is willing to sit with me and HUD Department. Actually I already did that with Deputy Secretary of HUD trying to address this issue that has been there for many years.

Are you willing to do that?

Mr. BYRNE. Yes. Absolutely. There is nothing more heart-breaking than to see somebody lose their home, and then have paperwork get in the way. We encourage those families to go to the disaster recovery centers. We have got 64 of them set up throughout the island. However you can get back on the phone with us, we will find a way to work that. And I look forward with you on it.

Miss GONZALEZ-COLON. I am glad to hear that, because that is one the biggest situation in the island even—I know that even locally, the construction code grandfather a lot of those informal kind of living. And actually the hurricane just spotlighted the situation on the island. I know the situation, and I will—this will be to EPA.

How has this situation, hurricane, affected the status of the landfills in Puerto Rico? Because I know the debris and the proposals made it for alternative debris disposal has been increasing after the hurricane. And we already got a problem with a lot of landfills before the hurricane.

And the third question, because I know I am going to run out of time, Mr. Byrne, is regarding—you know that PREPA is under the bankruptcy situation. So one of the main problems we got is PREPA don't got the money to buy the materials, in the first place, the liquidity to buy the materials and then got the reimbursement from FEMA to make that happen.

So that will, you know, make longer the process of the recovery. So that is one of the reasons I know the Department of Energy and



the Corps of Engineers were involved in the process. How can we make that process a faster one, and with your leadership there helping us out through your—faster situation.

Mr. LOPEZ. Thank you, Miss Colon.

So in regards to landfills, we share your urgent concern. And to answer your question, the storms have just made a situation that was difficult, and really a crisis situation, worse. So we have worked hard with FEMA and our colleagues to intercept waste before it is put into the landfill. So whether it is household waste, hazardous waste, vegetative debris, any number of potential additions to the landfills we are working to intercept it and then manage it. In some cases, shipping it off island for proper assessment.

The issue, of course, is the long-term. And we are very dedicated to working with the Commonwealth and USVI, because they have the same problem on their islands to get them to a point where they have landfills that are secure. We know that many of the landfills, none of them, are in full compliance. We have 11 that we have—13 that we have orders against because they are potentially contaminating groundwater, they could be hazards to the community.

Our challenge is that the ultimate responsibility lies with the Commonwealth in terms of managing and operating. So our goal, and we have developed a strategic plan in region 2 with EPA, we would like to reach out to the Commonwealth, bring all the stakeholders together, and begin looking at how do we address solid waste universally?

How do we reduce the amount of waste going to landfills? What do we do for source separation, recycling. We like to be part of that process. How do we drive funding towards the island which the island will control to put in secure landfills with proper liners, proper leachate collection, to make ones that are unsafe, close them down. So we are very much united with you. The term “crisis” applies, and we are addressing this very urgently. We share your concern.

Mr. BYRNE. As to—

Mr. DESANTIS. Let me—the time is up. I am going to recognize—because we are going to have the vote called, so if there is time on the back end, I would love to give you an opportunity.

Before I recognize our friend from the Virgin Islands, I have a statement from the American Public Power Association. I would ask unanimous consent that this be made part of the record. And without objection, it will be made part of the record.

Mr. DESANTIS. The chair does note the presence of Ms. Plaskett from the Virgin Islands. I ask unanimous consent that she be waived in and be allowed to participate. Without objection, so ordered.

And then I now would like to recognize her for 5 minutes.

Ms. PLASKETT. Thank you very much, Mr. Chairman, ranking member, for holding this hearing, and thank you, gentlemen, for being here this morning.

Part of the oversight and government reform purpose is to oversee and ensure that operations of the government are working smoothly and efficiently.

In October, bipartisan members of this committee sent a letter to DHS and have been requesting from FEMA response for that letter related to these hurricanes. We have not, to date, received the documents from that. And that is something that is very, very unnerving, and, potentially, very problematic in our ability to continue to do our work.

In the course of our own investigation in this committee, one of the things that we have recognized is, in the response, potentially some communications problem between agencies, and how are agencies working getting supplies to the people that are affected by these hurricanes.

One of the instances we found out were surrounding Walmart and emergency food. We have emails and text messages between Walmart and government officials, and Congress and Puerto Rico who discuss the desperate need for fuel at the Walmart stores to be able to sustain the food that was there. In one, on September 23 and 24, a Walmart official wrote to the Puerto Rico official saying: Walmart, any word on the fuel situation on the island? Puerto Rico, there is some redaction, no word yet. I put in numerous requests with FEMA and haven't heard from anything. Because of your issue, I put in a request to be imbedded into FEMA headquarters tomorrow which will allow me to get this sorted out directly. I will let you know if anything happens.

So our committee then issued to both myself and Ranking Member Cummings sent a letter to Trey Gowdy, which I would ask unanimous consent to be put into the record, which is a request regarding our bipartisan investigation of the response to the hurricanes and requesting information and outlining what we found out from the investigation and Walmart.

So, Mr. Byrne, how was Walmart's emergency request for a generator fuel handled by FEMA?

First, is there any objection?

Mr. DESANTIS. Without objection.

Ms. PLASKETT. Thank you.

Mr. Byrne, what was Walmart's emergency request for generator fuel handled by FEMA?

Mr. BYRNE. At that point, I don't think I was at the response, but I am familiar with the issue and the—at that point in time in a response, we are focused—we have to prioritize where we are going to get emergency fuel to, and our focus was on hospitals, you know, dialysis centers, and community health centers and public safety buildings.

Ms. PLASKETT. How many generators were brought down to Puerto Rico?

Mr. BYRNE. A total of about 1,900.

Ms. PLASKETT. 1,900. And is there a protocol to have generators in places where food is being stored for food to be able—is that within the purview of FEMA to get generators to those locations?

Mr. BYRNE. We do. But with the issue of private sector companies, you know, I think we have to be cautious here. You know, this really is—you know, if we are going to rely on FEMA to be the single source for both private sector—

Ms. PLASKETT. Okay. I guess the question is—the question is are you—have protocols to be able to do it?

I understand the issue with private sector. But we heard earlier in the testimony that there was issues in contracting for emergency food to be brought down. So when you have food there on the ground, does it then become a priority to make sure that that food supply doesn't become perishable?

Mr. BYRNE. We certainly take responsibility for everything we bring in.

Ms. PLASKETT. Okay. But one of the things I wanted to get back to with regard to the documents that we requested in October, do you have a date when you are going to respond to the letter that was sent by Chairman Gowdy and Ranking Member Cummings requesting the information from DHS?

Mr. BYRNE. This is the first that I have been made aware of that, but I am sure that I will take that back and we will make sure we respond.

Ms. PLASKETT. This is the first time that you heard about the letter that we requested information through FEMA from DHS?

Mr. BYRNE. Yes, ma'am. My role is to be the leader of the response in Puerto Rico. I am not really involved in the aspects that you just described.

Ms. PLASKETT. Okay. So will you get the message to get Brock Long for us?

Mr. BYRNE. I will carry it forward personally.

Ms. PLASKETT. Thank you.

Mr. BYRNE. Yes, ma'am.

Ms. PLASKETT. And do you know, Mr. Byrne, if FEMA has a plan for getting fuel to food storage generators in the event of another hurricane if it is being knocked out.

Mr. BYRNE. We are developing plans right now to have prepositioned a lot of fuel and generators on the island. We haven't worked out any details. But, again, I think we are going to—we are going to ask the private sector to also make plans, because this has got to be a whole community and not just us that is supplying all the emergency—

Ms. PLASKETT. I agree completely.

So as my colleague, Jennifer Gonzalez-Colon, said, we are now several months before hurricane season again. Predictions are that this hurricane season should be the same level of activity as last year's.

Are we prepared for a hurricane in the Virgin Islands and Puerto Rico, or one or two?

Mr. PARKS, is the Department—is your department prepared for that?

Mr. PARKS. We have—we prepare every year for—

Ms. PLASKETT. Are you prepared for the level of hurricanes happening in the Virgin Islands and Puerto Rico that occurred. That is a yes or no.

Are you prepared for it?

Mr. PARKS. Well, our role—the simple answer is, I would say we are not, because we are not—that is not our function.

Ms. PLASKETT. If you are called upon, are you saying that you have no role to play in that when—

Mr. PARKS. No, ma'am. I didn't say that. You asked for a yes-or-no answer.

Mr. PLASKETT. Is your agency prepared when called upon by FEMA to support that?

Mr. PARKS. Absolutely. Absolutely. Yes.

Ms. PLASKETT. And, Mr. Byrne, does FEMA have in place prioritization for the hurricane season that is coming knowing the compromised state that the Caribbean Americans are in right now?

Mr. BYRNE. We are going to take extraordinary steps to make sure we have stuff in place. But I would have to be honest, it is going to be a rough year. There is a fragile, you know, stability that we built, and we are going to need to take extra steps to make sure we have extra on the island, and we are doing that.

Ms. PLASKETT. Thank you.

I yield back.

Mr. DESANTIS. The gentlelady yields back.

With that, I don't see any additional members.

Would you like to do another round?

Miss GONZALEZ-COLON. Mr. Chairman, I would like, if you don't mind, to introduce into the record a letter I sent to the Corps of Engineers on the 13 of March of this year about the power restoration, to the record, if you don't mind.

Mr. DESANTIS. Without objection.

Mr. DESANTIS. Mr. Lynch, you have something for the record?

Mr. LYNCH. I just have one quick question, but I also have observations on Federal response to Maria in Puerto Rico. I would like to have this accepted into the record.

Mr. DESANTIS. Without objection.

Mr. LYNCH. Thank you.

And the question I had is, so, Mr. Byrne, I realize you did—

Mr. DESANTIS. Well, hold on. Let me just see.

Do you have any questions?

Let me recognize her.

Mr. LYNCH. Oh, I am sorry. Sure. I thought she yielded. No problem.

Mr. DESANTIS. The gentlelady is recognized for 5 minutes.

Miss GONZALEZ-COLON. Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

This question will be to Edison Energy. My question will be how stable or reliable is the repair grid right now?

Mr. AARONSON. Thank you, Representative Gonzalez-Colon.

So I want to point to some of the things that were said by Mr. Parks and Mr. Byrne. While the grid before Hurricane Maria made landfall was certainly—had—in disrepair, I think the fact that we have the ability to not just repair and replace, as FEMA rules would dictate, but repair and replace to code is going to give us a leg up on a little bit more stability and resilience from the grid. I'd also note the quality of work under the unified command from the mutual assistance crews, from the Army Corps of Engineers and its associated contractors, and certainly from PREPA, is cause for some confidence that we are going to be in a better spot.

And then the last thing I would say is, and this is true of the entire hurricane season. Mother Nature did one heck of a housecleaning, and took out a lot of the debris and vegetation that obviously can interfere with the safe transmission and distribution of electricity.

So while I think to the points that were just made, we need to be vigilant and we need to continue to do the work. We are in a more resilient situation than we were prior to the 2017 season.

Miss GONZALEZ-COLON. You just brought me a question to FEMA, and that is that some of the people from the Corps of Engineers were telling me that they never got the mission for FEMA to rebuild in a new way because they just got the provision of repair. And I just want to put in the record that we managed to include an amendment during the separate supplemental and the Budget Act, an amendment to Section 2601, the administrator of the Federal Emergency Management may provide assistance pursuant to the Section 428 of the Robert T. Stafford Act for critical services to replace or restore the function of a facility or assistance industry standard without regard to the pre-disaster condition of the facility or system, to replace or restore components of the facility not damaged by the disaster where necessary to fully effectuate the replacement or restoration of the disaster-damaged component.

So that provision was included because precisely all of the restrictions your office told me during that process, during the hearings, during the codels that were on the island. So that is included in the amendment this Congress passed. And I think you already got the provisions and laws, so there is no excuse now to say that the Army Corps, or FEMA, don't got a provision to make that happen.

Mr. BYRNE. Yes. Definitely. I mean, there is nothing that we are more excited about than that, and the ability to actually do the right thing. But the Corps was accurate. The mission assignment we get was for emergency work, not permanent work. And, really, now is the part where we got to be deliberate. We have to take time to take a look and figure out what the right thing to do is going forward, because we have got an extraordinary chance, as you said. It did wipe things clean, destroyed 80 percent of the infrastructure. Now we get a chance. You know, the bad news is people have suffered, and we feel for that. But the good news is, is we are going to be able to—we have an opportunity to build this back the right way.

Miss GONZALEZ-COLON. Mr. Byrne, another question regarding the Army Corps and the mayors is about how long it takes the reimbursement process? And during the last hearing from the homeland security, most of the mayors were—even Mr. Long is saying that you are dealing with a lot of requests from many States, but without the resources to manage a lot of those requests. Are you saying that you don't have enough people to manage the request of many of the reclamation from the municipalities?

Mr. BYRNE. Well, we are in the—you know, as far as the payback, you know, we recognize we want to move faster with the mayors and the documentation process that we have got in place. I think in any disaster that I have worked, the initial part is usually a little bumpy, but I think we will smooth that out.

But as far as more people, my plan is to hire more people. Hire more people on Puerto Rico. As I said, I have 52 percent of my workforce is Puerto Ricans right now. I am going to try to get to 90 percent by the 1-year anniversary. And we are going bring on

as many people as we need to provide the level of service that you are looking for.

Miss GONZALEZ-COLON. And, Mr. Chairman, one last question, and I will ask Mr. Byrne to file that on record for the committee, and it will be regarding the community disaster loan that I know the FEMA and the Treasury Department—actually, the Secretary of the Treasury is on the island today. Can you submit to this committee information regarding the status of the CDL for the municipalities and the State government regarding that during the next 5 days?

Mr. BYRNE. Sure.

Miss GONZALEZ-COLON. Thank you.

And I yield back.

Mr. DESANTIS. The gentlelady yields back.

Mr. Lynch.

Mr. LYNCH. Just a follow-up.

Mr. Byrne, we also—following up on Ms. Plaskett's request, we also have a request in for documents regarding the Tribute Contracting, LLC, documents. And so we would like to have those documents provided by Tiffany Brown in order to get that contract. As you know, she is suing FEMA. She is seeking a \$70 million settlement. And the wedding caterer is also suing to get their money from her. And so these documents will be made available in the core proceedings. We are going to get them anyway, but it would be a sign of good faith if FEMA provided those documents rather than us have to go to the court and get those documents from them. Okay?

Mr. BYRNE. Yes, sir. I will take that back.

Mr. LYNCH. All right. Thank you.

I yield back.

Mr. DESANTIS. The gentleman yields back.

I want to thank you. The votes—do you want to yield her the rest of your time?

Mr. LYNCH. Yeah. Sure. Sorry.

Ms. PLASKETT. Thank you.

Mr. Sutton, thank you, again, as so many of my colleagues have thanked you, and all of the people who came to volunteer in Puerto Rico and the Virgin Islands during the tragedies and the issues that we had after the hurricanes.

You arrived, you said, about a week after Hurricane Maria hit Puerto Rico. What was your visual account? And what do you know about the food shortages that were going on there?

Mr. SUTTON. Well, the, you know, visual account, I mean, the island looked like a—not just a hurricane, a tornado hit. I mean, you are talking from power lines, houses. I mean, all that was left was the frame of a house, not a house.

Ms. PLASKETT. Sure. Because there are tornadoes inside hurricanes.

Mr. SUTTON. Oh, pretty much. I mean, this one, yeah, I would almost believe it the way it looked. I went there the year prior. And, you know, Puerto Rico is beautiful.

Ms. PLASKETT. So what about the food storage? Because I don't have a lot of time.

Food shortages. Did you see any?

Mr. SUTTON. Oh, yeah. You know, most of the food that was there was available. You know, you are talking about San Juan being in immaculate shape. But outside of San Juan, nobody had food. No one had abilities to get that food either.

Ms. PLASKETT. And did you see any, or were you witness to anyone who lost their life during this time, not from injuries from the hurricane but potentially from food shortages?

Mr. SUTTON. Yes, ma'am. There were several elderly, young children under the age of 5. People who, you know, died of dehydration, died of malnutrition. And it is just, honestly, because the lack of supply of food and ability to get to the food. And a lot of those collection points for FEMA were "You come to us. We don't come to you."

And the hard part is people lost their cars and buildings, and they live up on the mountains or—

Ms. PLASKETT. Right. Jeffrey Parks, who is a key member of the joint task force of Katrina, arrived in Puerto Rico around September 30 and stayed for 10 days. In his statement for the record, he concludes that the lack of communications in the aftermath of Hurricane Marie was, quote, "the single largest response failure."

Mr. Sutton, do you agree with that assessment?

Mr. SUTTON. I completely agree with that.

Ms. PLASKETT. And why do you say that?

Mr. SUTTON. I mean, there was no communications. When I landed in the airport, the only communications were inside the airport.

Ms. PLASKETT. Right.

Mr. SUTTON. Even 15, 20 days after, the only forms of communication were inside of an RV in Eswado (ph). Outside of that, no communications.

Ms. PLASKETT. Mr. Byrne, I know that just trying to operate in the Virgin Islands right after the storm, I remember Jennifer and I were able to text a couple of times in between. But you found people congregating in one small area because the communications had gone out.

Do you have communications in place? What are the plans if something like this happens again to get emergency communication out to the critical areas?

Mr. BYRNE. Yeah. We have taken steps. We have actually given satellite phones to all 78 mayors. But we are going to do more. We are trying to restore, get as much back of the existing system and strengthen it before the season starts. There is a huge effort under way for that. And that is really a public-private partnership, because the normal communication companies are also engaged in helping us get the powers and the towers back.

Ms. PLASKETT. And what about—you talk about the towers. The same Jeffrey Parks says that he wrote to us, that he did not see a single temporary cell tower in the 10 days that he was in Puerto Rico.

How many temporary cell towers were installed within a month after Maria? And what is the plans in terms of temporary cell towers in the next instance?

Mr. BYRNE. I would have to get back to you with the numbers for that first month of how many temporary cell towers. But we are getting together. We have a summit where we are going to sit

down with all the parts, the municipalities, the mayors, the governor's staff, and to come up with additional plans to make sure that we—no stone is left unturned in terms of being as ready as we can to get through, as I said earlier, what is going to be a—potentially a risky season.

Ms. PLASKETT. Mr. Chairman, I just am really grateful for you for having this hearing. I think it is really important for us to do these assessments now as we are coming up to the hurricane season. My concern is we have heard from the witnesses with regard to do we have microgrids in place? Will they be in place in time for us to be able to power back up as quickly as possible to get things going.

You know, I worry about the people who were—areas where—especially devastated and people are living in marginal lives right now. People in Anna's Hope on St. Thomas and Coral Bay on St. Johns, Awim (ph) and White Lady on St. Croix, Vieques. People who live in Eduardo. Those are places that were completely obliterated after the hurricanes, and they are living on the edge as it stands. And my great concern is that this commit does what it needs to do to hold the Federal Government accountable, give them the tools that they need, the support and financing that is going to allow them to be on the ground if, God forbid, this should happen again.

So thank you so much, gentlemen, for being here and being open and honest with us and getting this information back so that we can all do our own part to ensure that American lives are not lost and that the economy is continually moving.

Thank you.

Mr. DESANTIS. The gentlewoman's time has expired.

I want to thank the witnesses again for appearing before us today. The hearing record will remain open for 2 weeks for any member to submit a written opening statement or questions for the record.

If there is no further business, without objection, the Subcommittee on National Security stands adjourned.

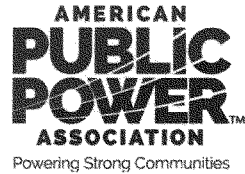
[Whereupon, at 12:25 p.m., the subcommittee was adjourned.]



## **APPENDIX**

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MATERIAL SUBMITTED FOR THE HEARING RECORD



2451 Crystal Drive  
Suite 1000  
Arlington, VA 22202-4804  
202-467-2900  
[www.PublicPower.org](http://www.PublicPower.org)

**Statement of the American Public Power Association**  
**Submitted to the House Oversight and Government Reform Committee's**  
**Subcommittee on National Security**  
**For the March 21, 2018, Hearing on**  
**(Submitted March 20, 2018)**

The American Public Power Association (APPA or Association) welcomes the opportunity to submit this statement for the record in relation to the House Oversight and Government Reform Committee's Subcommittee on National Security hearing on "Bureaucratic Challenges to Hurricane Recovery in Puerto Rico." APPA is the national service organization representing the interests of over 2,000 community-owned, not-for-profit electric utilities. These utilities include state public power agencies, municipal electric utilities, and special utility districts that provide low-cost, reliable electricity and other services to over 49 million Americans.

Hurricanes Harvey, Irma, and Maria caused widespread damage and impacted millions of Americans throughout the South and in the Caribbean. Public power utilities and their customers were impacted by all three storms, but particularly by Hurricanes Irma and Maria. Hurricane Irma caused widespread damage to the islands of St. Thomas and St. John in the U.S. Virgin Islands (USVI) and Key West, Florida. All 63 counties of Florida and large parts of Georgia, as well as Puerto Rico, were also impacted by the storm. Irma was soon followed by Hurricane Maria, which caused significant damage to St. Croix in USVI and Puerto Rico. Mutual aid played an important role in helping restore power to many impacted communities and is ongoing in the efforts to restore power to Puerto Rico.

**The Mutual Aid Process**

In the aftermath of these devastating storms, APPA received a lot of questions about mutual aid. Common questions include what is mutual aid? How does it work? How is mutual aid invoked? Who pays for mutual aid assistance? Given the many questions we have received, we thought it would be helpful to provide an overview on the mutual aid process.

Mutual aid is when utilities help one another in times of need. The Association, together with state and regional public power utilities and organizations, coordinate the mutual aid program (MAP) for the nation's public power utilities. More than 1,100 public power utilities across the country participate.

Utilities that want to give and get help for power restoration after a disaster voluntarily sign up for this national network. The network participants also maintain lists of independent contractors that may be available when extra help is needed.

When (and even before) a major disaster hits a utility's service territory and the utility knows that its own crews and equipment will not be enough to restore power quickly, the requesting utility or MAP network coordinator calls for mutual aid. It provides its best estimates of how many lineworkers and the types of equipment the requesting utility needs and what type of skills the responding lineworkers should have. The requesting utility also specifies any specialized equipment and/or materials needs. Other utilities in the national mutual aid network respond with what they can offer. The requesting utility also utilizes agreements with contractors to supplement the responding utility crews.

The actual dispatch and movement of crews from different utilities and contractors is coordinated by utility and public power association personnel who volunteer as regional and national mutual aid network coordinators. Such efforts require substantial logistics management. The utility that is requesting mutual aid generally arranges to house, feed, and care for the crews that come in from other utilities, and provides them the necessary work and safety briefings to do their jobs effectively. Requesting utilities generally assist the visiting crews to prioritize circuit restoration, ensure safe work procedures, and understand the terrain because the responding employees are typically unfamiliar with the requesting utilities' electric system.

Public power utilities requesting mutual aid pay utilities and contractors that provide help. Rates are determined through agreements entered into by the utilities. As units of state and local government, public power utilities are eligible for partial reimbursement of restoration expenses by the Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA), if all relevant conditions and requirements are met.

In addition to helping public power utilities in need, public power utilities also provide mutual aid to cooperatives and investor-owned utilities when requested and have also received assistance from cooperatives and IOUs when needed. In the aftermath of Superstorm Sandy, the entire industry has worked more closely on restoration efforts with the goal of bringing back power to all customers as soon as possible. The lessons learned from previous hurricanes and Superstorm Sandy were evident in the industry's restoration efforts following the active hurricane season in 2017.

#### **The Role of Mutual Aid Following Hurricanes Harvey, Irma, and Maria**

When Hurricane Harvey hit the Gulf Coast in September, most public power utilities were spared the worst, but did provide mutual aid to others directly impacted by the storm. Approximately 160,000 public power customers in Texas lost power and service was restored to nearly all of them within three days. Robstown, Texas, which is near Corpus Christi, suffered wind damage, but restored power to 95 percent of its customers within two days. Some public power utilities in East Texas lost power due to transmission outages in the area, but their distribution systems did not incur substantial damage. Walt Baum, the Executive Director of the Texas Public Power Association, an APPA member, testified before

the House Science, Space, & Technology Committee on October 3, 2017, on recovery efforts in Texas after Hurricane Harvey and the industry's efforts to maintain a reliable and resilient grid, including the importance of mutual aid to resiliency. APPA encourages the National Security Subcommittee to review Mr. Baum's insightful testimony to the Science Committee, which is available [here](#).

Hurricane Irma impacted public power utilities in USVI, Puerto Rico, Florida, South Carolina, and Georgia. The hurricane inflicted significant damage to the islands of St. Thomas and St. John in USVI. Virgin Islands Water and Power Authority (USVI WAPA) requested mutual aid after Irma and the Western Area Power Administration, as well as public power utilities from New England, responded by sending crews and equipment to assist in the recovery efforts. Given the extensive damage done by the hurricane, USVI requested additional mutual aid through APPA. In addition to 23 public utilities from New England, 22 public power utilities from Florida, Iowa, Missouri, Nebraska, Oklahoma, South Carolina, and Wisconsin, joined contractor crews and assisted USVI WAPA in its recovery efforts. Power was restored to all USVI customers that could accept power by March 8, 2018.

Puerto Rico was also hit by Irma, knocking out power to a majority of the island. The Puerto Rico Electric Power Authority (PREPA), an APPA member, had restored power to most of its customers before being devastated by Hurricane Maria just over a week later.

APPA member Keys Energy Services in Key West, Florida, was directly hit by Hurricane Irma, which took down most of its distribution and transmission facilities. As the storm moved up through Florida, it impacted every single public power utility in the state. More than 800,000 public power customers in Florida were without power at the height of the outages, but 98 percent of them had their power restored within seven days. In addition, there were significant outages among some of our Georgia members.

Mutual aid played a key role in restoring the power quickly in the Southeast. Public power utilities aided one another in the restoration efforts. They also aided IOUs, and IOUs assisted public power utilities with needed materials. The Florida Municipal Electric Association, an APPA member, played a central role in coordinating mutual aid for the utilities impacted by the hurricane in the state and coordinated municipal aid crews from 26 states. The restoration effort after Irma was one of the largest ones in U.S. history and the speed of the recovery was acknowledged by the U.S. Energy Information Administration.

Hurricane Maria knocked out power to St. Croix in USVI, the one island not substantially impacted by Hurricane Irma, and all of Puerto Rico. APPA member New York Power Authority (NYPA) sent technical subject matter experts and drones down to Puerto Rico as part of a state-led mission initiated by New York Governor Andrew Cuomo, at the request of Puerto Rico Governor Ricardo Rossello. NYPA's personnel worked with PREPA on damage assessments of specific PREPA generation, transmission, and substation facilities.

In addition, FEMA, the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers (USACE), and Department of Energy (DOE)

sent personnel to Puerto Rico. In early October, FEMA put USACE in charge of the mission to restore power. USACE selected contractors to assist in the recovery efforts. Four public power utilities from Florida also went to Puerto Rico in October to assist PREPA in the recovery efforts as subcontractors to one of PREPA's own contractors. They completed their assigned work and returned to the mainland by Thanksgiving.

On October 31, 2017, PREPA requested mutual aid from APPA and the Edison Electric Institute (EEI). This request was updated in early November to include the National Rural Electric Cooperative Association. Since receiving this request, the Association has worked with PREPA, our government partners and their contractors, and the industry to support the power restoration process. Public power utilities from Arizona, Connecticut, California, Indiana, Texas, and the Commonwealth of the Northern Mariana Islands traveled to Puerto Rico to assist in the joint recovery efforts. The testimony of Mr. Scott Aaronson of EEI, who is testifying at today's hearing, provides a timeline of the mutual assistance response by the industry and some of the challenges faced during the recovery efforts.

#### **The Challenge of Providing Mutual Aid to Islands**

APPA has a long history of facilitating mutual aid to our members in the U.S. territories. Public power utilities have helped restore power to the U.S. Virgin Islands after Hurricane Marilyn in 1995 and Hurricane Hugo in 1989. The main difficulty with providing mutual aid to islands hit by natural disasters is the logistics of getting crews and supplies to them. When a natural disaster is expected to hit a region in the continental U.S., utilities can request mutual assistance ahead of being struck by a storm, as well as enter into contracts with private contractors. Once a storm has passed, mutual aid crews can drive from across the country to restore power in a short period of time and supplies can be trucked in. When a natural disaster strikes an island that is not connected to the continental U.S., crews and supplies must either rely on planes or ships to get them to such locations.

For example, after Hurricane Marilyn hit USVI in 1989, crews and equipment were flown down and back via military aircraft. In 1995, utility equipment was flown down and barged back to the mainland after power was restored.

For the restoration efforts in Puerto Rico, trucks and equipment were sent via barge, which is less expensive, but takes more time to arrive than if they were sent via plane. APPA worked with the industry and our federal government partners to identify locations where barges would pick up equipment for shipment down to Puerto Rico. Crews drove trucks to specific ports and then flew down to San Juan to arrive just ahead of the equipment arriving. Should a future hurricane hit Puerto Rico or USVI, early designation of ports for transportation of equipment will facilitate mutual aid efforts.

#### **Lessons Learned from the 2017 Hurricane Season**

Mr. Aaronson in his testimony discusses some of the lessons learned from the 2017 hurricane season. APPA concurs in his discussion, and welcomes the opportunity to discuss with our government partners

at FEMA, the Department of Homeland Security, and DOE how to incorporate the lessons we all have learned to improve recovery efforts in the future.

APPA appreciates the opportunity to submit this statement for the record to the National Security Subcommittee and provide background on the mutual aid process for public power utilities. Thank you for holding this important hearing on bureaucratic challenges to hurricane recovery in Puerto Rico.

TREY GOWDY, SOUTH CAROLINA  
CHAIRMAN

ONE HUNDRED FIFTEENTH CONGRESS

ELIJAH E. CUMMINGS, MARYLAND  
RANKING MINORITY MEMBER

**Congress of the United States**  
**House of Representatives**

COMMITTEE ON OVERSIGHT AND GOVERNMENT REFORM  
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WASHINGTON, DC 20515-6143

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MINORITY 2001 225-5001  
<http://oversight.house.gov>

March 20, 2018

The Honorable Trey Gowdy  
Chairman  
Committee on Oversight and Government Reform  
U.S. House of Representatives  
Washington, D.C. 20515

Dear Mr. Chairman:

Our Committee has been conducting a bipartisan investigation of the Trump Administration's response to the hurricanes in Puerto Rico and the U.S. Virgin Islands since last October. Although we sent a joint letter to the Department of Homeland Security (DHS) requesting documents from the Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA), the Department has been stonewalling the Committee for the past five months, has failed to produce key documents we requested, and has not produced a single email relating to the hurricanes in Puerto Rico.

Despite this obstruction, Democrats have been able to conduct our own proactive investigation of the Trump Administration's response, focusing specifically on its deficient efforts to provide emergency food. We have spoken with numerous government officials, business owners, whistleblowers, and private citizens involved with these efforts.

On February 6, 2018, we provided you with documents we obtained indicating that FEMA failed to deliver tens of millions of emergency meals because it inexplicably awarded a contract to deliver 30 million emergency meals worth approximately \$156 million to a tiny, one-person company with a history of struggling with much smaller contracts.<sup>1</sup> Twenty days later, FEMA terminated the contract "for cause" after having accepted only 50,000 meals—29 million meals short of their goal.

Although we asked you in our February letter to issue a subpoena to compel DHS to produce the documents we requested last October, you refused to do so. The Department still

<sup>1</sup> Letter from Ranking Member Elijah E. Cummings and Rep. Stacey Plaskett to Chairman Trey Gowdy, House Committee on Oversight and Government Reform (Feb. 6, 2018) (online at <https://democrats-oversight.house.gov/sites/democrats.oversight.house.gov/files/2018-02-06.EEC%20%26%20Plaskett%20to%20Gowdy%20re.FEMA-Tribute%20Contracting.pdf>).

The Honorable Trey Gowdy  
Page 2

has not produced the documents we requested, despite the fact that these documents fall squarely within the bipartisan document request we made more than five months ago.

Despite DHS's failure to cooperate, we have pressed forward with our investigation by speaking with numerous government employees, corporate officials, and private citizens. As part of our ongoing efforts, today we are providing new documents we have obtained indicating that FEMA also failed to respond to multiple emergency requests from major supermarkets seeking fuel to run generators to help prevent food from spoiling in the days immediately following Hurricane Maria—including tons of fresh produce, dairy, and other perishable products that were desperately needed by these American citizens.

These new documents show that senior officials at Walmart took extraordinary measures to try to convey their emergency requests to FEMA. They enlisted congressional offices and officials from the government of Puerto Rico to try to communicate with FEMA. They explained repeatedly that they had emergency generators already in place with enough fuel to preserve food stocks for a matter of days, but that they needed FEMA's help to obtain additional emergency fuel to keep their food from spoiling after that.

These new documents show that the government of Puerto Rico communicated these emergency requests directly to FEMA, including repeatedly conveying them in person and in writing. The documents also show that by September 27, 2017—a full week after the hurricane struck—FEMA failed to supply emergency fuel to save these perishable food supplies.

Documents show that FEMA did not respond to requests for fuel as tons of desperately needed food went bad. It is unclear whether FEMA had a plan to distribute emergency fuel that it failed to execute, or whether FEMA had no plan at all.

For all of these reasons, today we reiterate our request that you issue a subpoena to compel DHS to produce all of the documents we originally requested on a bipartisan basis on October 11, 2017. We also renew our request to expand the date range of our original document requests. If you choose not to issue this subpoena yourself, then we request that you place this matter on the agenda for our next regularly scheduled business meeting so all Committee Members have the opportunity to vote on this motion.

**New Documents Show FEMA Failed to Respond to  
Emergency Requests for Fuel to Preserve Food**

Hurricane Maria struck Puerto Rico on Wednesday, September 20, 2017, leveling San Juan and leaving millions of people without access to food and water.

On Friday, September 22, at 4:55 p.m. EST, a senior Walmart official emailed Rep. Luis Gutiérrez' office with an urgent request:

**We're trying to keep the lights on and the food refrigerated in the few stores we've been able to get back up and running on the island. The problem is we're running**



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out of generator fuel and need help getting the Governor's approval for me (as I understand it. As you know, the communications situation is terrible).

Have you guys been in touch with anyone from FEMA that we can contact to help? We want to keep this food fresh for people.

At 6:01 p.m., Rep. Gutiérrez' office forwarded this email to a Puerto Rican government official, writing:

Do you have any suggestions/ideas for [Walmart]? We are reaching out to FEMA, too, but just in case you have ideas. Thanks.

At 6:13 p.m., the Puerto Rican government official responded that he was meeting with FEMA at that moment and was relaying the request directly:

FYI I'm sitting with the FEMA rep right now so we are taking care of this.

At 7:13 p.m., Walmart officials sent a priority list with the top Walmart stores that needed fuel to keep perishable food from spoiling. It read:

As we discussed, we have 48 facilities on the island (46 stores, 1 home office, 1 distribution center). All have generators on site. Fuel at this point is becoming a key concern as we are less than 24 hours left in maintaining power in most facilities.

Currently we have already opened 3 facilities to support the public and have plans to bring more on line. Key to doing this is ensuring that we have power to run the operation and reestablish our supply chain. While we have need for all facilities, our facilities are prioritized in the attached list to the top 12 stores, plus distribution center and home office.

Further prioritization would be the following to serve the largest populations:

- Distribution Center 6087 – Catano
- Sam's Club 4866, Kennedy Av, San Juan
- Sam's Club 6543, Carolina
- Walmart Supercenter 2449 Caguas
- Walmart Supercenter 5803 San Juan (RH Todd)
- Walmart Supercenter 2346, Toa Baja
- Walmart Supercenter 5802, Canovanas

You can reach me directly on my mobile at [Redacted] or contact our 24/7 Emergency Operations Center at Walmart at [Redacted].

Thank you for your assistance on this matter.

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Page 4

At 7:36 p.m., the Puerto Rican government official forwarded this information directly to a FEMA official in an email titled "Walmart Stores Priority List." He wrote:

**I have copy and pasted an email I received from Walmart regarding their priority list of stores. They have identified 12 specific outfits of their 48 stores that are top priority. If FEMA doesn't have the capacity of all 12 stores as priority sites requiring fuel, I have a list of 6 stores that are "super" priority for Walmart. Essentially, the fuel issue from my understanding is that FEMA needs to designate these Walmart sites as top priority. The gentlemen on the phone explained to me that they are very concerned about the food being thrown out due to spoiling due to the lack of food. Furthermore, he signaled that he would be willing to donate the food if FEMA cannot authorize fuel deliveries to these stores and is wondering if FEMA or the Puerto Rico agency for emergency would be the point of contact regarding these donations.**

**Please let me know if you need anything else from me on this. I can be reached through cell at [Redacted]. Also, if you receive any updates on this issue, please let me know so I can reach out to Walmart.**

At 7:43 p.m., the Puerto Rican government official sent an email back to Walmart officials confirming that FEMA had been alerted. He wrote:

**I have passed it along to FEMA. I will keep you all in the loop moving forward.**

The next day, Saturday, September 23, 2017, at 9:39 a.m., a Walmart official sent an email to the Puerto Rican government official pressing for any information from FEMA on the urgent request. He wrote:

**[T]hanks very much for your help so far. Checking in to see if you've learned anything about the fuel situation.**

That Sunday evening, September 24, 2017, starting at 9:01 p.m. the Walmart official tried again to obtain information about the emergency request for fuel. He had the following text message exchange with the Puerto Rican government official:

**Walmart: Any word on the fuel situation on the island?**

**Puerto Rico: [Redacted], no word yet. I've put in numerous requests with FEMA and haven't heard anything. Because of ur issue, I've put in a request to be embedded into FEMA headquarters tomorrow, which will allow me to get this sorted out directly. I'll let you know if anything happens**

**Walmart: You're a good man. Thank you. Did the hospitals get fuel?**

The Honorable Trey Gowdy  
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**Puerto Rico:** I think so. But I can't be sure. Our communication with FEMA on the specifics of certain things has been less than desired. I appreciate your concern though

On Monday, September 25, 2017, starting at 9:56 a.m., they had another text message exchange:

**Puerto Rico:** I've reached out t PREMA and told them about ur situation. Hopefully they can hel Help\*

**Walmart:** Our chief concern right now is with our distribution center. We might have 2 days worth of fuel left. It is critical that we keep that going in order to preserve our fresh inventory. If that goes down it could take weeks to replenish which would have a big negative impact on the island.

**Puerto Rico:** Noted

**Walmart:** Thanks. Anything else we need to be doing? We're pushing FEMA from multiple angles.

**Puerto Rico:** Nothing that I can think of.

I have a complete list of their employees and I'm going down it trying to contact the right person.

I do not know what is going on with communication in FEMA right now

On Wednesday, September 27, 2017, a government official sent an email informing FEMA that, since efforts to obtain emergency fuel had been unsuccessful for five days, Puerto Rican Governor Rosselló had personally intervened with FEMA to again request emergency fuel for grocery stores to maintain perishable food supplies:

I wanted you to know so you could share with NRCC/team that this morning, because of immediate threat to public health and safety, the Governor asked John Rabin [FEMA's Acting Regional Administrator for Region II] at 8:10 am this morning to have FEMA deliver fuel to all grocery and large retail immediately.

It is unclear how many tons of perishable meat, dairy, and produce were lost. Based on reports from a Walmart employee, a Walmart in San Juan was able to open within three to five days, but it was forced to throw out fresh meat and dairy products that spoiled because Walmart did not have the emergency fuel to keep its generators running. Additionally, the Walmart employee confirmed that stores in Humacao, Carolina, and Canovanas were forced to throw out

The Honorable Trey Gowdy  
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even more, including all perishable food products, as the result of a lack of emergency fuel.  
**Other Supermarkets in Puerto Rico Also Threw Out Food Due to Lack of Fuel**

Representatives from local supermarkets throughout Puerto Rico have reported that they also received no emergency fuel and were forced to dispose of thousands of dollars' worth of fresh meat, dairy, and vegetables in the immediate aftermath of Hurricane Maria.

For example, Manuel Reyes, the Executive Vice President of the Puerto Rico Chamber for the Marketing and Distribution of the Food Industry, an organization that represents grocers, food distributors, and food manufacturers in Puerto Rico, reported that he was not aware of FEMA providing emergency fuel to any grocery stores, despite numerous requests. He also reported that grocers and other private businesses eventually established an independent network to obtain and distribute fuel on their own.

Joyleen Quiñones, the General Manager for Selectos Supermarket stores in San Juan, confirmed that generators for two stores—Levittown and Los Palacios—became inoperable due to a lack of fuel and were forced to throw out thousands of dollars' worth of food. Selectos is the second-largest co-op in Puerto Rico. According to Ms. Quiñones, Selectos Los Palacios, 45 minutes outside of San Juan, threw away enough meat, fruit, vegetables, and dairy to fill a twenty cubic yard container valued at approximately \$50,000. Coca Cola, which has an office nearby, eventually provided emergency fuel to stores managed by Ms. Quiñones. She described great demand for food in the week following Hurricane Maria, reporting that hundreds of people stood in line outside her store and many went hungry.

#### Request for Subpoena

On October 11, 2017, the Committee sent a bipartisan letter requesting documents from the Department of Homeland Security relating to FEMA's preparation for and response to Hurricanes Irma and Maria in Puerto Rico and the U.S. Virgin Islands.<sup>2</sup>

For the reasons set forth above, we request that you issue a subpoena, by March 29, 2018, to compel the Department to produce all of the documents in our October request, including the following subset of documents which should have been produced in response to our original request:

- (1) all documents and communications referring or relating to requests for fuel from Walmart and other food retailers;
- (2) all documents and communications referring or relating to retailer decisions to close for any period of time due to a lack of fuel or power; and

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<sup>2</sup> Letter from Chairman Trey Gowdy and Ranking Member Elijah E. Cummings, House Committee on Oversight and Government Reform, to Acting Secretary Elaine C. Duke, U.S. Department of Homeland Security (Oct. 11, 2017) (online at <https://oversight.house.gov/wp-content/uploads/2017/10/2017-10-11-TG-EBC-to-Duke-DHS-Hurricane-Document-Request.pdf>).

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Page 7


- (3) all documents and communications referring or relating to retailers throwing away perishable or nonperishable products after Hurricane Maria.

Due to the gravity of these matters, we also request that the Committee expand the date range of our October 11, 2017, document requests to encompass the period from September 20, 2017, to December 1, 2017. If you choose not to issue this subpoena yourself, then we request that you place this matter on the agenda for our next regularly scheduled business meeting so that all Committee Members will have the opportunity to vote on a motion to issue this subpoena.

Thank you for your consideration of this request.

Sincerely,

  
Elijah E. Cummings  
Ranking Member

  
Stacey E. Plaskett  
Member of Congress

JENNIFFER GONZÁLEZ-COLÓN  
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**Congress of the United States**  
**House of Representatives**  
**Washington, DC 20515-5400**

COMMITTEES:  
NATURAL RESOURCES  
SMALL BUSINESS  
VETERANS' AFFAIRS

March 13, 2018

LTG Todd Semionite  
Commanding General and Chief of Engineers  
U.S. Army Corps of Engineers  
441 G St. NW  
Washington DC 20314-1000

COL Jason A. Kirk  
District Commander  
Jacksonville District, USACE  
PO Box 4970  
Jacksonville FL 32232-019

RE: POWER RESTORATION MISSION IN PUERTO RICO

Dear Lieutenant General Semionite and Colonel Kirk,

Restoring electrical power to Puerto Rico has been our collective priority since the day Hurricane Maria exited the Island. Without power, our economy could not move; without power, water could not be distributed; without power, our fellow citizens were left in the dark.

Puerto Rico's critical need for power restoration in the aftermath of disasters has been a test for all of us who have been involved. USACE has been an invaluable resource in this moment of great need and it is vital to see to the full completion of the maintain good lines of communication between the team addressing the relief and rebuilding missions in Puerto Rico.

As of today, we are officially at the 90% generation capacity mark. However, the observation on the field makes it evident that electrical generation does not correlate with electrical service to homes across Puerto Rico. Only six out of 78 municipalities have reported 100% power restoration, knowing full well that the fragility of the system can erase these gains in the blink of an eye. There are still municipalities in the central mountainous region with less than 60% restoration of service, with power restored mainly in the towns and commercial areas, leaving vast rural areas left in the dark. The movement of crews from areas with a high restoration rate to address the lagging areas only causes distress in the former communities, who feel that they are being abandoned without the job being completed. With well over a hundred thousand customers still lacking service, that is distressing.

USACE's contracts with Flour Corporation and Power Secure are set to expire on March 19th and April 7th, respectively. Personnel from these companies have been working for the past five months in the municipalities that compose the mountain

Hon. Jenniffer González-Colón  
Puerto Rico Power Restoration- page 2  
March 13, 2018

region—such as Cayey, Lares, Ciales, Morovis, and Utuado, to name a few examples—and, due to the difficulty of the terrain and the immensity of the devastation, they have not concluded their task; they should not leave until they do so.

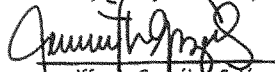
Raising camp and leaving PREPA to finish the job is not an option. PREPA's contracting process to substitute USACE's personnel will take time, delaying relief for people who have already spent more than six months without power. Moreover, last week's winter storm Riley further highlights the uncertainty that would be caused if Flour and Power Secure were to leave, when personnel working under PREPA's mutual aid agreement were recalled to attend to natural disasters in their own jurisdictions. After 6 months of no power or unreliable service, the average citizen on the street in those communities cannot tolerate even the perception that at this point we will begin to wind down the urgent relief mission and that the process of finishing the job will slow down.

I must urge USACE in the strongest terms to maintain the intensity of effort; to extend contracts as required, to maintain the presence of crews at a higher level than projected to address the areas where the job is not finished; to inform and advise the local authorities and the public of what are the timelines and keep the communications lines open; to assist in supplying PREPA with materials and technical assistance if and as necessary. The goal must be to have near 100% restoration—not generation—of power within a month and for the people in Puerto Rico to have visible evidence of this being pursued with a sense of urgency.

I wish to impress on the Corps leadership the importance of taking this need of the American citizens living in Puerto Rico into consideration in the making of decisions about the power restoration mission, and I am ready to bring before my colleagues in Congress any need for additional appropriations or for statutory language that will move this forward.

Again, I must thank all the men and women both military and civilian in USACE who have helped so much in the effort of Puerto Rico's recovery. Our mission is not complete. We must act quickly so that this project may retain its priority position. I look forward to an effective communication with the USACE team to make sure that Puerto Rico's needs are addressed.

Thank you for your service,



Jenniffer A. González-Colón  
Member of Congress

# Observations on the Federal Response to Maria in Puerto Rico

Submitted Jeffrey A. Parks,

President/Founder AVERT SDS, LLC Disaster and Security Services Provider

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## **Background:**

Five days after Maria came ashore in Puerto Rico I was contacted (via a 3<sup>rd</sup> party) by a Fortune 500 company which operates a chemical plant in the area of Sabana Grande Puerto Rico. At that time, they had NO contact with their plant or it's nearly 200 employees. During my discussion with the corporate chief of security, it became clear the company had not anticipated the potential for and impact of a total loss of communications from Puerto Rico, which is what had occurred.

In 2005 I was serving in the Army and assigned to US First Army as the Executive Officer to LTG Russel Honore as we tracked Katrina's path across Florida and to it's the second landfall at the mouth of Mississippi River. As LTG Honore and the Forward Operating Command from what would become Joint Task Force Katrina made their way south from Atlanta to Camp Shelby Mississippi LTG Honore called via SAT phone and reported no communications for power south of south of Route 10 in Mississippi. Redundant communications had been the number 1 lesson Learned from Katrina and the first of many Katrina Lessons Learned which I saw had not been adopted for the response to Maria.

My observations are based on my over 20 years' experience and a lift time of observations in storm response and military support to civil authorities. I am a native of the Eastern Shore of Virginia and veteran of life under the threat of coastal storms. For my work as a key leader and part of the Command Group of JOINT TASK FORCE KATRINA, I received 4 decoration, assisted in compiling and contributed to the JTF-K lessons learned, The Commanders Testimony to Congress and the GAO. In his book [Survival: How a Culture of Preparedness Can Save You and Your Family from Disasters](#) – May 5, 2009, by [Lt. Gen. Russel Honore \(U.S. Army Ret\)](#) (Author), [Ron Martz](#) (Author) LTG Honore (now retired) sites me as knowing more about the Katrina response than anyone alive. In my opinion and based on my experience and observations what I experienced in Puerto Rico was the antithesis of the lessons learned, regulations and doctrine developed after Katrina at such a huge cost in treasure and lives to the United States.

I arrived in San Juan Airport in the lead of a 3 person team from Atlanta's Hartfield Jackson Airport on Sept 30<sup>th</sup>, 2017. We departed Puerto Rico via corporate jet on Oct 10. My team included an Operations/Security Expert who is a certified IT professional, an EMT/Drone Operator and myself. Critical Observations from Maria. From San Juan, the team drove west for 120 miles to Mayaguez before seeing a working traffic light. The next day we drove south-east to Ponce via Sabana Grande. We eventually departed Puerto Rico from Aguadilla. I submit the following key points that must be addressed before the next CAT 3 or above storm strikes.



**Key Observations:**

1. Leadership/ Command and Control: On September 30<sup>th</sup> I observed almost no Federal Government support or semblance to an Incident Command Structure from San Juan to Mayaguez where I met with the FEMA incident director for "COE Mayaguez". The Director "Paul" was struggling to get information on his assigned in an environment where electronic communications were practically nonexistent. When I met him, he was picking up additional America Corps. Volunteers ( I am not sure of their official status) and my understanding was these volunteers were assisting in the response effort usually by providing area assessments.

Assisting my client in interacting with Incident Command Structure was part of my charter. In the area of Sabana Grande, there was no ICS other than the local mayor and his team who were isolated, frustrated and had little tangible assistance. Sabana Grande fell under COE Mayaguez for support. I had spoken with and shared information the FEMA lead for COE Mayaguez and he struggled to get information from the locals. Citizens of Sabana Grande expressed to me repeatedly their feeling of abandonment by the "Government. There was no DOD presence other than then hospitals which were rumored to be full of bodies which the government was hiding and the occasional escort of fuel. (The hospital rumors seemed to stem from the DOD presence at the hospitals and the security protocols there which were preventing people from entering the building unescorted or to see family members.) There was no power or communications across most of the Island, long lines for fuel and the early and dwindling supplies of bottled water while rumors abounded that the municipal water was contaminated. They saw little happening. I did not see a military vehicle outside of San Juan until driving by the National Guard and FEMA compound in Mayaguez named "COE Mayaguez". The National Guard was not opening or operating Points of Distribution as they have traditionally done. The people of PR saw little outside support or efforts to come to their relief and what they did see did not seem to benefit them.

Local authorities were simply overwhelmed. On October 10<sup>th</sup>, there were still dead animal carcasses on major roads and debris filled the drainage systems. This became critical as flash floods continued around Mayaguez and there was nowhere for the water to drain. The carcasses and debris were contributing to the contamination of the water supplies which were running on generator power.

On or around October 4<sup>th</sup>, I met with the Mayor of Sabana Grande. The rumors of the water contamination were expanding and no bottled water was available in stores.

The Mayor handed myself and my local representative a list which he had copies made to distribute to local businesses. The list was of types of generators he needed to keep the water purification plant operating. I asked if he provided it to FEMA and received a scowl in response. He explained to me that the purification plant was operating, but could not keep up due to the reduced capacity as a result of generator power and the strain from increased contamination of the water supplies. The only other water coming into the city of 30,000 was a military pallet of

bottled water which was transported by him and armed escorts daily from Aguadilla. On at least one occasion there was an attempt to steal the pickup and its water. He was also requesting assistance to off load palletized water when and if a regular flow started from FEMA or the gvernemtn, since the city did not have an off road fork lift. We were able to come up with a plan using a local private business until another capability could be found.

4 days later the generators at the water plant failed. I attempted to assist the mayor in how to request assistance via the FEMA and DOD but the system just didn't seem to be in place.

In my opinion, the decision to not follow U.S. Army Doctrine for Civil Support Operations as outlined in Army Field Manual FM 3-28 (published in June 2010) was a critical failure. This JTF, in support of the Lead Federal Agency, would have had a Commander and provided a leadership presence to the people of Puerto Rico as well as provided qualified personnel to assess the potential critical infrastructure issues which swept Puerto Rico as demonstrated by the water plant in Sabana Grande. The US DOD could have easily provided the necessary generator support to maintain the water purification systems as well as water purification experts to assist in keeping potable water flowing.

A JTF Commander would have also provided the local and Federal authorities a mentor and problem solver to assist in identifying potential problems and solutions. During Maria, my experience was that local authorities were not getting assistance in identifying available capabilities and coaching in what to ask for in order to keep the situation from worsening. These people were still in shock 2 weeks later and needed help that the government did not provide.

2. Communications: Communications was the single largest response failure. When you can't communicate it's a crisis and there were almost no communications on Puerto Rico two weeks after the storm. Temporary communications networks would have assisted in assessing this issue and provided information to the people as well as enabled problem solving and collaboration. Following Katrina, the private sector companies were installed temporary cell towers which I thought were part of the response package for contemporary disasters. We did not see any of these in PR. If they had been deployed it would have likely allowed the sharing of information such as the Ponce Airport, which was believed closed by everyone CONUS was open and had been since 2 days after the storm. The mayor of Ponce even sent out a Press Release trying to inform authorities that the airport was open. This occurred on October 5<sup>th</sup>.
3. Diesel Fuel and Cash Economy: During my meeting with FEMA on October 1<sup>st</sup>, I learned that "there was no diesel fuel" and they were struggling to keep the hospital generators running. However 2 days later I witnessed a delivery of 10,000 gallons of diesel to a private company. When I asked a local manager where the fuel came from, I learned that the fuel distributors were delivering to their paying customers (likely cash since cash was now the only currency accepted on PR) and that they knew the local government would not pay them. Gasoline lines persisted, but I found diesel to be readily available if you could pay or had good credit which the government of PR has neither. FEMA failed to understand the issue and could have easily purchased fuel without the threat seizing it and further alienating the local businesses. The

environment called for flexibility in purchasing and cash. Credit cards were of no use on the island because of the loss of connectivity.

4. National Guard Hotel Survey Team: On October 9<sup>th</sup> I flagged down a National Guard vehicle near our hotel in Lejas. This was the first National Guard vehicle I had seen in the area away from the main highway or urban areas. I suspected they were conducting health and welfare assessments. The Sergeant First Class in charge informed me that they were assessing hotel capacity for housing FEMA and other government personnel. He also shared with me his disappointment that the National Guard was not being used in its traditional roles of establishing distribution points or assessing local conditions. He described a "FOB Mentality" working directly for FEMA. He stated this was different than all of his other storm response experiences on Puerto Rico. I gave him recommendations for POD sites in and around Sabana Grande and the surrounding areas and shared out observations including contact info for the local mayor's assistants. He stated that they were hoping to establish POD's soon.
5. FEMA Delays Deploying Personnel: FEMA personnel I spoke with upon my arrival in Puerto Rico informed me that they were waiting weeks to fly from Atlanta to Puerto Rico. One FEMA leader had managed to be manifested on an air force aircraft carrying equipment out of Dobbins ARB, in Atlanta after waiting a week for a flight. I heard repeated reports of FEMA's inability to get people into Puerto Rico.

I had booked my teams tickets 4 days before travelling on Delta Airlines for \$1,800 and the flight was just over half full. All FEMA staff were going in to San Juan to await assignment or transportation for days and some said up to a week.

6. The Ponce Airport: Ponce is the major city on the south side of Puerto Rico. Initially following Maria's landfall access to Ponce was blocked across the interior of the island. The status of the major airport in Ponce was a mystery with reports of extensive damage. My contacts at Delta airlines were not sure of the status of the airport in Ponce as late as September 28th.

After my meeting with the mayor of Sabena Grande around October 4th, it was clear that water was becoming the new top commodity in Puerto Rico. My client asked me via satellite phone what humanitarian relief supplies they could send down via the corporate jet for their employees. My answer was water. We planned to send in as much bottled water as possible with the corporate jet and attempt to utilize the Ponce airport. The aircrew was not sure if they could land at Ponce until hours before the flight because of the lack of information and reports in Florida that the Ponce airport was not operational.

Around the 5th of October, my team and I with a local guide drove to Ponce to meet the aircraft. Storm damage was readily visible, including the loss of historic ancient trees. Traffic lights were out and police were directing traffic where ever possible. However, we found a very operational airport including a U.S. Marine Air Traffic Control and USAF Logistics Team, but very little air traffic. I asked for the airport manager who was attempting to communicate with 2 young women who didn't speak Spanish. They were with FEMA and supporting the Mayor of Ponce

who had asked them to come to the airport to find out the status and what type of aircraft could be supported. The Mayor was drafting a letter or fax on the status in an effort to tell the outside world that the airport was open. The airport manager said the airport had been fully operational except for the radar 2 days after the storm but all aircraft were being controlled via San Juan. I assisted the 2 young ladies, who were not being taken very seriously in my opinion in getting the information for the mayor. The 2 FEMA representatives had no background and little understanding of aircraft or airport operations. The airport could receive military aircraft up to C 17 I believe and civilian aircraft up to 747. There were no aircraft there that I recall with the although a military flight had dropped supplies earlier in the day.



UNITED STATES ENVIRONMENTAL PROTECTION AGENCY  
WASHINGTON, D.C. 20460

APR 30 2018

OFFICE OF CONGRESSIONAL  
AND INTERGOVERNMENTAL RELATIONS

The Honorable Ron DeSantis  
Chairman  
Subcommittee on National Security  
Committee on Oversight and Government Reform  
U.S. House of Representatives  
Washington, D.C. 20515

Dear Chairman DeSantis:

Enclosed please find the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency's responses to the Subcommittee's Questions for the Record following the March 22, 2018, hearing titled "Bureaucratic Challenges to Hurricane Recovery in Puerto Rico."

I hope this information is helpful to you and the members of the Subcommittee. If you have further questions, please contact me or your staff may contact Carolyn Levine in my office at [levine.carolyn@epa.gov](mailto:levine.carolyn@epa.gov) or (202) 564-1859.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Troy M. Lyons".

Troy M. Lyons  
Associate Administrator

Enclosure

**U.S. Environmental Protection Agency  
Responses to Questions for the Record  
for Mr. Peter Lopez  
Hearing on “Bureaucratic Challenges to Hurricane Recovery in Puerto Rico”  
before the  
Subcommittee on National Security  
Committee on Oversight and Government Reform  
U.S. House of Representatives  
March 22, 2018**

**Submitted by Chairman Ron DeSantis:**

**Question:** Puerto Rico is home to a number of pharmaceuticals and other hazmat generating industries. EPA was responsible for conducting assessments of these facilities in the aftermath of the storm. What did they find? Is there any ongoing risk to the residents of Puerto Rico?

**Response:** In the aftermath of Hurricanes Irma and Maria, EPA conducted assessments of about 300 regulated facilities in Puerto Rico and the U.S. Virgin Islands, including facilities that generate hazardous waste, pharmaceuticals, as well as facilities that store chemicals and oils in bulk; EPA also assessed 32 superfund sites and 233 wastewater facilities in Puerto Rico. EPA found no major leaks or releases from any of the facilities nor any situations where nearby residents were at risk from a release from a facility. EPA did respond to several minor spills and collected over 326,000 drums and containers of household hazardous waste in Puerto Rico as of April 22, 2018.

**Submitted by Representative Jenniffer Gonzalez-Colon:**

**Question:** How has this situation affected the status of the landfills in Puerto Rico? Have there been proposals submitted for alternate debris disposal efforts? Complaints about difficulty?

**Response:** The hurricanes made the already extremely difficult situation of the solid waste crisis in Puerto Rico, with many open dumps that do not meet basic landfills standards, worse. The storms generated approximately 3.85 million cubic yards, according to the US Army Corp of Engineers (USACE). There was also an increase in illegal dumping following the hurricanes. EPA, in coordination with the Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA) and USACE, has assessed over 150 illegal dumps that appeared after the hurricane and we have been collecting hazardous waste from across the island. In addition, EPA is beginning work with the Puerto Rico government and local municipalities to help them assess landfill capacity as a first step towards making improvements to programs to handle solid waste.

Debris collection was specifically a USACE lead. It is EPA's understanding that vegetative debris was chipped and mulched; construction and demolition debris was managed through grinding operations, and of course, EPA assisted with any items that could be hazardous. EPA also provided air monitoring during the grinding operations of construction and demolition debris conducted by the U.S. Virgin Islands government and the USACE. EPA was not requested to provide air monitoring support for any grinding operations in Puerto Rico.

<b>Question#:</b>	1
<b>Topic:</b>	Whitefish Contract Approval
<b>Hearing:</b>	Bureaucratic Challenges to Hurricane Recovery in Puerto Rico
<b>Primary:</b>	The Honorable Ron Desantis
<b>Committee:</b>	OVERSIGHT & GOV RFORM (HOUSE)

**Question:** It is the Committee's understanding that PREPA has not yet submitted Whitefish Energy's invoices to FEMA for reimbursement, but that FEMA has already approved of the Cobra contract, and FEMA been reimbursing PREPA for the work performed by Cobra. We also understand that the terms and conditions of the Whitefish Energy contract are very similar to Cobra's contract with PREPA. What is causing the delay in FEMA's approval of the Whitefish contract?

**Response:** FEMA does not approve recipient and subrecipient contracts, but rather reviews them for compliance with federal grant requirements, including procurement requirements, to assess eligibility for federal assistance. Accordingly, FEMA reviewed PREPA's Whitefish and Cobra contracts for compliance with federal requirements and advised PREPA of the noncompliance issues with each of those contracts. While PREPA amended the Cobra contract's terms and conditions to address the procurement issues identified by FEMA and brought the Cobra contract into compliance, it did not amend the Whitefish contract. FEMA has not yet received an amended Whitefish contract that addresses the procurement issues identified nor has it received any invoices for reimbursement under PREPA's contract with Whitefish.



<b>Question#:</b>	2
<b>Topic:</b>	Reimbursement Timeframe
<b>Hearing:</b>	Bureaucratic Challenges to Hurricane Recovery in Puerto Rico
<b>Primary:</b>	The Honorable Ron Desantis
<b>Committee:</b>	OVERSIGHT & GOV RFORM (HOUSE)

**Question:** Once PREPA submits Whitefish Energy's invoices to FEMA for reimbursement, how quickly will FEMA reimburse PREPA for the work performed by Whitefish and its subcontractors?

What is the typical timeframe between FEMA's receipt of invoices from PREPA for its contractors and FEMA's release of payment to PREPA for those contractors?

**Response:** FEMA reimbursement is dependent upon the applicant meeting all federal requirements, including those for procurements under federal grants, and documentation requirements in Title 2 of the Code of Federal Regulations and FEMA's Public Assistance Program and Policy Guide. Adhering to these requirements is essential to ensure, among other things, that the cost of work performed is reasonable. Once PREPA and the Commonwealth submit the Whitefish invoices and supporting documentation to FEMA, including certifications regarding procurement under the federal grant and project completion, FEMA will make every effort to ensure a thorough and timely review of the package to determine eligible costs, if any.

<b>Question#:</b>	3
<b>Topic:</b>	IPPs Update
<b>Hearing:</b>	Bureaucratic Challenges to Hurricane Recovery in Puerto Rico
<b>Primary:</b>	The Honorable Ron Desantis
<b>Committee:</b>	OVERSIGHT & GOV RFORM (HOUSE)

**Question:** It is the Committee's understanding that, by the date of the hearing, PREPA had authorized the dispatch of only 5 out of a total 250 megawatts (MWs) of renewable energy available through independent power producers (IPPs), even though 90 percent of the IPPs were operational by that time. Given these projects represent hundreds of millions of dollars in private investment and create hundreds of jobs, please provide an update on the dispatch of renewable energy since February 22, 2018. Also, please explain the steps FEMA has taken to work with both PREPA and the IPPs to get these important sources of power back online.

**Response:** Questions related to renewable energy generation should be directed to PREPA, which has the responsibility for all generation. FEMA is not working with private generation facilities in emergency work, nor does FEMA have authority over PREPA generation decisions. FEMA's task has been to stabilize generation (with generators) and support repairs to the transmission and distribution system.

<b>Question#:</b>	4
<b>Topic:</b>	Individual Assistance Registrations
<b>Hearing:</b>	Bureaucratic Challenges to Hurricane Recovery in Puerto Rico
<b>Primary:</b>	The Honorable Ron Desantis
<b>Committee:</b>	OVERSIGHT & GOV RFORM (HOUSE)

**Question:** In his testimony, Mr. Byrne mentioned that more than 4.7 million survivors had registered with FEMA for individual assistance during 2017, total. How many of these registrations are from residents of Puerto Rico?

**Response:** In 2017, FEMA received 1,108,166 registrations from individuals and households for Individual Assistance as a result of the impacts of Hurricanes Irma and Maria in Puerto Rico.

**Question:** Of the registrations from residents in Puerto Rico, how many of these survivors have received the assistance they applied for? Once a survivor receives the assistance, is the case closed? If so, how many cases have been closed to-date?

**Response:** As of April 27, 2018, 1,135,149 individuals and households in Puerto Rico have registered for Individual Assistance. Eligibility criteria for FEMA assistance is the same for all survivors in all disasters. Any figure – from the average grant amount to the number of survivors approved for the Individuals and Households Program (IHP) – does not indicate the level of assistance any one survivor or family can expect. Every disaster is different and the needs of each survivor are considered individually.

The table below details the number of survivors in Puerto Rico who have registered with FEMA and the amount of assistance approved under the IHP as of April 27, 2018. Registrations refers to the number of individuals and households that applied for assistance with FEMA. Valid registrations are those registrations where FEMA has verified that the reported damage was sustained within a declared county, the date reported for when the damages occurred to the home and /or personal property is within the incident period (time frame declared for the incident), the damage reported is the same as the incident type declared (e.g. water damage due to flood), and that the registration was submitted before the filing deadline. Referrals are the number of valid registrations referred to the IHP for potential approval. To be referred to the IHP for possible assistance, survivors must meet the four conditions of general eligibility:

- The applicant must be a U.S. citizen, non-citizen national, or qualified alien.
- FEMA must be able to verify the applicant's identity.
- The applicant's insurance, or other forms of disaster assistance received, cannot meet their disaster-caused needs.
- The applicant's necessary expenses and serious needs are directly caused by a declared disaster.

<b>Question#:</b>	4
<b>Topic:</b>	Individual Assistance Registrations
<b>Hearing:</b>	Bureaucratic Challenges to Hurricane Recovery in Puerto Rico
<b>Primary:</b>	The Honorable Ron Desantis
<b>Committee:</b>	OVERSIGHT & GOV RFORM (HOUSE)

Approved is the number of referrals approved for IHP assistance. The approved amount is the amount of assistance given to approved registrations. By law, FEMA can only approve one registration per household and individuals registered must live in the area designated in the disaster declaration.

Disaster	Registrations	Valid Registrations	Referrals	Approved	Approved Amount
Hurricane Irma	16,761	5,518	3,624	1,490	\$8,052,611.96
Hurricane Maria	1,118,388	1,117,821	887,815	451,872	\$1,133,118,622.78
<b>Total</b>	<b>1,135,149</b>	<b>1,123,339</b>	<b>891,439</b>	<b>453,362</b>	<b>\$ 1,141,171,234.74</b>

Once a survivor receives assistance, their case is not necessarily "closed." Survivors may disagree with FEMA's initial determination of eligibility or the amount of assistance provided, in which case survivors have 60 days from the date on the FEMA determination letter to appeal. Survivors may also be able to provide additional documentation or information that could potentially change their eligibility status. Survivors with insurance have one year to submit their insurance documentation so FEMA can make a determination on assistance to help cover uninsured or under-insured eligible losses. To ensure survivors receive all the federal assistance for which they are eligible, FEMA strongly advises survivors to keep FEMA updated on their situation by visiting a Disaster Recovery Center or by calling the FEMA Helpline. The Agency also coordinates with whole community partners to address remaining unmet needs once an applicant has received all federal assistance for which they are eligible.

<b>Question#:</b>	5
<b>Topic:</b>	Continuity of Effort Delay
<b>Hearing:</b>	Bureaucratic Challenges to Hurricane Recovery in Puerto Rico
<b>Primary:</b>	The Honorable Jenniffer Gonzalez-Colon
<b>Committee:</b>	OVERSIGHT & GOV RFORM (HOUSE)

**Question:** If the USACE ends its contracts and hands over to PREPA the final and hardest 5 percent of distribution and customer connection, how much of a delay does this represent in continuity of effort does this not mean having to restart the contracting process and wasting as much as a month to restart the effort?

**Response:** As of June 14, 2018, power restoration is at 99.58 percent with 0.43 % of or just over 6,224 customers remaining without power. Crews continue working to restore power in the remaining, hardest-hit and most logistically challenging areas where equipment, materials, and sometimes even workers, must be flown into the work sites.

On May 18 USACE concluded its Mission Assignment for emergency power restoration. With most utilities 95 percent restored, PREPA plans to manage the final repairs. Other power-related USACE mission assignments have been extended for generators, logistics, and materials management. The current plan includes the use of PREPA's contractors, contractor oversight services, and logistics capability. As with any transition, there is a handoff that occurs and we expect to experience no more than a week of reduced crew count in some areas. Working through the Joint Field Office (JFO) and the Unified Command Group, which includes PREPA, FEMA will continue to provide the means necessary to provide stable power to the people of Puerto Rico. FEMA, in coordination with the Government of Puerto Rico, will continue to assess mission assignments and amend as necessary.

<b>Question#:</b>	7
<b>Topic:</b>	Rural Areas
<b>Hearing:</b>	Bureaucratic Challenges to Hurricane Recovery in Puerto Rico
<b>Primary:</b>	The Honorable Jennifer Gonzalez-Colon
<b>Committee:</b>	OVERSIGHT & GOV RFORM (HOUSE)

**Question:** What would have been needed, in hindsight, to have made the effort more efficient; what processes and resources should have been in place and should be in place before it happens again? What procedures of the USACE, FEMA, and other agencies need to be adjusted? What aspects of statutory or regulatory mandates or limitations may the Congress need to reimagine, amend or waive.

**Response:** Our goal is to help residents prepare for hurricane season. To date, we held an Energy Sector Summit on May 10 and dedicated a session on lessons learned with industry contractors and PREPA and captured actions to be taken before next hurricane season. In addition, we have scheduled a Summit with the Governor of Puerto Rico and have scheduled three preparedness exercises at the end of May. We're also supporting all of the municipalities in developing or updating their local preparedness plans.

Based on lessons learned from the 2017 hurricane season, FEMA re-evaluated stockpiling of commodities in Puerto Rico. FEMA is increasing the amount of commodities stocked in Puerto Rico ahead of the 2018 hurricane season. Since last year, Puerto Rico warehouse capacity has more than tripled. As of the end of April, FEMA has over 700 generators installed in public facilities, as per State priority determination.

We must also build a culture of preparedness in every segment of our society; from individual to government, industry to philanthropy, we must encourage and empower everyone with information to prepare for the inevitable impacts of future disasters.

We have to ready the nation for catastrophic disasters. FEMA will work with our partners across all levels of government to strengthen partnerships and access new sources of scalable capabilities to quickly meet the needs of overwhelming incidents.

And finally, we need to reduce the complexity of FEMA. We must continue to be responsible stewards of the resources we're entrusted to administer. We must also do everything that we can to leverage data to drive decision-making, and reduce the administrative and bureaucratic burdens that impede impacted individuals and communities from quickly receiving the assistance they need.

**Question:** USACE says some rural areas will not be done until the end of May. What would it take so NOBODY must wait that long? If it's not impossible, why not do it? Cost? Production lead-in times? Need to hold resources to use in case there is another emergency?

<b>Question#:</b>	7
<b>Topic:</b>	Rural Areas
<b>Hearing:</b>	Bureaucratic Challenges to Hurricane Recovery in Puerto Rico
<b>Primary:</b>	The Honorable Jennifer Gonzalez-Colon
<b>Committee:</b>	OVERSIGHT & GOV RFORM (HOUSE)

**Response:** The magnitude of destruction to the island and power grid caused by Hurricane Maria was unprecedented. The governor set an aggressive timeline, but we know it will take significant time to restore power to the remaining customers due to the challenges of terrain, the condition of the grid system before the storms, and the extensive damage caused by the hurricanes.

The logistical challenges presented in the hardest-hit areas where the remaining one percent of work is taking place cannot be avoided given the system's pre-storm design. Equipment, materials, and sometimes even workers, have to be flown into these remote, mountainous areas where the remaining work is occurring. In addition, there is significant helicopter work required and only so many helicopters can operate in the same vicinity. In addition, there are FAA requirements for work over "congested areas" that require advance approval, and weather delays are becoming more of a factor with rain and high winds in the mountains this time of year. PREPA is also looking at alternatives for the hardest-to-reach customers, such as solar generators, to support those customers until their power is restored. We are working closely with PREPA to support the restoration mission in rural areas as quickly as possible in manner that also ensures the safety of workers carrying out this critical mission. DOE is working with the national labs to develop a model that will inform planning and operational decisions to improve energy system resilience.

<b>Question#:</b>	8
<b>Topic:</b>	Efforts to Inform
<b>Hearing:</b>	Bureaucratic Challenges to Hurricane Recovery in Puerto Rico
<b>Primary:</b>	The Honorable Jennifer Gonzalez-Colon
<b>Committee:</b>	OVERSIGHT & GOV RFORM (HOUSE)

**Question:** Do we have an active effort to inform the people of Puerto Rico of the pace of restoration work and the time frame to be realistically expected?

**Response:** We remain committed to achieving our goal of restoring electricity to customers on the island.

PREPA is best suited to provide updates on restoration of power. PREPA has been providing a daily update on generation, that is, the electricity that is available for consumption by clients. The percent of clients restored reflects the number of users that can take that electricity and have service to their home or business restored.

PREPA has a customer service line that runs 24/7 and they have created an online portal that provides a four week schedule for specific areas.

FEMA's External Affairs team, along with our partners at USACE, provide regular updates on recovery progress to internal and external stakeholders through social media, traditional media, talking points, graphics and reports. Additionally, FEMA, through its Intergovernmental Affairs Division, provided satellite phones to every mayor on the island in the early days of response – a first in FEMA's history.

Due to the communication challenges early in the disaster, Intergovernmental Affairs worked across the federal government and deployed close to 160 federal family staff from over 15 federal agencies, through mission assignments and surge capacity force, to support engagements with the 78 Mayors. This historic IGA effort resulted in Mayors having face to face engagement two to three times per week and ensured they were receiving accurate and timely information regarding disaster resources, and that we were receiving reports on their needs.

That connection and coordination with the municipalities has continued to this day. Our IGA staff provides regular reports and advisories to, and meets with, the municipalities to provide updates on recovery efforts and help answer questions, facilitate operational requests, and resolve any issues as they arise.



<b>Question#:</b>	9
<b>Topic:</b>	Improvements Needed
<b>Hearing:</b>	Bureaucratic Challenges to Hurricane Recovery in Puerto Rico
<b>Primary:</b>	The Honorable Jennifer Gonzalez-Colon
<b>Committee:</b>	OVERSIGHT & GOV RFORM (HOUSE)

**Question:** What improvements would be needed to really make it a permanent rebuilding, with upgrades when necessary to bring it to standard; and do we have a reliable notion of the cost of doing so?

**Response:** The condition of the Puerto Rico Electric Power Authority (PREPA) power grid over the past decade has been well-documented. Deferred maintenance, antiquated materials on the system, and lack of oversight and regulations made for a degraded and fragile system before the storm.

The generation infrastructure is old (28+ years older than industry average) and unreliable. Prior to the 2017 hurricanes, Puerto Rico sustained frequent power plant outages (12 times more than the mainland); had a high dependence on fuel oil; and the principal power generation was located far from demand centers.

Transmission and Distribution infrastructure was not adequately maintained, further contributing to outages, losses, and poor quality service; and there were no funds allotted to storm hardening or resilience. The transmission and distribution system was highly vulnerable to catastrophic events further impacting delivery of electric service.

PREPA's infrastructure was fragile prior to the hurricanes due to the poor maintenance of the power grid and liquidity issues. Emergency work is being completed as quickly as possible to bring power up across the island. The emergency repairs completed thus far on the grid in some places have left the grid in a better condition than it was (i.e. steel poles instead of wood, new guy wires and bolts) and in other places, for example, the wire was reused and may have limited life. So the system will continue to be fragile even with emergency repairs.

However, as we move to permanent work, the Commonwealth of Puerto Rico PREPA and its Federal partners, including FEMA and DOE are working together on assessing how best to stabilize the grid, and to make sure it is modernized, resilient, and scalable.

On Feb. 9, the President signed into law the Bipartisan Budget Act of 2018. Section 20601 of the Act allows FEMA to provide:

- Public Assistance funding for critical services to replace or restore the function of a facility or system to industry standards without regard to their pre-disaster condition;

<b>Question#:</b>	9
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<b>Committee:</b>	OVERSIGHT & GOV RFORM (HOUSE)

- Public Assistance funding for critical services to replace or restore components of the facility or system that are not damaged by the disaster when it is necessary to fully effectuate the replacement or restoration of disaster-damaged components to restore the function of the facility or system to industry standards;

for the following disaster declarations: DR-4336-PR, DR-4339-PR, DR-4340-USVI, and DR-4335-USVI. With the authorities given in the Bipartisan Budget Act, federal funds can be used to help permanently rebuild and replace PREPA systems with a more resilient grid system.

<b>Question#:</b>	10
<b>Topic:</b>	Deadlines
<b>Hearing:</b>	Bureaucratic Challenges to Hurricane Recovery in Puerto Rico
<b>Primary:</b>	The Honorable Jenniffer Gonzalez-Colon
<b>Committee:</b>	OVERSIGHT & GOV RFORM (HOUSE)

**Question:** What deadlines have passed or are approaching for such things as aid applications, or 100 percent federal funding? Are those terms statutory or administrative?

**Response:** The deadline to register for FEMA's Individual and Household Assistance program and the Small Business Administration's Physical Damage and Economic Injury Loans is June 18, 2018.

The deadline for submitting a Request for Public Assistance (RPA) has passed. Regulation requires a State, Territorial, Tribal, or local government entity or private non-profit that wishes to seek Public Assistance funding, to submit an RPA to FEMA, through the Recipient, within 30 days of the respective area being designated in the declaration. FEMA approved a time extension to this deadline through April 3, 2018.

Regulation requires subrecipients to identify and report all of its disaster-related damage, Emergency Work activities, and debris quantities to FEMA within 60 days of the Kickoff Meeting. The deadline for identifying and reporting damage has passed for some subrecipients.

Lastly, as of May 18, 2018 FEMA announced additional disaster assistance is available to the Commonwealth of Puerto Rico. This assistance allows for additional funding at a 100 percent federal cost share for limited emergency protective measures. This includes a 90-day extension for emergency power restoration (August 16, 2018 for a total of 330 days), and a 120-day extension for emergency temporary power support and the Sheltering and Temporary Essential Power program (September, 15, 2018 for a total of 360 days). This decision was administrative.

<b>Question#:</b>	11
<b>Topic:</b>	Lessons Learned II
<b>Hearing:</b>	Bureaucratic Challenges to Hurricane Recovery in Puerto Rico
<b>Primary:</b>	The Honorable Jenniffer Gonzalez-Colon
<b>Committee:</b>	OVERSIGHT & GOV RFORM (HOUSE)

**Question:** The vulnerability of the national power grid has been brought up in other contexts - has the agency used the experience in Puerto Rico to learn about how to handle the scenario of large parts of the US power grid going completely offline?

**Response:** Recognizing the electrical power grid is vulnerable to threats including hurricanes and other natural disasters, space weather, large near-earth objects, accidents, terrorist attacks such as electromagnetic pulse (EMP), or significant cyber incidents, in March 2015, FEMA began planning efforts to describe the Federal Government's strategy for providing support in responding to, and recovering from, large scale long duration power outages. Regardless of the cause, a large-scale power outage will result in cascading impacts across the 16 critical infrastructure sectors, all of which rely on grid power. FEMA published the Power Outage Incident Annex (POIA): *Managing the Cascading Impacts from a Long-Term Power Outage* in June 2017, just three months before Hurricane Maria made landfall in Puerto Rico. The POIA includes the Federal Government's concept of operations and unified coordination structures required to execute survivor-centric response and recovery operations in the wake of a long-term power outage. It outlines the types of federal support available to critical infrastructure (CI) stakeholders in restoration activities and responsibilities of industry stakeholders.

The devastation to the power grid in Puerto Rico, along with widespread outages in Florida and Texas caused by hurricanes Harvey and Irma, have provided ample opportunities to validate our approach and improve consequence management following significant outage events.

Many of the major challenges in Puerto Rico validated the assumptions in the POIA. However, the major discrepancy was the assumption in the POIA that "restoration of power is the responsibility of electric companies, the Federal Government may be requested to provide services to enable the power restoration process, as well as the delivery of essential services, through the facilitation of policy decisions and resource prioritization." However, the local power grid, managed by the Puerto Rico Electric Power Authority (PREPA), was an already troubled system both financially and in terms of quality of infrastructure. The impacts of the storm greatly impeded existing state capabilities to respond to the incident, whereas FEMA's response mechanisms assume a viable state/territorial government that the Agency can support.

While many of the obstacles faced in the Puerto Rico restoration effort are unique, the challenges related to supporting survivors, maintaining critical infrastructure and

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providing basic support to allow the continuation of commerce are relevant to any widespread and long term outage. Some key takeaways from recent outages:

- Power restoration is the responsibility of the power provider. The skills, manpower and materiel required to repair the grid post event are housed, almost entirely, within the industry.
- The normal restoration process depends upon a capable and competent utility provider, an effective preventive maintenance and capital investment program, access to sufficient quantities of manpower, equipment, and material, investment in pre disaster mitigation investment, and coordination with government officials to facilitate the process.
- Mutual aid and other reciprocal support exchange programs are critical to the restoration process.
- The Federal Government may be called upon to facilitate movement and procurement of manpower, equipment, and materiel in large scale events. This is particularly likely when responding to events located outside of the contiguous United States (OCONUS), or if normal transportation routes and supporting infrastructure are compromised.
- Power is essential to all 16 critical infrastructure sectors. Immediate impacts to Public Safety, Communications, and Healthcare must be mitigated.
- Generators, while not a replacement for the grid, may be the only viable option for providing power to critical nodes. Large scale generator missions create enormous logistics challenges.
- Providing opportunities to re-establish normal private sector operations is critical to sustaining survivor support operations.

The development of the POIA prior to the 2017 hurricanes strengthened FEMA's and its Federal partners' understanding of the cascading impacts that a long-term power outage poses across other lifeline infrastructure sectors. After-action efforts from the 2017 hurricane season include better integration with the 16 Critical Infrastructure and Key Resources (CIKR) sector-specific agencies to promote better information sharing between emergency managers and critical infrastructure owners and operators. FEMA

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<b>Committee:</b>	OVERSIGHT & GOV RFORM (HOUSE)

continues to make strides to learn from previous disasters, improve processes, and build readiness to respond to and recover from catastrophic disasters.

The National Level Exercise 2018 scenario included major hurricane that makes landfall causing severe damage to residences, businesses, and critical infrastructure throughout the Mid-Atlantic region. The scenario included power outages and cascading effects to critical infrastructure systems, including impacts to communications. The NLE 2018 examined and validated the capabilities of federal, state, local, tribal, and territorial governments to support the energy sector and synchronize efforts to manage the consequences of long-duration power outages and critical interdependencies.

Further, FEMA believes that efforts to invest in the ongoing modernization of the power grid to make it more redundant and resilient will reduce the likelihood or duration of a significant power outage in the future. The Department of Energy is the lead agency for Emergency Support Function 12 (Energy) under the National Response Framework and coordinates Federal response efforts to restore power. It is also the Sector Specific Agency in the National Infrastructure Protection Plan, charged with serving as the day-to-day interface with private and public sector partners and infrastructure operators to protect and prevent disruptions to the nation's energy infrastructure. As such, FEMA would defer to the Department of Energy for additional information regarding the vulnerability of the nation's power grid.

<b>Question#:</b>	12
<b>Topic:</b>	Last 5 Percent
<b>Hearing:</b>	Bureaucratic Challenges to Hurricane Recovery in Puerto Rico
<b>Primary:</b>	The Honorable Jennifer Gonzalez-Colon
<b>Committee:</b>	OVERSIGHT & GOV RFORM (HOUSE)

**Question:** What would it have taken to put us where we are now, but two or three months earlier? USACE says 95 percent restored by end of March, what are the challenges getting to that last 5 percent?

**Response:** Power restoration has been and continues to be a top priority for FEMA and the Commonwealth of Puerto Rico. Puerto Rico experienced a disaster that is unprecedented in our history. Nearly all of Puerto Rico's 3.5 million people were without power or communications.

Unique circumstances presented significant challenges to power restoration.

- Puerto Rico has 2,400 miles of transmission lines across the island and 30,000 miles of distribution lines with over 300 sub-stations.
- The power grid, which was already in a state of disrepair, suffered upwards of 80 percent damage.
- The transmission system is in treacherous, mountainous terrain, requiring specialized equipment and experienced crews.
- The damages that occurred in Texas, Florida and elsewhere in the Caribbean during the historic 2017 hurricane season also resulted in severe shortages of poles, conductors, insulators, transformers, and other resources that have impacted our ability to restore power. The lead times on some of the materials are weeks to months, and the transportation time by sea has averaged seven to eight days.
- Materials had to be manufactured (in some cases), mobilized, loaded, floated or flown, offloaded, and then distributed across the island.
- PREPA's liquidity issues made it more difficult to enter into contracts and obtain supplies.
- Initial lack of communication methods slowed down initial assessment reports.

But that's not to say we haven't made significant progress regarding power restoration

<b>Question#:</b>	12
<b>Topic:</b>	Last 5 Percent
<b>Hearing:</b>	Bureaucratic Challenges to Hurricane Recovery in Puerto Rico
<b>Primary:</b>	The Honorable Jennifer Gonzalez-Colon
<b>Committee:</b>	OVERSIGHT & GOV RFORM (HOUSE)

- As of June 14, 2018, power restoration is at 99.58 percent with 0.43 percent of or just over 6,224 customers remaining without power In Puerto Rico, USACE has installed more than 1,900 generators to sustain critical activities, many of which have been running for months. For context, during many disaster responses, USACE installs 40 to 50 temporary generators to provide power for a few weeks until the grid is back up.
- As of early March, USACE has received nearly 40,000 poles and 3,200 miles of conductor wire, with more continuing to arrive.
- Assessments and repairs continue to reveal new challenges that must be addressed for operational or safety reasons, which has also resulted in delays. The Unified Command Group and staff assess daily the remaining work in order to meet the goal of restoring electricity barring any additional challenges, achieving 100 percent restoration in areas with complex terrain, like Arecibo and Caguas, will take until late-May.

The last 5% of any power restoration is always the hardest. We are at the point where additional teams will not expedite the process. We have the experts and specialized equipment we need.



<b>Question#:</b>	13
<b>Topic:</b>	Effort
<b>Hearing:</b>	Bureaucratic Challenges to Hurricane Recovery in Puerto Rico
<b>Primary:</b>	The Honorable Jennifer Gonzalez-Colon
<b>Committee:</b>	OVERSIGHT & GOV RFORM (HOUSE)

**Question:** With an all-out no-holds-barred effort, could we have had 99 percent recovery before now?

**Response:** Power restoration has been and continues to be a top priority for FEMA and the Commonwealth of Puerto Rico. Puerto Rico experienced a disaster that is unprecedented in our history. Nearly all of Puerto Rico's 3.5 million people were without power or communications.

Unique circumstances presented significant challenges to power restoration.

- Puerto Rico has 2,400 miles of transmission lines across the island and 30,000 miles of distribution lines with over 300 sub-stations.
- The power grid, which was already in a state of disrepair, suffered upwards of 80 percent damage.
- The transmission system is in treacherous, mountainous terrain, requiring specialized equipment and experienced crews.
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- Materials had to be manufactured (in some cases), mobilized, loaded, floated or flown, offloaded, and then distributed across the island.
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- As of early March, USACE has received nearly 40,000 poles and 3,200 miles of conductor wire, with more continuing to arrive.
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The last 5% of any power restoration is always the hardest. We are at the point where additional teams will not expedite the process. We have the experts and specialized equipment we need, but it is similar to trying to fix a broken car and having more mechanics get under the hood; additional teams will not help.

<b>Question#:</b>	14
<b>Topic:</b>	Crews on the Street
<b>Hearing:</b>	Bureaucratic Challenges to Hurricane Recovery in Puerto Rico
<b>Primary:</b>	The Honorable Jennifer Gonzalez-Colon
<b>Committee:</b>	OVERSIGHT & GOV RFORM (HOUSE)

**Question:** Once we have the supplies necessary at hand, is it not better to have MORE crews on the street than fewer?

Can we maintain the standard of safety, with enough crews on the street, to be finished in 30 days rather than in 90?

**Response:** Our priority is to safely and urgently restore reliable power to the people of Puerto Rico as quickly as possible. We are committed to a unified effort until the mission is complete and power is restored for all. Having more crews on the street would not have made the process move faster. As of May 22, 2018, power restoration is at 99.04 percent, with 0.96% of, or just over 14,200, customers located in remote areas among mountainous terrain with limited access. To address these logistical challenges, equipment, materials and even workers are flown into the worksites where the restoration continues. A majority of the remaining customers are concentrated in two PREPA Regions (Arecibo and Caguas). You can only put so many crews on a circuit at any given time, and you can only fly so many helicopters and heavy lift drones in the same area. The last 5 percent of any power restoration is always the hardest. Based on the guidance from the Unified Command Group we are at the point where large numbers of additional teams won't help, but we have secured the experts and specialized equipment we need.

<b>Question#:</b>	15
<b>Topic:</b>	Community Disaster Loans
<b>Hearing:</b>	Bureaucratic Challenges to Hurricane Recovery in Puerto Rico
<b>Primary:</b>	The Honorable Jenniffer Gonzalez-Colon
<b>Committee:</b>	OVERSIGHT & GOV RFORM (HOUSE)

**Question:** Under the provisions of PL 115-72, the Additional Supplemental Appropriations for Disaster Relief Requirements Act of last October 2017, there is an authorization for issuance of up to \$4.9 Billion in Community Disaster Loans for the locations affected by hurricanes, to compensate for lost revenue and extraordinary expenditures. There have been questions raised about disbursement. To the best of your knowledge:

What is the stage of the process to have communities, states and territories apply for these loans, and specifically where does Puerto Rico stand right now?

**Response:** Applicants have the fiscal year of the disaster or the fiscal year immediately following to apply for Community Disasters Loans.

On 01/09/18 the Community Disaster Loan Program was authorized for the Commonwealth of Puerto Rico. The Government of Puerto Rico decided to delay their application for a Community Disaster Loan until a future date.

**Commonwealth Status**

FEMA, in consultation with Treasury, is working closely with Puerto Rico leadership to finalize a credit agreement for a loan to the Commonwealth. All parties are working closely to ensure that the loan terms are mutually beneficial. A date to finalize the agreement has not been set.

**Municipality Status:** As of 4/20/18, 12 municipal loans have been approved and 18 are pending approval for the municipal legislature and/or mayor's signature.

**Approved**

Loan Number	MUNICIPALITY	Loan Amount	Municipal Legislature Approved	Loan effective date
EMN-2018-LF-4339PR01	Yabucoa	\$ 4,936,305.00	Yes	04/03/18
EMN-2018-LF-4339PR02	Bayamón	\$ 5,000,000.00	Yes	04/03/18
EMN-2018-LF-	Humacao	\$ 5,000,000.00	Yes	04/03/18

<b>Question#:</b>	15
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<b>Primary:</b>	The Honorable Jenniffer Gonzalez-Colon
<b>Committee:</b>	OVERSIGHT & GOV RFORM (HOUSE)

4339PR03				
EMN-2018-LF-4339PR04	San Lorenzo	\$ 3,734,222.00	Yes	04/03/18
EMN-2018-LF-4339PR05	Juncos	\$ 5,000,000.00	Yes	04/03/18
EMN-2018-LF-4339PR06	Caguas	\$ 5,000,000.00	Yes	04/04/18
EMN-2018-LF-4339PR07	Sábana Grande	\$ 2,454,001.00	Yes	04/03/18
EMN-2018-LF-4339PR08	Ponce	\$ 5,000,000.00	Yes	04/03/18
EMN-2018-LF-4339PR09	Toa Baja	\$ 5,000,000.00	Yes	04/03/18
EMN-2018-LF-4339PR10	Trujillo Alto	\$ 5,000,000.00	Yes	04/03/18
EMN-2018-LF-4339PR11	Salinas	\$ 2,977,386.00	Yes	04/03/18
EMN-2018-LF-4339PR12	Río Grande	\$ 4,656,411.00	Yes	04/03/18

<b>Question#:</b>	15
<b>Topic:</b>	Community Disaster Loans
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<b>Committee:</b>	OVERSIGHT & GOV RFORM (HOUSE)

4339PR18		
EMN-2018-LF-4339PR19	Orocovis	\$ 4,110,679.00
EMN-2018-LF-4339PR20	Canóvanas	\$ 5,000,000.00
EMN-2018-LF-4339PR21	Arroyo	\$ 3,084,630.00
EMN-2018-LF-4339PR22	Barceloneta	\$ 5,000,000.00
EMN-2018-LF-4339PR23	Dorado	\$ 5,000,000.00
EMN-2018-LF-4339PR24	Manatí	\$ 5,000,000.00
EMN-2018-LF-4339PR25	Carolina	\$ 5,000,000.00
EMN-2018-LF-4339PR26	Cidra	\$ 5,000,000.00
EMN-2018-LF-4339PR27	Cayey	\$ 5,000,000.00
EMN-2018-LF-4339PR28	Fajardo	\$ 5,000,000.00
EMN-2018-LF-4339PR29	San Sebastián	\$ 5,000,000.00

Another 22 municipal applicants are in quality control. Eleven are in the initial review stage and FEMA is awaiting the application of 15 more.

<b>Question#:</b>	16
<b>Topic:</b>	Congressional Intent
<b>Hearing:</b>	Bureaucratic Challenges to Hurricane Recovery in Puerto Rico
<b>Primary:</b>	The Honorable Jennifer Gonzalez-Colon
<b>Committee:</b>	OVERSIGHT & GOV RFORM (HOUSE)

**Question:** Have you been advised of any Congressional intent to have the Treasury or DHS process these loan requests from local authorities with a process for evaluating and rating each case, including analyzing what was the revenue loss, what was the extra expenditure and if there is local liquidity to cover it, that is specific to the characteristics of each location, or would it be uniform? Or of there being any jurisdiction where such requirement is to be waived?

Have you been advised of any Congressional intent, or one from Treasury or DHS, that a specific part of this credit be offered to one particular state or territory, or is it something that is to be available to all those communities in need and will be subject to evaluation and rating in each case?

**Response:** Under CDL authorities, FEMA in consultation with Treasury, conducts a detailed evaluation of each applicant's financial situation to determine liquidity needs. Each loan process is specific to the characteristics of each applicant (US Virgin Islands Government, Puerto Rico Government, US Virgin Islands Water and Power Authority, etc.). However, for expedience sake, FEMA utilized the traditional loan process capped at \$5 million for municipalities in Puerto Rico (which is a uniform process). For those municipalities requiring more than \$5 million, they are provided the first loan to address the immediate need, then they work with FEMA and the Treasury to identify and secure funding for the remaining unmet need. Loan authority is available to all communities and is subject to the evaluation of their needs.

<b>Question#:</b>	1
<b>Topic:</b>	Competing Priorities
<b>Hearing:</b>	Bureaucratic Challenges to Hurricane Recovery in Puerto Rico
<b>Primary:</b>	The Honorable Ron Desantis
<b>Committee:</b>	OVERSIGHT & GOV RFORM (HOUSE)

**Question:** Following Hurricanes Irma and Maria, Walmart asked FEMA to prioritize generator fuel distribution to its stores in Puerto Rico. What other competing priorities existed at that time that may have prevented FEMA from fulfilling Walmart's request?

**Response:** The protection of life and safety is our first priority in any response. Fuel deliveries to Puerto Rico began on September 22, 2017—with priority given to critical infrastructure and life-safety operations (hospitals, dialysis centers, other medical facilities, communications, etc.). The number one fuel priority, as set by the government of Puerto Rico, was for medical facilities providing life-safety operations. However, to support these life-safety operations, priority also has to be given to water and waste water facilities. Without power to these facilities, hospitals and other life-safety centers cannot operate. These infrastructure interdependencies on electricity have to be considered when prioritizing recovery efforts.



<b>Question#:</b>	2
<b>Topic:</b>	Commodity Distribution
<b>Hearing:</b>	Bureaucratic Challenges to Hurricane Recovery in Puerto Rico
<b>Primary:</b>	The Honorable Ron Desantis
<b>Committee:</b>	OVERSIGHT & GOV RFORM (HOUSE)

**Question:** Is it FEMA's practice to distribute commodities directly to private businesses upon request? Please explain how FEMA handles such requests, since the Agency's primary responsibility is to coordinate with state, territorial, tribal, and local governments.

**Response:** It is not FEMA's practice to distribute commodities directly to private businesses upon request.

The Stafford Act and its implementing regulations do not authorize FEMA to provide direct federal assistance to private for-profit entities in response to a request, nor does it authorize federal assistance exclusively for economic recovery. In limited circumstances, private commercial entities may be indirect or incidental beneficiaries of direct federal assistance. To address an immediate threat to the community at large that is beyond state and local capability, FEMA may provide direct federal assistance through a private organization. For example, FEMA could provide a generator to a for-profit hospital, if necessary, to ensure the community has adequate emergency medical care. By contrast, direct federal assistance would not be appropriate in situations where assistance is requested for certain businesses or industries based on a perceived importance of the asset to the state or local economy.

The impacts of Hurricanes Irma and Maria brought the economy of Puerto Rico to a virtual standstill. In the weeks following, business communities across the island teamed up with the Government of Puerto Rico, FEMA, and other federal agencies to revitalize local commerce and get people back to work. In this context, the joint FEMA-Puerto Rico Business Emergency Operations Center was launched to bring together government, business, and industry leaders to identify challenges and develop unique solutions toward private sector recovery. Working groups were established to coordinate on major initiatives including restoring the supply of oxygen to hospitals, stabilizing the food supply chain, revitalizing the travel and tourism sector, and addressing fuel and diesel shortages. Many of these efforts focused on identifying bottlenecks and increasing shipping capacity to restore supply chains, which in turn resulted in increased availability of critical commodities to the economy as a whole.

<b>Question#:</b>	3
<b>Topic:</b>	Tribute Contracting
<b>Hearing:</b>	Bureaucratic Challenges to Hurricane Recovery in Puerto Rico
<b>Primary:</b>	The Honorable Ron Desantis
<b>Committee:</b>	OVERSIGHT & GOV RFORM (HOUSE)

**Question:** Did FEMA follow all applicable federal procurement laws and regulations with respect to the contract for meals with Tribute Contracting?

**Response:** Yes.

**Question:** Did Tribute Contracting receive any special consideration under federal contracting laws, regulations, or programs that favor certain businesses, such as Small Disadvantaged Businesses, Women-Owned Small Businesses, or Service-Disabled Veteran-Owned Small Businesses?

**Response:** No. This acquisition was not set aside for exclusive participation for any small business concern. The solicitation was posted on the Federal Business Opportunities website for the general public to submit a proposal.

Mr. Scott Aaronson  
Vice President, Security and Preparedness  
Edison Electric Institute

Submitted by Chairman Ron DeSantis  
Subcommittee on National Security  
Committee on Oversight and Government Reform

1. Are you concerned at all by reports that the contractors who were the first to assist in the emergency repair work in PR are owed over \$100M and that may have an impact on the industry's response to future storms and deter contractors from taking on such work?

**Answer: As I noted in my testimony, mutual assistance is in our industry's DNA. When a request is made for assistance, electric companies answer the call. To your specific question, EEI does not represent electric contractors, so we can't speak to whether this issue will deter them from disaster recovery work in the future.**

Mr. Scott Aaronson  
 Vice President, Security and Preparedness  
 Edison Electric Institute

Submitted by Representative Jenniffer Gonzalez-Colon

**Thank you for your questions, Rep. Gonzalez-Colon, and for your tireless work on behalf of your constituents. Following the Oversight and Government Reform hearing, my colleague, Carlos Torres, testified before the Energy and Commerce Committee on this same topic.<sup>1</sup> I know you were present at that hearing but, for the benefit of the other Committee members, I will refer frequently to Carlos' testimony. He is the foremost expert on this restoration, serving as the Power Restoration Coordinator in Puerto Rico since November 2017. Furthermore, his experience includes a 30+ year career in New York managing emergency and storm restoration efforts for Consolidated Edison – so his insight on these issues is unparalleled.**

1. What would it have taken to put us where we are now, but two or three months earlier? USACE says 95 percent restored by end of March, what are the challenges getting to that last 5 percent?
2. With an all-out no-holds-barred effort, could we have had 99 percent recovery before now?

**Answer: There's no doubt that an earlier request for mutual assistance from PREPA to the industry on the mainland would have accelerated the restoration – the formal request did not come until October 31. Likewise, had many of the other challenges faced by the restoration crews – a lack of materials, underinvestment in the energy grid before the storm, etc. – been different, the restoration timeline would have been accelerated.**

**As of this writing, power has been restored to more than 98 percent of customers, including nearly 90 percent of customers in the hardest-hit Caguas region. Restoration to the remaining customers remains challenging, as it is both labor- and time-intensive work in the hardest-hit and most remote parts of the island.**

3. Once we have the supplies necessary at hand, is it not better to have MORE crews on the street than fewer?

**Answer: Quoting Carlos Torres' testimony:**

*"In every single restoration effort, a point is reached where a substantial amount of work is completed and the amount and type of workers needed to complete the job are reassessed. In many cases, more people simply does not mean that work gets completed faster. This is especially true in Puerto Rico's mountainous regions with their narrow roads, where only so many trucks and so many workers can fit into one space at a time. Access to materials, not the size of the workforce, at times has slowed the restoration, but we have seen a steady improvement in materials being delivered to the island, and the remaining crews are well positioned to continue making progress. Again, this deliberate right-sizing of the workforce*

<sup>1</sup> <https://docs.house.gov/meetings/IF/IF02/20180411/106913/HHRG-115-IF02-Wstate-TorresC-20180411.pdf>

*is typical and necessary. As is the case with all restorations, the final customers are the most difficult and time-consuming to restore; in this case, the terrain on the island is a recurring challenge.”*

4. Can we maintain the standard of safety, with enough crews on the street, to be finished in 30 days rather than in 90?

**Answer:** The timeframe to complete work is not an issue of enough crews, or of safety practices, it is one of access. Safety is of the utmost importance to our industry. Quoting again from the Torres testimony:

*“A restoration of this complexity and magnitude demands a response to match it. It also requires an unwavering commitment to safety. I cannot overemphasize the focus that I and my team have placed on safety throughout the entire restoration effort. My goal was—and continues to be—to ensure that everyone involved in power restoration gets home safely at the end of each day and at the end of this mission.”*

**No response received to the Questions for the Record.**

Questions for the Record for Mr. William Parks  
Senior Advisor to the Assistant Secretary  
Office of Electricity Delivery and Energy Reliability  
U.S. Department of Energy

Submitted by Chairman Ron DeSantis  
Subcommittee on National Security  
Committee on Oversight and Government Reform

1. Please describe the pre-storm condition of Puerto Rico's power grid, particularly in comparison to typical power grids on the mainland.
2. Please explain how Puerto Rico's electric transmission and distribution system differs from mainland systems, including the use of any unique or obsolete parts or equipment that were not readily available following the hurricanes.

**No response received to the Questions for the Record.**

Questions for the Record for Mr. William Parks  
Senior Advisor to the Assistant Secretary  
Office of Electricity Delivery and Energy Reliability  
U.S. Department of Energy

Submitted by Chairman Ron DeSantis  
Subcommittee on National Security  
Committee on Oversight and Government Reform

1. It is the Committee's understanding that there are a significant number of independent energy producers on the Island. By the date of the hearing, the Committee was informed that PREPA had only authorized the dispatch of 5 out of a total 250 megawatts (MWs) of renewable energy from independent power producer (IPP) projects, even though 90 percent of all IPPs were operational by that time. Given these projects represent hundreds of millions of dollars in private investment and create hundreds of jobs, please provide an update on the dispatch of renewable energy since February 22, 2018. Also, please explain the steps DOE has taken to work with PREPA and the IPPs to get these important sources of power back online.
2. Are you concerned at all by reports that the contractors who were the first to assist in the emergency repair work in PR are owed over \$100M and that may have an impact on the industry's response to future storms and deter contractors from taking on such work?

Questions for the Record for Mr. William Parks  
Senior Advisor to the Assistant Secretary  
Office of Electricity Delivery and Energy Reliability  
U.S. Department of Energy

Submitted by Representative Jenniffer Gonzalez-Colon

1. If the Army Corps of Engineers ends its contracts and hands over to PREPA the final and hardest 5 percent of distribution and customer connection, how much of a delay does this represent in continuity of effort does this not mean having to restart the contracting process and wasting as much as a month to restart the effort?
2. What would have been needed, in hindsight, to have made the effort more efficient; what processes and resources should have been in place and should be in place before it happens again. What procedures of the USACE, FEMA, and other agencies need to be adjusted? What aspects of statutory or regulatory mandates or limitations may the Congress need to reimagine, amend or waive.
3. USACE says some rural areas will not be done until the end of May. What would it take so NOBODY must wait that long? If it's not impossible, why not do it? Cost? Production lead-in times? Need to hold resources to use in case there is another emergency?
4. Do we have an active effort to inform the people of Puerto Rico of the pace of restoration work and the time frame to be realistically expected?
5. What improvements would be needed to really make it a permanent rebuilding, with upgrades when necessary to bring it to standard; and do we have a reliable notion of the cost of doing so?
6. What deadlines have passed or are approaching for such things as aid applications, or 100 percent federal funding? Are those terms statutory or administrative?
7. The vulnerability of the national power grid has been brought up in other contexts - has the agency used the experience in Puerto Rico to learn about how to handle the scenario of large parts of the US power grid going completely offline?
8. What would it have taken to put us where we are now, but two or three months earlier? USACE says 95 percent restored by end of March, what are the challenges getting to that last 5 percent?
9. With an all-out no-holds-barred effort, could we have had 99 percent recovery before now?
10. Once we have the supplies necessary at hand, is it not better to have MORE crews on the street than fewer?
11. Can we maintain the standard of safety, with enough crews on the street, to be finished in 30 days rather than in 90?