



## **Gov. Scott Issues Updates on State Action to Assist Puerto Rico**

*On October 3, 2017, in [News Releases](#), by Staff*

**ORLANDO, Fla.** – Today, Governor Rick Scott visited the American Red Cross distribution warehouse in Orlando to thank volunteers for organizing donations to assist recovery efforts for Puerto Rico after Hurricane Maria. Governor Scott also spoke with Puerto Rico Governor Ricardo Rosselló today to discuss ongoing response and recovery efforts.

See below for more information on what the State of Florida is doing to support Puerto Rico:

### **MILITARY SUPPORT**

- The Florida National Guard (FLNG) continues to monitor and provide support, as needed, to coordinate Emergency Management Assistance Compact (EMAC) force flow into Puerto Rico.
- Over the weekend, the FLNG deployed a communications specialist from the 48th Civil Support Team to Puerto Rico to assist with stabilizing the response network. This is in addition to the airman from the Florida Air National Guard is on the ground in San Juan directing the Joint Air Coordination Element (JACE).
- Additionally, the FLNG is providing logistical support to the North Carolina National Guard which is preparing to ship vehicles out of Jacksonville to Puerto Rico via sealift. The 100-person unit will lodge at Camp Blanding Joint Training Center beginning October 5<sup>th</sup> until deployment.
- The Florida National Guard is coordinating with the full-time Guardsmen as part of the 601st Air Operations Center at Tyndall Air Force Base. This organization, under the U.S. Air Forces North (AFNORTH), is coordinating all military airflow in the Joint Operations Area. They recently coordinated 29 military flights, which included water, meals, sandbags, health specialists, military police, vehicles and other humanitarian assistance supplies and personnel.

### **LAW ENFORCEMENT**

- The Florida Department of Law Enforcement (FDLE) traveled to San Juan with Governor Scott last week and met with the Puerto Rico Department of Public Safety to discuss security concerns and needs.
- FDLE has coordinated a request for 1,500 law enforcement officers that are standing by to deploy to Puerto Rico to supplement Puerto Rican law enforcement. These assets will come from across Florida, including state and local partners, and other states.
- An eight-member incident management team is prepared to deploy to Puerto Rico this week to help assess law enforcement needs. The Florida Highway Patrol has two members on the incident management team and will have between 50-70 troopers available to respond immediately once needs are identified.
- The Florida Fish and Wildlife Conservation Commission (FWC) has identified volunteers from across the state that are part of the FWC Special Operations Group (SOG) to stand by for potential deployment. Many of these officers have recently deployed to assist with Hurricanes Harvey and Hurricane Irma response and recovery operations.
- FWC has identified specialty equipment such as trucks, coastal and river patrol boats, ATVs and shallow draft boats to be considered for potential use as needed.

## **DIVISION OF EMERGENCY MANAGEMENT**

- At the direction of Governor Scott, three Disaster Relief Centers (DRCs) have opened at Orlando International Airport, Miami International Airport, and the Port of Miami for Puerto Rican families displaced by Hurricane Maria.
- The following organizations will have staff on site: Federal Emergency Management Agency, Department of Children and Families, Department of Agriculture and Consumer Services, Department of Health, Department of Economic Opportunity, American Red Cross and Catholic Charities (Orlando International Airport).
- These partners will offer services such as help with registering for FEMA Individual Assistance, crisis counseling, Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP) information, assistance with unaccompanied minors and agency social services, assistance with animal services, medical attention and health concerns, employment information and training services, food and water resources, language guidance and spiritual care.
- The hours of operation for these centers are 7:00 a.m. – 9:00 p.m., including weekends.
- The State Emergency Response Team (SERT) is working closely with Puerto Rican officials to help identify, prioritize and affect Emergency Management Assistance Compact missions, allowing for the right resources and personnel from the continental U.S. to be appropriately leveraged in support of the response effort.
- SERT has coordinated with private partners to secure three large transport vessels that have a combined passenger capacity of more than 7,500 individuals.
- SERT is working with private cellular infrastructure repair and support companies to assist the Puerto Rico response effort and deploy personnel, repair equipment, trucks and fuel needed for critical communications infrastructure repairs.

- SERT is identifying relief supplies for deployment. More than 2 million pounds of relief supplies are positioned in the Tampa Bay area for two large cargo aircraft transporting them to airports outside of San Juan. In addition, four hangars across the Tampa and Orlando areas are full of relief supplies are on standby for air transport.
- Available relief supplies include 220 Florida Point of Distribution (POD) support packages which are used for the distribution of water, food, and supplies to the public, 50 6,000-gallon potable water tankers, 300 fork lifts, 10 kitchen support units, 10 shower/laundry facilities, 1,000 light towers, and 1,200 portable generators standing by for transport to Puerto Rico as needed. In addition, Lowe's is currently transporting 30 trailers worth of portable generators to Homestead for transport to Puerto Rico.
- SERT is working with utility partners at the State Emergency Operations Center to identify resources that may be offered to Puerto Rico. This includes personnel, repair equipment and expertise. Additionally, FPL has offered assessment teams that can quickly deploy and assist in determining critical infrastructure needs.
- SERT is working with fuel industry partners to secure ships transporting fuel, fuel trucks and bilingual drivers to transport fuel to areas with the most critical need. Two fuel barges are on standby for deployment.
- SERT, through the Florida Retail Federation, is coordinating with Florida's major retailers in ensuring the availability and distribution of needed goods.
- SERT coordinated with the Humane Society of the United States to support pet and animal shelters in San Juan.

## **HEALTH AND MEDICAL**

- The state coordinated with Florida International University to host evacuees from Puerto Rico and the Virgin Islands, 90 of which were dialysis patients, at Florida International University.
- The state is currently on the list of Federal Coordinating Centers (FCCs) to accept patients if needed from Puerto Rico as recovery efforts continue. The Florida Department of Health (DOH) will stand ready to coordinate patient transport as needed.
- DOH is providing education on available public health services at Disaster Relief Centers in South Florida and Orlando for Puerto Rican families displaced by Hurricane Maria.
- The Agency for Health Care Administration will work with our federal partners to gather information on any waivers the Medicaid program would need to serve individuals from Puerto Rico. As always, the Medicaid program covers medically necessary services for children and families eligible for Medicaid.

## **TRANSPORTATION & PUBLIC WORKS**

- The Florida Department of Transportation (FDOT) is prepared to deploy a four-person team to assess infrastructure status and needs and coordinate further related deployments.

- FDOT is working to fulfill a request from Puerto Rico to assist in evaluating the current status of traffic signals and Intelligent Transportation Systems (ITS) field devices.
- FDOT has been in communication with Puerto Rico's Secretary of Transportation and Public Works regarding transportation needs.
- The Governor has called on Florida port directors to prioritize and expedite the shipment of goods from across the country quickly to Puerto Rico and many ports have committed to stand ready to help move supplies through their facilities as quickly as possible.

## **VOLUNTEER FLORIDA**

- Volunteer Florida is providing information and resources to Floridians who want to make donations or volunteer at [www.volunteerflorida.org](http://www.volunteerflorida.org).
- Volunteer Florida is assisting with the opening of Disaster Relief Centers in South Florida and Orlando for Puerto Rican families displaced by Hurricane Maria and providing bi-lingual assistance for displaced families.
- Volunteer Florida is coordinating with local volunteer United Way agencies and non-profit partners to provide referral information for transportation, lodging, food and water during transition.

## **EDUCATION**

- Florida school districts have processes in place to enroll K-12 students displaced by natural disasters, and all districts are prepared to enroll Puerto Rican evacuees. Families displaced by Hurricane Maria have begun arriving in Florida, and a number have already enrolled their students.
- Commissioner Stewart will issue a summary of guidance to all districts and continue to work with school districts on additional issues as they arise.
- The below Florida state colleges and universities are waiving out-of-state tuition and fees for students from Puerto Rico displaced by Hurricane Maria following a request by Governor Scott:
  - Broward College
  - Chipola College
  - College of Central Florida
  - Daytona State
  - Eastern Florida State College
  - Florida A&M University
  - Florida Atlantic University
  - Florida Gateway
  - Florida Gulf Coast University
  - Florida International University
  - Florida Keys Community College

- Florida Southwestern State College
- Florida State College at Jacksonville
- Florida State University
- Gulf Coast State College
- Hillsborough Community College
- Indian River State College
- Lake Sumter
- Miami Dade College
- New College of Florida
- North Florida Community College
- Northwest Florida State College
- Palm Beach State
- Pasco-Hernando State College
- Pensacola State College
- Polk State College
- Santa Fe College
- Seminole State
- South Florida State College
- Johns River State College
- Petersburg College
- State College of Florida, Manatee–Sarasota
- Tallahassee Community College
- University of Central Florida
- University of Florida
- University of North Florida
- University of South Florida
- University of West Florida
- Valencia College

Last week, at the request of Puerto Rico Governor Ricardo Rosselló, Governor Scott visited San Juan, Puerto Rico to help coordinate response and recovery efforts. On Friday, Governor Scott met with President Trump and Vice President Pence to discuss his trip to Puerto Rico and actions the State of Florida is taking to help with response and recovery. Governor Scott also hosted a call with Puerto Rican government officials and Florida state agency leaders last week to ensure the State of Florida is doing everything possible to help Puerto Rico recover.