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

**TALLAHASSEE, Fla.** – Today, Governor Rick Scott provided an update on resources being deployed to Puerto Rico to assist with recovery and response efforts following Hurricane Maria.

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

### **DIVISION OF EMERGENCY MANAGEMENT**

- At the direction of Governor Scott, two Multi-Agency Resource Centers (MARC) have opened in Orlando (formerly at Orlando International Airport) and Miami International Airport 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 Highway Safety and Motor Vehicles, 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 the Orlando MARC are 9:00 a.m. – 5:00 p.m. Monday through Friday. The hours of operation for the center in Miami are 9:00 a.m. – 7:00 p.m. Monday through Friday and 8:00 a.m. – 4:00 p.m. on Saturday.
    - The Orlando MARC is located at 6490 Hazeltine National Drive, Suite 170, Orlando, FL 32822.
- Since October 3<sup>rd</sup>, 2017, more than 297,000 individuals have arrived in Florida from Puerto Rico through Miami International Airport, Orlando International Airport and Port Everglades.
- More than 35,000 individuals have visited the Multi-Agency Resource Centers in Orlando (formerly at Orlando International Airport) and Miami International Airport.
- FEMA is onsite providing information on available resources for people arriving from Puerto Rico.

- DEM is working with our Federal and local partners to explore and consider all available solutions with regards to housing Hurricane Maria survivors.
- 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.
- Hurricane Irma and Maria survivors can find more information by contacting FEMA Disaster Assistance at 1-800-621-3362 or visit [www.disasterassistance.gov](http://www.disasterassistance.gov). They can also contact the State Assistance Information Line at 1-800-342-3557 or visit <http://www.floridadisaster.org/info/maria.htm>.

## **MILITARY SUPPORT**

- The Florida Air National Guard will conduct its final mission when it sends 16 Airmen from the 202nd Red Horse Squadron to assist with tearing down and storing four Disaster Relief Bed-down System (DRBS) packages, from January 7<sup>th</sup> through 16<sup>th</sup>.

## **LAW ENFORCEMENT**

- FDLE coordinated a request for 500 law enforcement officers to deploy to Puerto Rico for security missions. Those missions are complete and all officers are back home.
- Last month, 50 Florida Highway Patrol troopers returned from a month-long deployment in Puerto Rico. While in Puerto Rico, these troopers patrolled alongside local law enforcement, helping to maintain security within communities. Troopers also assisted with delivering medical and other supplies to several hospitals and impacted individuals in rural areas.
- The Department of Highway Safety and Motor Vehicles has deployed Florida Licensing on Wheels (FLOW) Mobile to an offsite relief center outside of the Orlando International Airport to provide

credentialing services to impacted customers. In Orlando, one FLOW unit two days a week will be at this location. So far, DHSMV FLOWS have served more than 10,700 customers seeking driver license, ID or motor vehicle services.

- Obtaining a Florida credential (DL or ID) will invalidate any previously-issued credential.
  - Customers who have been displaced by Hurricane Maria are not required to obtain a Florida driver license or ID.
  - Customers with all proper documentation who are displaced by Hurricane Maria and are in temporary lodging or share housing of another person due to loss of housing, economic hardship or a similar reason may obtain a Florida ID at no cost.
  - A non-Florida resident may continue to drive in Florida using their valid driver license.
  - An evacuee who is in possession of a valid Puerto Rican driver license, may obtain a 180-day temporary driving permit at no cost and retain their valid Puerto Rican driver license. Temporary permits will automatically expire following the 180 days.
- 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.

## **HEALTH AND MEDICAL**

- 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 supporting evacuees with gaining access to public health and medical programs including immunizations, prescriptions, WIC, and other programs.
  - DOH is providing education and outreach in Miami and Orlando for Puerto Rican families displaced by Hurricane Maria. DOH is supporting activities at the other locations, including Tampa.
- The State Regulatory Boards of Medicine, Osteopathic Medicine and Nursing have published information regarding expedited licensure online.
- 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.
- Florida Department of Children and Families staff are on site at the Multi-Agency Resource Centers and are actively working to help Puerto Rican families identify what public assistance benefits are available, including Medicaid eligibility. These staff are also providing instructional handouts on how to apply for these benefits.
- The Agency for Persons with Disabilities employees are working with the Multi-Agency Resource Centers to assist individuals with developmental disabilities from Puerto Rico. APD is meeting with families in need to discuss potential services while in Florida.

## **TRANSPORTATION & PUBLIC WORKS**

- FDOT continues to hold regular weekly conference calls with counterparts in Puerto Rico, to provide technical assistance and exchange technical documents.
- Based on assessment of need, FDOT team will provide technical exchange on sustainable Intelligent Transportation Systems (ITS) systems for Puerto Rico.
- Weekly conference calls will continue on the technical review through January.

## **VOLUNTEER FLORIDA**

- FEMA has set up a warehouse in Jacksonville for donations to Puerto Rico. The Seventh Day Adventists are conducting warehouse operations. Volunteer Florida's AmeriCorps members have received training in warehouse operations to support warehouse efforts in Jacksonville.
- American Red Cross is assisting in Puerto Rico with family reunification and helping evacuees in Florida with medications, medical equipment, and health supplies.
- The Salvation Army has sent to 10 semi-trailers of food and water to Puerto Rico with an additional 150 pallets staged to be sent. The Salvation Army is also assisting with clothing vouchers and toys for displaced families.
- Volunteer Florida is working with members of the Florida VOAD (Voluntary Organizations Active in Disaster) to deploy volunteers to Puerto Rico to assist with amateur radio; cell phones, regular phones, the internet and other systems are down or overloaded; amateur radio assist getting important messages through.
- 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 coordinating with Multi-Agency Resource Centers in Orlando and Miami to serve displaced families from Puerto Rico.
- Organizations and services at the Orlando Multi-Agency Resource Center include:
  - American Red Cross is registering families
    - The United Way - providing registration for food assistance, housing assistance, medical needs and referrals to case management for extended needs
    - Latino Leadership, Inc. - providing registration for employment solutions, food banks, and clothing banks
    - Catholic Charities - managing referrals for schooling, medical, health clinics, food pantries, ESL services, and financial assistance
    - The Salvation Army - providing care along with hygiene kits and snacks and baby supplies; it is also providing comfort packages and shelf food packages (3 meals in one box)
    - Shepard's Hope - providing assistance with health insurance and medical needs
    - Second Harvest Food Bank - providing food kits for distribution and assisting with SNAP applications.
    - Florida Legal Services – Assisting evacuees with legal needs
    - Goodwill – assisting with local job search, access to computer, phone, copiers
    - United Way providing Uber vouchers
    - Second Harvest is providing food vouchers
    - Salvation Army is providing clothing vouchers
    - American Red Cross is providing snacks and water
- Organizations and services at the Miami Multi-Agency Resource Center include:
  - The United Way of Miami-Dade - coordinating services for displaced families
  - Red Cross - providing family Reunification and is staffing the comfort station, providing water, snacks, comfort kits and sheltering if needed.
  - Salvation Army - providing emotional and spiritual care along with hygiene kits and snacks and baby supplies, and limited housing
  - Banyan - providing health services, family counseling, and crisis counseling
  - Catholic Charities – providing assistance in accessing food, FEMA referrals, and assistance in accessing shelters
  - Church World Services – assisting with overnight/short-term housing as available
  - Salvation Army – providing bus passes to individuals through the DRC
  - Starbucks had been accepting emergency supplies for Puerto Rico evacuees to be distributed by the Salvation Army

## **BUSINESS AND COMMUNITY SUPPORT**

- The Department of Economic Opportunity (DEO) and the local CareerSource boards have deployed staff to meet evacuees at the Multi-Agency Resource Assistance Centers (MARCs) opened in Miami and Orlando. Staff are on-site to provide information about resources available to assist them in Florida. Assistance has been provided to more than 4,187 individuals.
- On December 11, 2017, Florida Department of Business and Professional Regulation's (DBPR) Secretary Jonathan Zachem issued an Emergency Order continuing the suspension of all fees required for occupational-license applications for residents of Puerto Rico who were displaced by Hurricane Maria. To view the Emergency Order, click [HERE](#).
- The Florida Retail Federation (FRF) is working with the State Emergency Response Team (SERT) and Florida's major retailers to help Puerto Rico retailers' operational status and requests for assistance.
- DEO has approved the release of Disaster Community Services Block Grant (CSBG) funds to provide emergency services such as rent, utilities, food and transportation to disaster survivors including Puerto Rico evacuees. The CSBG Program is administered locally by Community Action Agencies (CAAs).
- CareerSource Centers are providing reemployment and job placement assistance to Puerto Rico evacuees.
- The Florida Restaurant and Lodging Association and VISIT FLORIDA are working with the SERT to identify lodging resources to support Puerto Rico evacuees housing needs in Florida.

## 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.
- Florida school districts have enrolled more than 11,200 displaced students from Puerto Rico and the Virgin Islands.
- On December 29, 2017, DOE issued a memo to school district superintendents confirming graduation requirements for displaced Puerto Rican high school juniors and seniors to earn a Puerto Rico high school diploma while enrolled in a Florida school, if they choose. To view the memo, [CLICK HERE](#).
- On November 17, 2017, Commissioner Stewart sent a letter to Puerto Rico Secretary of Education Julia Keleher in response to requested assistance related to students who have come to Florida from Puerto Rico as juniors and seniors in high school. To view the letter [CLICK HERE](#).
- On November 9, 2017, the U.S. Department of Education announced they plan to award \$2 million in SERV grants to the Florida, Puerto Rico and U.S. Virgin Islands Departments of Education.
- DOE issued a memo to district superintendents regarding an accountability exception for students who qualify as English Language Learners (ELLs) recently arriving from outside the 50 states or the District of Columbia. These students will not be included in the achievement components for the 2017-18 school grades and the school grades calculation will not include these students in the learning gains. To view the memo, [CLICK HERE](#).
- The Commissioner has reauthorized the following waivers remain in effect as long as the underlying Executive Order (17-304) is in effect:
  - At Governor Scott's direction, the Office of Early Learning (OEL) has temporarily waived rules and regulations that will allow Florida's 30 early learning coalitions to enroll Puerto Rican children whose education records are unavailable due to the storm. This will make it easier for young children to continue their early learning education through Florida Voluntary Prekindergarten Program (VPK) and School Readiness Programs. To view the order, click [HERE](#).

- At Governor Scott's direction, the Florida Department of Education (DOE) has temporarily waived rules and regulations that will allow Florida public school districts to enroll Puerto Rican students whose education records are unavailable due to the storm. The Governor also directed DOE to waive the educator certificate application fee and other requirements to help Puerto Rican educators displaced by the storm more easily continue their teaching careers in Florida. Upon receiving a request from a district superintendent, DOE will waive the application fee for an initial educator certificate and will allow the acceptance of an unofficial transcript of teaching degrees or copies of a valid teaching certificate issued by another state or U.S. territory. To view the order, click [HERE](#).
- At the direction of Governor Scott, Commissioner Stewart also signed a supplemental order authorizing state colleges to waive existing rules and other requirements to help Puerto Rican students more quickly enroll in college. At the request of Governor Scott, all 28 Florida College System institutions have agreed to offer in-state tuition to Puerto Rican students who were impacted by Hurricane Maria. To view the order, click [HERE](#).
- DOE has waived statutory and rule requirements related to residency and student records at Florida's 48 technical centers. Additionally, all technical centers are offering displaced Puerto Rican students in-state tuition. To view the final order, click [HERE](#).
- Commissioner Stewart issued a [summary of guidance](#) to all districts and will continue to work with school districts on additional issues as they arise.
- Florida Virtual School will accept 20,000 Puerto Rican students who were displaced by Hurricane Maria to ensure they are able to continue their education. To sign up, contact Liz Chico at (863) 606-8033.
- The Florida Department of Education is working closely with the Puerto Rico Department of Education to help them immediately take advantage of Florida Virtual School's (FLVS) platform and curriculum once internet access is reinstated in Puerto Rico. This will enable Puerto Rican students and educators to continue essential education operations.
- 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 Polytechnic University
  - 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

Governor Scott has also 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. For more information on state response action for Hurricane Maria, visit [www.floridadisaster.org/info/maria](http://www.floridadisaster.org/info/maria).

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