

Puerto Rico Severe Storms and Flooding – FEMA-1798-DR

Declared October 1, 2008

On September 24, 2008, Governor Aníbal Acevedo-Vilà requested a major disaster declaration due to severe storms and flooding beginning on September 21, 2008 and continuing. The Governor requested a declaration for Individual Assistance for eight municipalities and Hazard Mitigation for all municipalities. Beginning on September 22, 2008, joint Federal, State, and local Preliminary Damage Assessments (PDAs) were conducted in the requested counties and are summarized below. PDAs estimate damages immediately after an event and are considered, along with several other factors, in determining whether a disaster is of such severity and magnitude that effective response is beyond the capabilities of the State and the affected local governments, and that Federal assistance is necessary.¹

On October 1, 2008, President Bush declared that a major disaster exists in the Commonwealth of Puerto Rico. This declaration made Individual Assistance requested by the Governor available to affected individuals and households in Guayama, Humacao, Maunabo, Patillas, Ponce, Salinas, Santa Isabel, and Yabucoa Municipalities. This declaration also made the Hazard Mitigation Grant Program assistance requested by the Governor available for hazard mitigation measures for the entire Commonwealth.²

Summary of Damage Assessment Information Used in Determining Whether to Declare a Major Disaster

Individual Assistance

- Total Number of Residences Impacted:³ 2,025
 - Destroyed - 3
 - Major Damage - 1,456
 - Minor Damage - 364
 - Affected - 202
- Percentage of insured residences:⁴ (0%)
- Percentage of low income households:⁵ (85%)
- Percentage of elderly households:⁶ -
- Total Individual Assistance cost estimate: \$43,214,214

Public Assistance - (*Not requested*)

- Primary Impact: -
 - Total Public Assistance cost estimate: -
 - Statewide per capita impact:⁷ -
 - Statewide per capita impact indicator:⁸ \$1.31
 - Countywide per capita impact: -
 - Countywide per capita impact indicator:⁹ \$3.28
-

¹ The preliminary damage assessment (PDA) process is a mechanism used to determine the impact and magnitude of damage and resulting needs of individuals, businesses, public sector, and community as a whole. Information collected is used by the State as a basis for the Governor's request for a major disaster or emergency declaration, and by the President in determining a response to the Governor's request (44 CFR § 206.33).

² When a Governor's request for major disaster assistance under the Robert T. Stafford Disaster Relief and Emergency Assistance Act, as amended (Stafford Act) is under review, a number of primary factors are considered to determine whether assistance is warranted. These factors are outlined in FEMA's regulations (44 CFR § 206.48). The President has ultimate discretion and decision making authority to declare major disasters and emergencies under the Stafford Act (42 U.S.C. § 5170 and § 5191).

³ Degree of damage to impacted residences:

- Destroyed – total loss of structure, structure is not economically feasible to repair, or complete failure to major structural components (e.g., collapse of basement walls/foundation, walls or roof);
- Major Damage – substantial failure to structural elements of residence (e.g., walls, floors, foundation), or damage that will take more than 30 days to repair;
- Minor Damage – home is damaged and uninhabitable, but may be made habitable in short period of time with repairs; and
- Affected – some damage to the structure and contents, but still habitable.

⁴ By law, Federal disaster assistance cannot duplicate insurance coverage (44 CFR § 206.48(b)(5)).

⁵ Special populations, such as low-income, the elderly, or the unemployed may indicate a greater need for assistance (44 CFR § 206.48(b)(3)).

⁶ Ibid (44 CFR § 206.48(b)(3)).

⁷ Based on State population in the 2000 Census.

⁸ Statewide Per Capita Impact Indicator for FY09, *Federal Register*, October 1, 2008.

⁹ Countywide Per Capita Impact Indicator for FY09, *Federal Register*, October 1, 2008.