

National Hurricane Program

Working for Safer Communities

Islands Task Force

With the recent onslaught of major hurricanes directly impacting Puerto Rico, the U.S. Virgin Islands, Guam, Hawaii, and other insular United States territories, the need for the best technical data available for hurricane preparedness is evident. Although some Hurricane Evacuation Study (HES) work has been undertaken for these island communities, still more work needs to be done. For example, evacuation studies conducted in an insular community, both in the Atlantic and Pacific, have generally followed the guidelines developed for mainland studies, since there is currently no written guidance concerning additional or different analysis methods to be employed in island settings.

An Islands Task Force, consisting of representatives from numerous Federal, state, and local partners, met three times in 1998 and 1999, with findings and recommendations published in a summary report (reference appears below). The task force was broken into working groups to examine the following topics:

- HES needs and management
- Wind, waves, and technological advances
- Cultural, behavioral, and sheltering issues, and special populations
- Infrastructure, communications, mitigation, and coordination with response and recovery efforts

The Islands Task Force also examined the following topics in detail and provided specific recommendations for future work:

- Hazards and vulnerability issues (forecasting hurricane position and intensity, wind behavior in complex terrain, storm surge, waves, rainfall and mudslides)
- Public shelter issues
- Behavioral issues
- Transportation issues
- Evacuation decision making tools