RESPONSE EFFORTS

Puerto Rico and the U.S. Virgin Islands have been hit with the worst natural disaster the islands have seen in nearly a century as a result of Hurricanes Irma and Maria. Governor Tom Wolf has called on the federal government to act with greater urgency to assist millions of residents in the American territories facing a humanitarian crisis.

Pennsylvania will stand, as always, ready to provide whatever assistance we can to our friends in need, and will remain vigilant as requests for help come through formal request channels. Through our Response staff and 24/7 Watch and Warning Center, The Pennsylvania Emergency Management Agency (PEMA) is continually monitoring the situation in Puerto Rico and U.S. Virgin Islands and working directly with other state and federal partners to send assistance as it is requested.

To date, Pennsylvania has responded to requests from the federal government through Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA) and the U.S. Forest Service requests. Puerto Rico is still in the very early stages of response and recovery and trying to provide for the basics in life safety for citizens. The Pennsylvania National Guard has sent members and equipment to work with thousands of other National Guard members and first responders onsite to support relief and recovery missions throughout the island. Members of the Pennsylvania Task Force 1 Urban Search and Rescue Team are assisting with incident management. Additionally, members from one of our state agencies are coordinating resources to assist with debris removal. As response and recovery continue, we remain ready to assist with requests for resources.

HOW TO LOCATE FAMILY / HELP THOSE AFFECTED BY HURRICANE MARIA

Find various resources for people who are in Puerto Rico, U.S. Virgin Islands and information here (https://www.usa.gov/hurricane-maria#item-213724) for concerned family members abroad. (Visit this page frequently as USA.gov will continue to update this information.)

How You Can Help
It takes a whole community to recover from a disaster. The most effective means for Pennsylvanians to support recovery of communities affected by Hurricane Maria is to donate time or money to trusted voluntary-, faith- and community-based charitable organizations. It is important to remember unsolicited donated goods (e.g., clothing, miscellaneous household items, mixed or perishable foodstuffs) require voluntary agencies to redirect valuable resources away from providing services to sort, package, transport, warehouse, and distribute items that may not meet the needs of disaster survivors.

The National Voluntary Organizations Active in Disaster (NVOAD) provides a list of trusted organizations receiving financial and in-kind donations, many of which are already coordinating relief and response efforts. You may find the list on the NVOAD website at http://www.nvoad.org.
If you are seeking an opportunity to get involved in response and recovery operations underway it is strongly encouraged to volunteer through local and nationally known organizations. A list of volunteer websites is available at [www.nvoad.org](http://www.nvoad.org).

Officials in Puerto Rico and the U.S. Virgin Islands ask that volunteers not self-deploy, as unexpected arrival in affected communities creates additional burden for first responders. Those who wish to register to volunteer to support response efforts for Hurricane Maria can go [here](https://prvoad.communityos.org/cms/irma) for Puerto Rico and [here](https://usvivoad.communityos.org/cms/irma) for the U.S. Virgin Islands.