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BEFORE
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“FEMA’s Role in Disaster Preparedness and Response to Hurricanes Maria And Harvey”

Submitted by
Federal Emergency Management Agency
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The Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA) is pleased to appear before the U.S. Commission on Civil Rights to discuss FEMA’s role in disaster preparedness and the response to Hurricanes Maria and Harvey.

The Commission’s invitation to FEMA to provide testimony included a number of questions. To ensure that FEMA’s testimony is responsive to the Commission’s specific interests, our testimony is in the form of responses to those specific questions, as follows.

1) To what extent did FEMA’s response to Hurricanes Maria and Harvey comply with the Robert T. Stafford Disaster Relief and Emergency Act (Stafford Act), along with other federal civil rights law and policies?

All states responding to the 2017 hurricanes (and any other Major Disaster Declaration) were required to sign a FEMA State-Agreement which required recipients to comply with the Stafford Act and incorporated the DHS Standard Terms and Conditions for financial assistance, which include requirements that recipients comply with federal civil rights laws and policies, including but not limited to Title VI of the Civil Rights Act of 1964 and the Civil Rights Act of 1968.

2) How was federal funding budgeted for and allocated across natural disasters for the 2017 season?

Individual Assistance:

Calendar Year	DR	State	IHP Amount
2017	4344	CA	\$17,988,120.57
2017	4341	FL	\$9,674.92
2017	4340	VI	\$44,112,249.83
2017	4339	PR	\$1,336,691,744.06
2017	4338	GA	\$13,643,351.67
2017	4337	FL	\$1,020,966,938.16
2017	4336	PR	\$12,950,283.16
2017	4335	VI	\$40,826,320.17
2017	4332	TX	\$1,656,898,380.50
2017	4331	WV	\$2,770,197.73
2017	4326	MI	\$5,217,208.76
2017	4318	AR	\$3,961,671.43

Calendar Year	DR	State	IHP Amount
2017	4317	MO	\$12,527,583.31
2017	4300	LA	\$3,006,480.74
2017	4297	GA	\$2,962,689.95
2017	4295	MS	\$3,338,999.67
2017	4294	GA	\$631,364.39
Total	17		\$4,178,503,259.02

Public Assistance

Event	Number Of Applicants	Number Of PWs Obligated	Federal Share Obligated
Harvey	1,398	6,562	\$2,506,341,969.53
Irma	2,376	10,457	\$2,605,726,212.52
Maria	1,162	8,929	\$27,571,380,708.69
Other Events (full breakout of other DRs in attached excel document)	4,275	10,005	\$2,398,132,345.85
Total CY 2017 Declarations	9,211	35,953	\$35,081,581,236.59

3) How does FEMA plan, coordinate, and execute emergency management in administering hurricane aid relief in collaboration with other federal organizations as well as state, local, and tribal lands?

Disaster response is first and foremost a local effort, with local police, fire and other first responders, as well as voluntary agencies addressing immediate needs when disaster strikes. If an incident is of such magnitude that it is beyond local and state capacity, the governor of the state/territory or the Chief Tribal Executive can request supplemental federal assistance under the Stafford Act. The Stafford Act authorizes the President to issue Major Disaster Declarations or Emergency Declarations to provide aid to states, tribes, and territories (STTs) overwhelmed by disasters.

FEMA is responsible for coordinating the Federal Government's response efforts, including the authority to direct other Federal agencies to provide support. FEMA has

both national and regional personnel at the ready and maintains resources, contracts, and commodities in preparation for deployment. We will pre-deploy personnel and equipment to reduce immediate threats to life, property, and public health and safety, and to improve the timeliness of our response.

In anticipation of, or following a significant incident, a STT may request an Emergency or Major Disaster Declaration from the President through their FEMA Regional Office. For an Emergency Declaration, Preliminary Damage Assessments (PDAs) are not required. For a Major Disaster Declaration, the FEMA Regional Office will deploy staff to conduct PDAs in conjunction with STT representatives to determine the extent of the disaster, its impact on individuals and public facilities, and the types of federal assistance that may be needed.

Under a Major Disaster Declaration, the President may authorize the full array of Stafford Act disaster programs to include Individual Assistance, Public Assistance, and the Hazard Mitigation Grant Program. Stafford Act assistance is intended to be supplemental and, other than housing assistance, it is typically subject to a cost share.

FEMA will submit a recommendation to the President regarding the request for a Declaration based on several factors established in FEMA regulations. Declaration decisions are at the sole discretion of the President. Declaration denials are subject to a one-time appeal, which must be submitted by the Governor within 30 days of the denial.

4) What types of assistance are provided to individuals and what is the trajectory of post-hurricane relief, such as evacuation to safety, temporary shelter, health care, food, clothing, housing, unemployment benefits or training, and rebuilding? Are these provided through individual or block assistance, programs entitling payments, or other programs entitling other relief?

Disaster recovery extends beyond simply repairing damaged structures—it also includes the continuation or restoration of services critical to supporting the physical, emotional, and financial well-being of impacted community members. FEMA is one of many partners that supports survivors and state, local, tribal, and territorial (SLTT) governments in disaster recovery. FEMA’s role is twofold: It provides support through its own statutory authorities and resources while also coordinating the support of federal and non-federal partners to achieve recovery outcomes. In general, FEMA’s operational coordination role becomes increasingly important for larger incidents because there are more available resources that require coordination.

Through Individual Assistance (IA) programs, FEMA provides direct assistance to individuals and households, as well as SLTT governments, to support individual survivors following a disaster. IA programs and services for disaster survivors can include:

- Mass Care and Emergency Assistance
- Individuals and Households Program

- Disaster Case Management
- Crisis Counseling Assistance and Training Program
- Disaster Legal Services
- Disaster Unemployment Assistance
- Voluntary Agency Coordination

When IA is approved, Disaster Survivor Assistance (DSA) may be used to support disaster survivors as the Agency’s “boots on the ground.” DSA focuses on addressing the needs of disproportionately impacted populations and survivors by collecting targeted information to:

- support leadership and operational decision-making;
- provide accessible, in-person, case-specific information and referrals;
- provide referrals to whole community partners as needed; and
- identify accessible information needs to strategically disseminate critical messages.

5) Examining the federal response to Hurricanes Maria and Harvey, to include:

- **Accessibility of requests for aid, and any barriers**

The unprecedented scale, scope, and impacts of the complex combination of hurricanes Harvey, Irma, and Maria and the California Wildfires challenged the capabilities of FEMA and the response community. For example, the concurrent timing and scale of disaster damages nationwide caused shortages in available debris removal contractors and delays in removing disaster debris—a key first step in recovery. Responders faced numerous challenges—such as complex logistics for supplies due to distances from the mainland, and the need to provide several services due to widespread devastation and loss of power and communications infrastructure and capabilities. The extent of this damage also limited access to survivors until access routes and communications lines could be established. Given Puerto Rico’s and the U.S. Virgin Islands’ remote distance from the U.S. mainland, FEMA faced challenges in getting key personnel and resources to the territories before and after the hurricanes made landfall, and with distributing those resources to survivors. Barriers to administering disaster relief in the aftermath of Hurricane Maria also included FEMA’s challenge of not having enough bilingual employees to communicate with local residents or have the ability to translate documents in Spanish.

- **Number of requests for assistance; Number of individuals/households provided assistance**

Disaster Number	Hurricane	Registrations	Valid Registrations	IHP Referrals	IHP Eligible	IHP Amount
4332	HURRICANE HARVEY	895,636	890,938	740,541	373,150	\$1,656,898,380.50
4339	HURRICANE MARIA	1,122,627	1,120,770	894,514	475,314	\$1,336,691,744.06
4340	HURRICANE MARIA	23,294	22,929	19,550	11,701	\$44,112,249.83

- **Any relevant disparities and inequities associated with access to relief aid, including placement and staffing of centers, hot-line staffing, contractor hiring and staffing, and access to appeals procedures.**

There were unprecedented demands for staff to support 2017 disaster operations across the nation, including Harvey, Irma and Maria. FEMA implemented a variety of methods to augment the disaster workforce to ensure that there were no gaps in service delivery or access to available assistance during this time across disasters. This included the expansion of local hires, contract staff, mission assignments, National Processing Service Center surge staff (SWAT), as well as activation of the U.S. Department of Homeland Security (DHS) Surge Capacity Force (SCF).

A breakdown of call center and helpline staff is provided below to demonstrate the volume and categories of staff resources applied to meeting the needs of survivors registering for disaster assistance.

FEMA Managed Agents	
SWAT	507
Reservists	437
Temp Agents	490
Local Hires	1772
SCF	578
Externally Managed Agents	
IRS	2485
Census	175
OC3	3015
Total non-simultaneous augmentation staff onboarded	9459

- **Monetary amount of relief provided, including any demographic and geographic distribution within a disaster declaration area**

Please see response to Question 2. For a full breakout of geographic data by county, declaration, or event please see attached excel document.

- **Any logistical issues in administering disaster relief**

Hurricane Maria devastated Puerto Rico and the U.S. Virgin Islands' fragile critical infrastructure. It was the first Category 4 storm to make landfall on Puerto Rico in 85 years. Following the storm, every airport and port was closed, only 5 percent of the population had access to cell phone service, and the main island was without power, leaving 3.7 million residents without electricity. In addition, the storm disrupted critical supply routes from Puerto Rico to the U.S. Virgin Islands, resulting in the longest sustained air mission to deliver resources in FEMA history.

FEMA coordinated a complex logistics mission for hurricanes Harvey, Irma, and Maria that involved a large volume of commodities— such as water, meals, blankets, cots, sheltering supplies, and tarps—moving across multiple states and territories.

In Puerto Rico and the U.S. Virgin Islands, FEMA encountered significant challenges in coordinating and moving resources due to these territories' geographic distance from the U.S. mainland and challenging on-the-ground conditions. While FEMA maintains a stockpile of commodities in Puerto Rico, the Agency distributed 800,000 total units from Puerto Rico—more than 80 percent of its inventory for these commodities.

The Agency worked extensively with private sector entities, NGOs, and other Federal agencies to procure commodities and then coordinated the use of air and maritime transportation assets to move them. FEMA worked closely with DoD on airlifts; contracted with commercial air carriers; and used its existing maritime shipping contracts to transport resources from the mainland to the territories.

The conditions in Puerto Rico following Hurricane Maria required FEMA to deviate from the logistics model for commodity delivery and distribution. Initially, FEMA faced challenges in moving commodities from ports to other locations. Between the limited FEMA logistics personnel on the island and local contractors—who were also disaster survivors — the Agency could not find enough truck drivers to transport commodities. This issue, coupled with impassable roads, caused delivery delays.

FEMA found alternative methods to facilitate commodity delivery that included working extensively with other Federal partners on island to move food and water to Puerto Rico Regional Staging Areas (RSAs). At the RSAs, commodities were turned over to the Puerto Rico State Guard for further coordination with, and distribution to, the 78 Puerto Rico municipalities. FEMA also partnered with DoD to air drop commodities to isolated communities as early as three days post-Hurricane Maria landfall.

FEMA delivered a historic quantity of 63.6 million (M) meals and 74.1M liters of water to the Commonwealth of Puerto Rico (Commonwealth) government from September 2017 through April 2018.

- **Any types of civil rights complaints received**

Following Hurricane Harvey, FEMA's Office of Equal Rights received 98 allegations of discrimination from disaster survivors and organizations involved in disaster relief efforts. The vast majority -- 96 of the 98 complaints received -- were from individual survivors and members of the public.

The complaints concerned nondiscrimination requirements of several civil rights laws, including:

- Title VI of the Civil Rights Act of 1964, which prohibits discrimination on the basis of race, color or national origin in any program or activity receiving Federal financial assistance;
- Section 308 of the Stafford Act, which prohibits discrimination by FEMA, state, local, tribal, and territorial (SLTT) partners, and non-governmental relief and disaster assistance organizations engaged in the "distribution of supplies, the processing of applications, and other relief and assistance." Specifically, it requires that these activities "be accomplished in an equitable and impartial manner, without discrimination on the grounds of race, color, religion, [national origin], sex, age, disability, English proficiency, or economic status[:]" and
- Section 504 of the Rehabilitation Act, which requires FEMA and its recipients to ensure nondiscrimination for individuals with disabilities by providing equal access to programs, physical accessibility of facilities, effective communication, and reasonable accommodations.

Almost a quarter of allegations received after Hurricane Harvey referred to no underlying civil rights or nondiscrimination authority as the survivor did not identify a protected basis. However, the majority of allegations received did identify a protected basis and some identified multiple bases. The most common basis was race, followed by economic status and disability. Other bases included national origin, sex or gender, English proficiency, religion, sexual harassment, and age.

The vast majority of allegations received were closed without the filing of a civil rights complaint (96/98). These matters were closed based on the resolution achieved in coordination with Individual Assistance and other program areas (if applicable). The two (2) complaints that were filed and investigated were ultimately resolved.

In addition, FEMA received an additional civil rights concern, in the form of a Short Form Information Request from the Office for Civil Right and Civil Liberties (CRCL) at DHS. The Short Form was related to a complaint alleging disparate resource allocation by FEMA following Hurricane Harvey. Specifically, a non-governmental organization alleged that a predominately black neighborhood was

provided only one FEMA trailer despite the city's determination that many homes in the neighborhood were "substantially damaged," and there appeared to be little reconstruction work underway.

Conversely, a predominately white, more affluent nearby city "was bustling with contractors gutting and repairing houses," and had copious FEMA temporary housing trailers. The Office of Equal Rights and FEMA responded to the Short Form with written information and by providing FEMA witnesses for interviews. As a result, CRCL closed the complaint because it was unable to substantiate the allegations.

The processing of civil rights complaints is only one part of the work that was done. The Office of Equal Rights Cadre of Reservists also deployed civil rights leads, advisors and specialists during Hurricane Harvey. Prior to Hurricane Harvey, the Office of Equal Rights Cadre deployed during disasters with an 80% focus on the internal, employment-related civil rights concerns and the remaining 20% focused on survivor based Civil Rights matters. During Hurricane Harvey to the present, the Office of Equal Rights operational focus has dramatically changed. The Office of Equal Rights was reorganized to create an External Civil Rights Division to oversee external civil rights functions, including policy, training, complaints processing, compliance reviews, and community outreach. In addition, the previously known Equal Rights Cadre was rebranded and organized as the Civil Rights Cadre, enhancing all external facing civil rights compliance and enforcement responsibilities.

During the response recovery to Hurricane Maria, FEMA's Office of Equal Rights Civil Rights Division received 155 allegations of discrimination from disaster survivors, members of the public, and organizations involved in disaster relief efforts.

The vast majority -- 153 of the 155 complaints received -- were from individual survivors and/or members of the public.

Less than 30% of the allegations received after Hurricane Maria referred to no underlying civil rights or nondiscrimination authority as the survivor did not identify a protected basis. However, the majority of allegations received did identify a protected basis and some identified multiple bases. The most common bases were economic status, race, and disability. Other bases included national origin, sex or gender, English proficiency, religion, sexual harassment, and age.

The allegations received were resolved at the lowest level (inquiry) without the filing of a civil rights complaint (153/155). These matters were closed based on the resolution achieved in coordination with Individual Assistance and other program areas (if applicable). The two (2) complaints that were filed and investigated remain open and are pending the implementation of resolution.

DHS CRCL conducted listening tours in Puerto Rico and can be contacted to provide additional information regarding their findings.

The processing of civil rights complaints is only one aspect of the responsibilities of civil rights compliance and enforcement work done at disasters. The Office of Equal Rights Cadre of Reservists, currently known as the External Civil Rights Division Civil Rights Cadre, also deployed civil rights leads, advisors, physical accessibility specialists, civil rights specialists and civil rights sign language interpreters during Hurricane Maria while also engaging in the activation of Surge Capacity Force and Local Hiring.

The Civil Rights Cadre's footprint in Hurricane Maria has an ongoing presence of a team of 15 initially locally hired civil rights employees. At the start of the recovery response to Hurricane Maria, the Cadre provided a community assessment to leadership identifying communities high on the CDC's Social Vulnerability Index for incorporation in strategic planning.

As part of its responsibilities, the OER deployed staff to provide facilitated training for Disaster Case Managers and operational leadership to ensure clear understanding of civil rights responsibilities in delivering programs across FEMA. In addition, the Cadre staff published the Civil Rights Notice and process to request reasonable accommodations in applicable languages at every facility while working with External Affairs to ensure all program content be translated into required languages for survivors and applicants. The team has had engagement and participation in over 1,000 speaker bureau activities held in communities across the island throughout the 78 municipalities to ensure community outreach.

6) What challenges, if any, did federal agencies face in working with state and local governments and private sector responses to these disasters?

Initial Response

In 2017, the four sequential disasters—Hurricanes Harvey, Irma, Maria, and the California wildfires—created an unprecedented demand for federal disaster response and recovery resources. Limited preparedness by the U.S. Virgin Islands and Puerto Rico for a Category 5 hurricane and incapacitation of local response functions due to widespread devastation and loss of power and communications led FEMA to assume response functions that territories would usually perform themselves. According to the National Disaster Recovery Framework, local governments have the primary role in preparing for and managing the response and recovery of their communities, including leading pre-disaster recovery and mitigation planning efforts. However, FEMA essentially served as the first responder in the early response efforts in Puerto Rico.

FEMA officials noted that many services they provided—such as power restoration, debris removal, and commodity distribution—are typically provided by territorial or local governments. Federal, state, and local officials also faced additional challenges. In addition to finding temporary housing for disaster survivors given the extensive damage to available housing in each location, locating accommodations for the nearly 15,000 federal government employees—including military personnel—deployed to assist in response activities became a major challenge.

At the height of the response to Hurricanes Harvey, Irma, Maria and California wildfires, FEMA upscaled response operations, quintupling the number of incident management (IM) staff in the field within 60 days of Hurricane Harvey’s landfall, expanding from 2,800 to 10,400 deployed staff. To supplement Agency staff, FEMA requested the activation of the Department of Homeland Security (DHS) Surge Capacity Force (SCF) that ultimately provided over 3,000 additional staff to the field for 2017 response operations. FEMA leveraged partners in nontraditional ways to meet the accessibility and staffing challenges pervasive in the operation, such as leveraging Urban Search and Rescue to deliver food and check hospital capacities and capabilities. In addition to SCF partners, FEMA relied on the Department of Defense (DoD) and DHS to assist in air dropping food and water in otherwise inaccessible areas.

Recovery:

- Consistently, competing priorities at the various levels of state and local governments has been a challenge for federal agencies, delaying utilization of federal aid and resources.
- Existing financial environment (bankruptcy) and limited capacity/experience to manage large amounts of new federal funding complicates recovery.
- Decentralized communications structures and high turnover of federal, private contract support, including COR3, and territory/local government staff proved challenging for federal agencies in outreach efforts, resulting in duplicative efforts and multiple applications for recovery assistance.
- Implementing federal programs for disaster recovery outside the scope of the Stafford Act challenged the coordination and application of all available federal funding schemes for disaster recovery; the national Recovery Support Function Leadership Group (RSFLG) has taken this as a lesson learned and has worked with federal partners to develop Resource Roadmaps, highlighting all federal resources available for COVID-19 recovery, and will continue to promote coordination at this level for future recovery operations.
- At present FEMA and the Community Planning and Capacity Building Recovery Support Function (CPCB RSF) offers technical assistance (TA) to support development of recovery plans and building of capability in low capacity/high impact communities, but only if supported and requested by the state government. States can face challenges in ability/willingness to accept this support, thereby limiting assistance options for potentially low capacity or underserved communities. FEMA does not offer this assistance directly to localities.

- In Texas, the CPCB recommended TA for multiple localities, but ultimately due to challenges at the state level, limited capacity support was offered in coordination with TDEM.
- In Puerto Rico, FEMA offered extensive support through the Homeland Security Operations Analysis Center/RAND to assist the Commonwealth to develop its Transformation and Innovation in the Wake of Devastation: an Economic and Disaster Recovery Plan for Puerto Rico. Additionally, CPCB supported a limited local recovery consultation and planning process supported through the Government of Puerto Rico and the Foundation of PR.

7) What is the status of ongoing rebuilding efforts in Puerto Rico and the Houston area?

Puerto Rico

FEMA and its federal partners continue to provide historic-level support to the government of Puerto Rico in its ongoing recovery from Hurricane Maria, the earthquakes, and COVID-19. We are rebuilding large parts of the island, supporting the government's plans to restore essential services, rebuild large parts of the island, and enable resilience to withstand future hazards.

As of June 14, 2021, over \$24.5 billion had been obligated for over 7,955 recovery projects. As of June 7, eighty-four percent of the projects (HM 406) we have processed have funds for hazard mitigation, such as roof waterproofing, hurricane windproof windows and doors, etc. Similarly, FEMA provides funds under the Hazard Mitigation Grant Program (HMGP 404), which totals over \$84.7 million (as of June 7, 2021). With the collaboration of the Puerto Rico government and the Central Office for Recovery, Reconstruction and Resiliency (COR3), we expect to complete all project inspections for Maria this month. Also, we expect to obligate all remaining Public Assistance projects for Hurricane Maria this year.

Houston Area

Statewide:

- FEMA estimates the total Harvey recovery effort at approximately \$3.3 billion.
- Since Recovery efforts began, FEMA has obligated a total of \$2.49 billion federal share for Public Assistance.
- Out of more than 19,000 projects open since the date of declaration, 509 projects remain open with an estimated federal share of \$690.7 million.

Applicants in Harris County (excluding City of Houston):

- Harris County area applicants started with 6,805 projects. FEMA has obligated 6,334 projects totaling \$1.89 billion.
- Included in the projects obligated to date are: Houston Community College, Houston Habitat for Humanity, Inc., Houston Hospice, Houston Housing Authority, and University of Houston, for a combined total over \$29 million.

- The remaining 160 projects for Harris County applicants are the most complex and time consuming.

City of Houston (applicant):

- The City of Houston recovery includes 152 obligated projects totaling over \$388 million in federal funding, 26 projects remain open.

8) What is known about any permanent displacement of residents?

Houston Area:

In response to Hurricane Harvey (DR-4332), FEMA provided more than \$1.6 billion in grant funding to more than 373,000 individuals and households through the IHP program. This assistance included initial rental assistance for 143,539 applicants and continued rental assistance for 2,723 applicants who had needed assistance beyond the first two months. FEMA also provided \$121 million in financial assistance to applicants with immediate or critical needs because they were displaced from their primary dwelling. Immediate or critical needs are life-saving and life-sustaining items including, but not limited to: water, food, first aid, prescriptions, infant formula, diapers, consumable medical supplies, durable medical equipment, personal hygiene items and fuel for transportation. Finally, FEMA provided temporary direct housing to approximately 3,512 households.

Hurricane Harvey peak shelter population was 42,399 in 258 congregate shelters. All congregate shelters closed on October 27, 2017, 63 days after landfall. On August 27, 2017, FEMA approved Transitional Sheltering Assistance (TSA) with a peak population of 24,454 households. All households were transitioned out of TSA by June 30, 2018.

FEMA supported Hurricane Harvey feeding operations by procuring and delivering over \$62.8M of shelf stable meals from October 2017 through February 2018 to meet short term feeding shortfalls. This effort was in addition to meals and snacks provided by Voluntary Organizations Active in Disaster.

Puerto Rico:

During the implementation of the TSA program, survivors who met eligibility criteria stayed in participating hotels throughout the nation. Some applicants opted to stay in the continental U.S. Some survivors wanted to return to Puerto Rico and the Transportation Assistance Program was activated. FEMA provided transportation assistance to survivors in the TSA program who were checked into hotels in the continental U.S. on May 3. Through Transportation Assistance, FEMA provided payments directly to airlines to cover the cost of airfare, and up to \$100 in luggage costs per household member and pet fees. As of September 14, 2018, a total of 592 individuals have concluded travel back to Puerto Rico using the Transportation Assistance. Both the TSA and Transportation programs ended on September 14, 2018 for a total federal cost of \$22.6 million.

9) Has the COVID-19 pandemic impacted any of these efforts?

Houston Area:

FEMA quickly pivoted to nearly full-time remote work due to the COVID-19 pandemic. Public Assistance has continued to assist applicants in their Recovery and obligate funds during the pandemic.

Puerto Rico:

Despite the challenges of COVID-19, 2020 was an unprecedented year in terms of the number of projects that were allocated funds. 4,983 projects were approved in 2020. The achievements made in the number of obligated projects in 2020 largely result from the operations, structure, and expertise developed locally by FEMA during 2019. Recovery operations immediately transitioned to full telework status to ensure continuity across all areas. While site inspections were delayed at the beginning of the pandemic, they resumed once government offices began reopening. A total of 5,673 site inspections for Hurricane Maria projects were performed during 2020, helping to move recovery forward and maintain a steady rhythm of funding obligations. In terms of Individual Assistance, as the programs had closed prior to the pandemic, the only impact was a delayed financial closeout. On the other hand, the establishment of 27 long-term recovery groups (LTRG), a collaborative effort with the Puerto Rico VOAD, was delayed due to the pandemic and virtual coordination was adopted. Over 2,806 organizations have been contacted to provide messaging on the importance of being part of the LTRGs.

We would be pleased to answer any additional questions that you have regarding FEMA's role in disaster preparedness and response to Hurricanes Maria and Harvey.