

**Questions for the Record to William B. “Brock” Long  
Administrator  
Federal Emergency Management Agency**

**Submitted by Ranking Member Elijah E. Cummings  
Committee on Oversight and Government Reform**

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**Communications with the White House Regarding the Hurricanes**

1. Before Hurricane Irma hit the U.S. Virgin Islands and Puerto Rico, did you brief President Trump or other White House officials on the agency’s preparedness for the hurricane?
  - a. If so, when did each briefing occur? What was communicated? Was the briefing(s) in person or via telephone?
    - i. Please list all persons present for these briefings, including their full names and titles.
    - ii. Were there any specific issues or concerns raised during these briefings by White House officials or the President? If so, what were they?
    - iii. Please identify and provide all documents in your possession or in the possession of officials in the Administrator’s office relating or referring to these briefings.
2. Before Hurricane Maria hit the U.S. Virgin Islands and Puerto Rico, did you brief President Trump or other White House officials on the agency’s preparedness for the hurricane?
  - a. If so, when did each briefing occur? What was communicated? Was the briefing(s) in person or via telephone?
    - i. Please list all persons present for these briefings, including their full names and titles.
    - ii. Were there any specific issues or concerns raised during these briefings by White House officials or the President? If so, what were they?
    - iii. Please identify and provide all documents in your possession or in the possession of officials in the Administrator’s office relating or referring to these briefings.
3. As Hurricane Irma was striking the Caribbean region, how frequently were you briefing the President or other White House officials regarding its impact?

- a. Please list all persons present for each briefing, each person's full name and title, whether the briefing was conducted over the phone, through email, or in person, and provide any materials or documents relating to the briefing.
4. As Hurricane Maria was striking the Caribbean region, how frequently were you briefing the President or other White House officials regarding its impact?
  - a. Please list all persons present for each briefing, whether the briefing was conducted over the phone, through email, or in person, and provide any materials or documents relating to the briefing.
5. After Hurricane Irma hit the U.S. Virgin Islands on September 6, 2017, when did the President contact you to get information about its impact on the territory? Were you contacted by any other White House official? If so, by who, and when were you contacted?
  - a. What were the specific questions and concerns the President and/or White House official had about the hurricane's impact?
  - b. Please provide all documents in your possession or in the possession of the Administrator's office relating or referring to these communications.
6. After Hurricane Maria hit on September 20, 2017, when did the President contact you to get information about its impact on the region? Were you contacted by any other White House official? If so, by who, and when were you contacted?
  - a. What were the specific questions and concerns the President and/or White House official had about the hurricane's impact?
  - b. Please provide all documents in your possession or in the possession of officials in the Administrator's office relating or referring to these communications.

### **Recovery Lags in Vieques**

During the hearing on November 29, 2018, I asked you about an email sent from an individual who seemed to be on the ground on the island of Vieques in Puerto Rico to Mike Byrne, the FEMA official leading recovery in Puerto Rico. This email was also directed to you by a second individual later in the email chain. I am enclosing a copy of this email exchange.

7. Did you inform President Trump about the conditions in Vieques once you received this email?
  - a. If yes, when? What was his response?
  - b. If no, why not? Did you ever brief the President specifically on recovery issues in Vieques? If so, please provide the date and location of these briefings.

8. After receiving this email, did you take any action to help recovery efforts in Vieques?
  - a. If yes, what did you do? When did it happen? Who else was involved?
  - b. Are you aware of Mike Byrne taking any steps to address the issues raised in the email? If so, what specific steps did he take? When was each step taken?
9. According to a NBC News article dated November 3, 2018, the island of Vieques is still entirely run on generators. Is this still the case? Does the federal government have a plan to support restoring power on the island?

### **Contracting Issues Post-Hurricane**

10. How many contracts were cancelled due to vendor default by FEMA in relation to disaster response and recovery from September 2017 to the present date? Please provide the name of the company that defaulted, the contracted good and/or service, and the value of the contract for each.

On November 26, 2018, the New York Times reported that a program financed by FEMA funds had issues with potential contractor waste. According to the article, “the amounts for labor and materials that were paid to the people who actually performed the work were only about 40 percent of what FEMA was assessed.” The cause of the exorbitant amounts FEMA was assessed were due to “a succession of intermediary contractors passing along costs and profits along the way.”

11. What role is FEMA playing to limit the number of subcontractors hired by the contractor in order to decrease these costs?
  - a. Please provide the Committee with a copy of all invoices paid with FEMA funds to the Tu Hogar Renace program.
  - b. Please provide the Committee with a list of all FEMA contractors hired by the Department of Housing in Puerto Rico to perform repairs as a part of the Tu Hogar Renace program.

### **Requests for Emergency Fuel by Food Retailers**

On March 20, 2018, Rep. Plaskett and I released email exchanges regarding Walmart’s attempt to obtain emergency fuel from FEMA for their generators to keep desperately needed food from spoiling. Unfortunately, the fuel was never delivered, and tons of food spoiled. I am enclosing a copy of the letter sent to Chairman Gowdy on this issue.

12. Please list all grocery stores and retail stores that made a request for fuel to FEMA from September 20, 2017, through October 4, 2017. For each request, please explain why the fuel requested was not given to the store.

13. On September 27, 2017, according to the documents obtained by our Committee and quoted in our letter, Governor Rosselló made a request to John Rabin, the then-Acting Regional Administrator for Region II for FEMA, for FEMA to “deliver fuel to all grocery and large retail immediately” due to an “immediate threat to public health and safety.”
- a. After the Governor’s request, did FEMA deliver any fuel to grocery stores or large retail stores?
    - i. If yes, what grocery or retail stores received the fuel? What dates did they receive the fuel? How much fuel was obtained from each delivery?
    - ii. If no, why didn’t grocery or retail stores receive fuel even after the Governor made a request of FEMA?
14. Please identify and provide all other emergency requests from the private sector that were made to FEMA, including requests for medical supplies, transportation for critical goods, and other requests for emergency fuel. Please also identify whether the request was fulfilled by FEMA (including the date of fulfillment and the exact amount of goods/services provided), and if not fulfilled, the reason the request was not fulfilled.

### **Food Shortages**

15. On September 19, 2017, the day before Hurricane Maria struck Puerto Rico, how many meals were pre-positioned in Puerto Rico?
- a. Please list the location of these meals as well as how many meals were at each location.
16. After Hurricane Maria hit, when was the first delivery of meals to Puerto Rico?
- a. Please identify each date that emergency meals were delivered, the city the emergency meals were delivered to, and the number of meals delivered from September 20, 2017, to December 1, 2017.
17. When did FEMA request that the Department of Defense (DOD) begin air drops of critical supplies, like food and water? After the request was made, when did DOD begin performing these air drops?
- a. Why did FEMA not request this support from DOD earlier?
18. When did you become aware that there were significant food shortages in Puerto Rico in the aftermath of Hurricane Maria?

19. Did you inform President Trump about the food shortage in Puerto Rico following Hurricane Maria? If yes, when, and how did the President respond? If not, why did you not inform the President?

- a. Please list any other White House officials with whom you discussed the food shortage. Please include their full names, titles, the dates you discussed the food shortage issue, and their responses. Please provide any documents related to these communications.

20. Did President Trump ever ask you if FEMA was able to provide enough food to feed the survivors in Puerto Rico? What about the U.S. Virgin Islands? If yes to either, please provide the date, the question(s) asked, your response, and any documents related to the conversation.

### **Factoring in Climate Change to FEMA's Planning for Natural Disasters**

Last month, the Trump Administration released the fourth National Climate Assessment, which found that climate change could lead to more and stronger hurricanes in the Caribbean region.

21. Do you agree with the scientific experts who developed the National Climate Assessment –that climate change will increase both the number and strength of hurricanes?

I am concerned with recent reporting that FEMA has eliminated any reference to climate change in the agency's strategic plan for 2018-2020.

22. What specific steps is FEMA taking to factor in the effects of climate change as FEMA prepares for future natural disasters?

### **Providing Safe Water to Hurricane Victims**

23. How many liters of bottled water were pre-positioned in Puerto Rico on September 19, 2017, the day before Hurricane Maria made landfall?

- a. Please identify the locations of the bottled water and the amount in each location.

24. After Hurricane Maria made landfall on September 20, 2017, when was the first delivery of bottled water to Puerto Rico? How much was delivered? To what city?

- a. By September 27, 2017, how many liters of water had been delivered to Puerto Rico?

25. Please identify all contracts FEMA used to pre-position water in the Caribbean before Hurricane Maria. Please include the name of the vendor, how many liters of water were contracted for, and whether there was any issue with delivery under these contracts.

26. Did FEMA enter into post-disaster contracts for water with vendors located on the island?
- a. If yes, how many liters of water were contracted for? Please identify each company to which FEMA awarded a contract.
27. Did FEMA enter into any post-disaster contracts for water with vendors located outside of Puerto Rico?
- a. If yes, what companies? What were the amounts of these contracts? Did any company not deliver all of the water contracted for? If yes, please identify the name of the company and the reason all water was not delivered per contract requirements.
28. How does FEMA identify a water shortage in an area post-hurricane?
29. Was there a water shortage in Puerto Rico or the U.S. Virgin Islands after the hurricanes?
- a. If yes, please identify the time frame for when the water shortage occurred and how long the water shortage lasted.

### **Potential Water Contamination**

In September of this year, numerous news outlets reported that FEMA had possibly millions of water bottles stored on a runway in Ceiba, Puerto Rico.

30. There are serious health concerns with drinking water that has been stored outside. Why did FEMA not store this water at an indoor location? How long was this bottled water stored outside? Please provide a list of the dates of delivery of water to this location, how long each delivery was stored outside, the dates on which the water was distributed, and who received the water.
31. Was FEMA aware of the health concerns with distributing water that has been stored outside? Please provide the Committee with all communications related to the decision to store this water at an outside facility.
32. Please provide the Committee with a detailed list of the intended destinations of this water.
33. A CBS News article dated September 13, 2018, states that local mayors who received the water complained that the water had a “taste and odor.” Ottmar Chávez, who serves as the GSA Administrator for Puerto Rico, stated that he was in contact with FEMA to have the water tested. Was the water ever tested? By whom? What was the result?

- a. What is the status of the water today? How many bottles of water are remaining on the runway in Ceiba, Puerto Rico? What happened to the bottles that have been removed from this location since the September reports?
- 34. Was there an attempt by GSA to sell bottled water, at this location or another location, that had been stored outside? Did FEMA attempt to sell water that had been stored outside?
  - a. If yes to either of the above questions, when was the attempted sale made? Who was the buyer?
  - b. Did FEMA know that the water was contaminated?

The Committee has obtained a copy of a Senior Leadership Briefing and Recovery Snapshot dated October 13, 2017, which states that, “EPA tested 177 public water systems in St. Croix; 32 of 47 systems that tested positive for E. Coli in remediation process.”

- 35. At the time of this Senior Leadership Briefing and Recovery Snapshot, what was the status of the 15 other water systems that were not in the remediation process?
- 36. In total, by what date were all water systems in Puerto Rico and the U.S. Virgin Islands tested?
  - a. How many total tested positive for E. Coli?
  - b. How was the public notified during this time, when most communications on the island were still down, that the water system had tested positive for E. coli?
  - c. By what date was E. Coli cleared from the water system?

#### **Failed Communications in the Immediate Days after the Hurricanes**

Jeffrey Parks, a key member of Joint Task Force Katrina, submitted a statement for the record that has been included in the official record for this hearing. Mr. Parks stated that he arrived in Puerto Rico on September 30, 2017, and stayed for ten days. In Mr. Parks’ statement for the record, he concluded that the lack of communications in the aftermath of Hurricane Maria was “the single largest response failure.”

- 37. Do you agree with Mr. Parks? If not, why not?
- 38. What plan did FEMA have to ensure that emergency communications were restored with minimal disruption following Hurricane Maria? Please provide this Committee with a copy of your plan.
- 39. What role did the President and his senior staff have in planning for or coordinating the emergency communications response to the hurricanes?

- a. Please identify and provide records relating to all briefings, meetings, and correspondences in which you discussed with the President and/or his senior staff issues related to communications in Puerto Rico and U.S. Virgin Islands after the hurricanes.
40. My staff has been informed that some of the mayors in Puerto Rico were not provided a working satellite phone after Hurricane Maria. Was this an issue you were aware of?
- a. If yes, when did you become aware? How did you become aware? What actions did you take to resolve the issue and when were those actions taken?

**Implementation of Lessons Learned from 2017 Hurricane Season**

41. Did FEMA have a plan in place at the beginning of September 2017 to respond to more than one catastrophic hurricane in the Caribbean? Does FEMA currently have a plan in place to respond to more than one catastrophic hurricane in the Caribbean? If so, please provide a copy of the plan to the Committee.
42. In FEMA's After-Action report, one of the key findings was that the agency suffered from "staffing shortages across incidents."
- a. How many positions are understaffed currently at FEMA?
  - b. Does FEMA have a plan to fill these vacancies? If so, please share this plan with the Committee.
43. The After-Action report states that FEMA should "increase FEMA readiness stock outside the continental United States."
- a. What specific steps has FEMA taken to increase readiness stocks in Puerto Rico?
    - i. What specific steps has FEMA taken to increase readiness stock in the U.S. Virgin Islands?
44. The After-Action report also states that FEMA "should work with its key partners to develop a more comprehensive understanding of local, regional, and national supply chains."
- a. How many meetings has FEMA had with private, local companies and members of the community in Puerto Rico and the U.S. Virgin Islands to help reach this goal?
  - b. What has FEMA learned from these meetings, and how is the information learned to be incorporated into the agency's disaster planning?



### **Gaps in the Federal Response in U.S. Virgin Islands**

During the hearing, Rep. Plaskett submitted a statement for the record from Meghan Enright, a resident of St. John who works for Love City Strong, a non-governmental organization in the U.S. Virgin Islands (USVI).

45. In her statement, Ms. Enright wrote that FEMA was “very slow coming” to the island. How many FEMA personnel were pre-positioned in the USVI before Hurricane Maria? Before Hurricane Irma?

- a. Please provide the Committee with the amount of critical supplies on the USVI on September 19, 2017, before Hurricane Maria, and September 6, 2017, before Hurricane Irma.

In March of this year, my staff had phone calls with Randy Lavasseur, the Caribbean Group Superintendent for the National Park Service, regarding his role in response efforts on the island of St. John. Mr. Lavasseur represented to Committee staff that his agency acted as first-responders on the island after Hurricane Irma.

46. Why were there not more FEMA personnel on the island in the immediate days after Hurricane Irma struck?

47. What efforts has your agency made to ensure that FEMA hires minority contractors, subcontractors, and laborers?

48. Please provide the Committee with a breakdown of how many contractors of color have bid on FEMA contract solicitations for response and recovery in the Caribbean region and how many have been awarded contracts.

**Questions for the Record to William B. “Brock” Long  
Administrator  
Federal Emergency Management Agency**

**Submitted by Ranking Member Stacey Plaskett  
Subcommittee on the Interior, Energy, and Environment  
Committee on Oversight and Government Reform**

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*Waiving Cost Share*

1. Why has FEMA decided not to exercise its clear authority under the Insular Areas Act to waive non-federal cost sharing for public assistance permanent work in the Virgin Islands, such as under Category F (Utilities)?

*Disaster Housing*

2. The Disaster Recovery Reform Act, signed into law last month, allows state, territorial, and tribal governments to use federal assistance to directly administer FEMA’s permanent housing program for 2017 disaster victims. Will this allow the use by local governments of FEMA funding for permanent housing construction in lieu of other funding like Community Development Block Grants?
3. FEMA’s experiment of shifting responsibility for disaster housing recovery to the states has been a failure, as outlined in a recent GAO report. At what point will FEMA reconsider the use of a Disaster Housing Assistance Program (D-HAP) like what was put in place after Hurricane Katrina to respond to the needs of displaced households? What factors/criteria will prompt a change in position?

*Resiliency*

4. The resiliency provision in the Bipartisan Budget Act for the U.S. Virgin Islands and Puerto Rico allows the islands to rebuild infrastructure without regard to pre-disaster conditions using public assistance program alternative procedures. This applies to infrastructure providing “critical services.” Will FEMA interpret critical services to include infrastructure like roads and public housing? Will FEMA otherwise support eligibility of infrastructure like roads and public housing for this additional assistance?

**Questions for the Record to William B. “Brock” Long  
Administrator  
Federal Emergency Management Agency**

**Submitted by Representative Nydia Velázquez  
U.S. House of Representatives**

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1. On October 22, 2018, FEMA wrote that it had originally placed 35 FEMA generators in the municipality of Vieques and that 24 of those had been de-installed while 11 remained in place. In addition, FEMA indicated that its protocol is to remove generators after power is “restored and stable.” However, on November 28, 2018, there were reports that classes in Vieques were being cancelled because schools did not have power and that residents and businesses had not had power for most of the prior two weeks due to maintenance being done by FEMA on their generators. Why would FEMA remove a generator—even to service it—without replacing it when such practice would leave residents without power?
2. To its credit, FEMA finally approved in August 2018 a sample Sworn Declaration to address the complex nature of home ownership in Puerto Rico when a survivor applies for assistance. However, FEMA has not distributed this Sworn Declaration to those applicants who were previously denied assistance based on unverified ownership and appears to rely on local legal aid groups to do it. Will FEMA commit to notifying all survivors previously denied assistance because of title issues that they can reapply using the new Sworn Declaration?
3. How is FEMA tracking the denials of assistance eligibility because the applicant could not provide a title verifying ownership of the home? How many applicants were denied for lack of proper title?
4. What controls are you implementing to ensure that FEMA funds will primarily be used to repair houses as opposed to funding steep markups as recently reported by the New York Times?
5. The slow response in helping the people of Puerto Rico post-Hurricane Maria was contributed to by the fact that there were little supplies on the ground (tarps, water, food, etc.) because of the relocation of resources due to Hurricane Irma. What has been done to rectify that? Do you have sufficient supplies in Puerto Rico now to cover another hurricane in Puerto Rico? What steps has FEMA taken to ensure that municipalities are aware of the inventory and how they can access it during an emergency?
6. With the change in official death count, is FEMA contacting those survivors who were previously denied funeral assistance to re-submit appropriate documentation (e.g. revised death certificate)?

7. Assistant Department of Energy Secretary Bruce Walker has testified that rebuilding efforts in Puerto Rico should look to make local infrastructure more resilient. Congress encouraged that approach by waiving the "pre-disaster conditions" requirement under the Stafford Act in the recent Bipartisan Budget Act. Are FEMA's contracting practices guided by this principle of making the local infrastructure more resilient? Can you provide some examples as to how FEMA is fixing the infrastructure in a way that is better than "pre-disaster conditions"?
8. We were informed that some Puerto Rican mayors have expressed their discontent about FEMA's lack of reimbursements in Categories A and B under FEMA's Public Assistance program. What can be done to expedite these reimbursements?
9. What was communication like between FEMA and the White House after Hurricane Maria? Were there any specific directives, instructions, or comments made from the White House to FEMA leadership concerning the administration of aid in Puerto Rico?
10. Why wasn't Michael Byrne, a seasoned disaster relief expert, originally assigned to oversee the Hurricane Maria response?