



Source: FEMA

### FAST FACTS

- Hurricane Fiona made landfall in Puerto Rico on Sunday, September 18 as a Category 1 hurricane, dropping as much as 32 inches of rain in some areas.
- More than 1 million Puerto Ricans remain without power; more than 35% of customers have no running water.
- About 1,000 people have been rescued from their homes, and 93 shelters are open to house those displaced by the storm.
- Hurricane Fiona has developed into a Category 4 storm, with maximum sustained winds of about 130 mph, as it approaches the island of Bermuda.

Hurricane Fiona made landfall on Puerto Rico on Sunday, September 18, with maximum sustained winds of 85 mph and torrential rain—nearly five years to the day after Hurricane Maria devastated the island. More than 1 million customers remain without power as of Wednesday morning, while more than 35% of households lack access to water as severe flooding has impacted filtration plants.<sup>1</sup> On Wednesday, President Biden approved a major disaster declaration for Puerto Rico, releasing additional federal funds for the response.<sup>2</sup>

After strengthening from a tropical storm to a Category 1 hurricane on Sunday, Fiona dropped as much as 32 inches of rain in some regions of Puerto Rico before tracking westward toward the Dominican Republic.<sup>3</sup> As floodwaters rose on Sunday and Monday, emergency responders rescued about 1,000 people across Puerto Rico.<sup>4</sup> Four people on the island have been killed, according to FEMA.<sup>5</sup>

Our Team Lead in Puerto Rico reports that every corner of the island has been heavily affected by Fiona, and that record rainfall and landslides caused massive damage to infrastructure and widespread flooding, leaving communities across the island without access to basic necessities such as shelter, clean water, electricity and healthcare. Another team member, who lives in the western inland town of Utuado (where a bridge built after Hurricane Maria was swept away by high flood waters on Sunday), has reported that the town is inaccessible, and that municipal government and emergency teams are working to restore access.

In addition to power and water outages, internet and mobile phone reception is weak, making communication challenging. In the heavily affected southern portion of the island, many families are still displaced from the 2020 earthquakes, placing them at greater risk from the impact of this weekend's storm.

As of Wednesday morning, 93 shelters were open in response to the storm and are currently housing 1,077 occupants.<sup>6</sup> All hospitals on the island are operational, with 53 of them running on generator power.<sup>7</sup>

<sup>1</sup> <https://www.preps.pr.gov/>

<sup>2</sup> <https://www.fema.gov/press-release/20220921/president-joseph-r-biden-jr-approves-major-disaster-declaration-puerto-rico>

<sup>3</sup> <https://time.com/6215211/how-to-help-puerto-rico-hurricane-fiona/>

<sup>4</sup> <https://www.washingtonpost.com/nation/2022/09/19/hurricane-fiona-puerto-rico-live-updates/>

<sup>5</sup> <https://disastercenter.com/FEMA%20Daily%20Ops%20Briefing%2009-21-2022.pdf>

<sup>6</sup> <https://disastercenter.com/FEMA%20Daily%20Ops%20Briefing%2009-21-2022.pdf>

<sup>7</sup> <https://disastercenter.com/FEMA%20Daily%20Ops%20Briefing%2009-21-2022.pdf>

## **International Medical Corps Response**

International Medical Corps, which has been working in Puerto Rico since Hurricane Maria in 2017, is now deploying an emergency team, along with critical relief supplies to support response efforts. Our team is working closely with the Department of Health, state officials, and local hospitals, health facilities and organizations to support response efforts.

Assessments are underway across the island, but conditions remain dangerous due to debris, flooding and the threat of additional landslides. Hospital partners are operational, but rainwater and flooding have significantly damaged equipment. In addition, COVID-19 remains a significant concern, with positivity rates hovering near 20%.

International Medical Corps is supporting recovery efforts across the island, focusing on ensuring that healthcare facilities can reopen their doors and maintain normal hours of operations. Today, teams have started assessments and begun distributing portable vaccine cold-chain equipment and other critical supplies. Many of our partner organizations have reported that they are still without electricity and water, and are able to continue operations only through use of generators and water cisterns. Some have reported an increased volume of patients since the hurricane. Partners have reported an immediate need for clinical supplies such as hygiene kits and thermometers, personal protective equipment, medical equipment, including wheelchairs and defibrillators, and other necessities, including blankets and drinking water, which we are now working to procure and distribute.

Needs will include hygiene kits, tarps and other critical supplies; energy sources and/or other equipment to keep health facilities operational; mobile health services, including mental health care; ongoing COVID-19 response support; and medical surge staffing.

International Medical Corps will continue to conduct awareness sessions in Puerto Rico focused on mental health and psychosocial support for healthcare personnel and communities coping with the loss and uncertainty caused by repeated disasters. As conditions ease, our teams also will continue to implement nutrition activities that educate parents, caregivers and children on the correct management of food in times of crisis, and counseling on breastfeeding and infant and young-child feeding (IYCF) practices for new and expectant mothers.

The resilience of communities has been significantly strained due to repetitive losses suffered by families because of multiple disasters over the last several years. Continued investment in mental health services will be required as Puerto Rico once again comes together to recover and rebuild.

## **International Medical Corps in Puerto Rico**

International Medical Corps has been supporting long-term recovery efforts in Puerto Rico since two Category 5 hurricanes, Irma and Maria, struck the island in 2017. When earthquakes shook the island in January 2020, our San Juan-based team responded quickly, providing critical sanitation, hygiene, nutrition and mental health awareness sessions. Within two months, COVID-19 had spread to the island, exacerbating needs among those already vulnerable to healthcare interruptions or experiencing the mental health effects that accompany repeated disasters and ongoing stress and uncertainty. International Medical Corps has continued to provide essential relief supplies, strengthening health facilities so that they can treat COVID-19 patients and provide vaccinations, and training local first responders and community leaders.