



Puerto Rico Earthquake

Situation Report #1

January 7, 2020

Situation Update

At 3:24am local time on January 7, 2020 a 6.4 magnitude earthquake struck approximately 10mi south-southwest of Ponce, Puerto Rico (population: 145,000) on the southern coast of the island and 60mi south of San Juan. According to the U.S. Geological Survey (USGS), the earthquake occurred at a depth of 6mi. A tsunami alert was issued for Puerto Rico and the U.S. Virgin Islands but was later cancelled. The Governor of Puerto Rico has declared a State of Emergency and activated the National Guard.

The earthquake comes after several smaller earthquakes beginning yesterday, the most powerful of which was a 5.8 magnitude earthquake on January 6 at 6:30am in the same general area as this morning's earthquake. Fifteen significant aftershocks have occurred in the affected areas. The earthquakes are all occurring along the Lajas Valley, Montalva Point and the Guayanilla Canyon fault lines.

The reported damage is localized near the epicenter, with unconfirmed reports of trauma injuries in several of the affected towns and cities and one media-reported death in Ponce due to falling debris. Three hospitals in the region, Damas Hospital and Hospital Metropolitano Dr. Pila in Ponce and Hospital Pavía in Yuaco, were damaged by the earthquake. Damas and Pavía have taken preventative evacuations due to risk from structures adjacent to the hospitals, though FEMA reports only one hospital has been evacuated.

Quick Facts

- 6.4m earthquake struck the southern coast of Puerto Rico
- Widespread reports of damage to infrastructure
- Power remains out throughout the island
- Three hospitals in the south of the island suffered damage causing evacuations
- Reports of trauma related injuries
- Aftershocks continue to impact the area.

While one health clinic in Ponce is closed due to slight structural damages and generator challenges, many clinics remain open.

There are early reports of widespread structural damage to roads, buildings and bridges in several areas along the southern portion of the island including the towns of Guánica, Guayanilla, Ponce and Yauco. Schools throughout the island have been closed for the week to allow for structural inspections. Puerto Rican authorities have also temporarily shut off power throughout the island, including in San Juan, following damage to one of the island's main power plants. Some of the impacted areas in the south lost power following yesterday's 5.8m earthquake. Two shelters are now open and housing upwards of 300 individuals.

San Juan's Luis Muñoz Marín International Airport (SJU) is operating off backup generators but is otherwise operating at normally. Damage assessments are ongoing throughout the region and information is coming in more slowly as the power remains out.

Project HOPE's Response

Project HOPE has been operating continuously in Puerto Rico since Hurricane Maria in 2017. Our team on the ground is currently assessing the situation, bringing needed resources and supplies to affected populations. HOPE is in contact with local government and health authorities, including the Puerto Rican Department of Health and the Ponce Emergency Response Manager among other key local leadership. HOPE is also coordinating with fellow NGOs to determine needs and next steps. Our previous emergency preparedness programming on the island is already assisting people who require cold storage for their medicines in the midst of this emergency and the subsequent loss of power.

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