



Puerto Rico Earthquake

Situation Report #2

January 10, 2020

As aftershocks continue to impact Puerto Rico, shelter populations are increasing quickly. The rapid growth has also led to the development of unofficial shelters which severely lack resources, as populations stay outdoors fearing the structural integrity of their homes if they remain standing. Meanwhile, the Puerto Rican Power Authority reports that it may take up to a year to restore stable electrical power to parts of the island.¹

Many Shelters Lack Needed Resources

Since Tuesday, the number of people residing in shelters has grown significantly. Some of the designated shelters in Ponce, such as Auditorio Juan Pachin Vicens, have sustained structural damage and the interiors cannot be used. The official shelter in Ponce which held approximately 380 people Wednesday night is now believed to hold more than 500 people. At many of the shelters the population is growing in the evenings, as people are afraid to sleep in their homes, opting instead to sleep at the shelters, outdoors, or in their cars. Bathroom capacity has been increased, but limited shower and

Quick Facts

- Shelter populations have increased, with some shelters exceeding capacity as locals fear returning home
- Unofficial shelters have developed, which lack basic hygiene and medical resources
- The power may remain out in impacted areas for months, increasing demand for cold-chain storage for medications
- Aftershocks continue, with ongoing concerns for structural integrity

hygiene facilities are available. The military has established medical clinics and fellow NGOs have begun mental health support programs. The Ponce shelter is researching how long the local population will require shelter support before returning to their homes. This process may be slow due to a shortage of structural engineers capable of inspecting the stability of local structures.

In addition to the official shelters, several unofficial shelters have been established at the community level in open fields and parking lots. These shelters do not have the same resources as the official shelters, lacking medical services, hygiene facilities, and other coordinated response activities. Local government contacts have acknowledged the need for support at the unofficial shelters, including WASH, public health and medical services.

Medical professionals in the area report significant needs for insulin and cold-chain storage mechanisms to help maintain the diabetes care regimens of the local population. Our team reports seeing insulin storage on ice, which can reduce the effectiveness causing hyperglycemia. Tdap vaccines have also been requested in response to the large number of low-level injuries due to debris and the potential for infection. There are concerns for possible spread of illnesses like conjunctivitis due to the overcrowding and lack of hygiene supplies and services. In Guayanilla, many pharmacies remain closed, limiting access to medication.

Project HOPE's Response

During our initial assessments, Project HOPE distributed cold storage bags and trained medical professionals and patients on their use for insulin and other medication requiring refrigeration. To date our team has distributed 219 cold-storage bags at 9 locations. Project HOPE is also sending 2000 hygiene kits directly to Ponce to be distributed to shelter populations. The kits will provide families with soap, toothpaste and other hygiene items that will reduce the potential for the spread of disease and help maintain basic health. We are in coordination with other NGO's and partners to support deployment of a mobile solar power station for use at unofficial shelters. Project HOPE will launch a mobile health screening program at the unofficial shelters over the weekend to support local health infrastructure and address the surge in need.

SOURCES

1. <https://www.cbsnews.com/news/puerto-rico-earthquake-costa-sur-power-plant-severely-damaged-hindering-efforts-to-restore-power-to-island/>

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