

## **Disaster Housing Recovery for Vulnerable Populations Webinar**

The following questions were submitted during this webinar. We've compiled the questions and answers from the presenters for your reference.

- How many hospitals in Puerto Rico are fully operational? What is FEMA's budget? How many HUD employees are dedicated to California's fires?
  - It is our understanding that all hospitals are “operational”, but that may not mean they are operating at pre-disaster levels. Many have lost equipment as well as staff. Others, like the one in Culebra (<https://nydn.us/2DIIYno>), are still operating on generators – so ‘fully operational’ should not be construed as fully functioning.
- What is the bill number Marion mentioned?
  - Bill H.R. 4557
- Can anything be done to get FEMA to the table to discuss their lack of action?
  - Numerous letters have been sent to FEMA by members of Congress (both house and Senate), nearly all by Democratic members. To date, many of those letters have either gone unanswered, or been responded to unsatisfactorily. Some examples here (<https://bit.ly/2Kd0eAI>) and here (<https://bit.ly/2OHEygF>) and here (<https://bit.ly/2MJT1Jc>). Congress must call FEMA Administrator Brock Long and HUD Secretary Ben Carson to hearings and hold them accountable.
- What was the reason for the delay of FEMA trailers arriving after Hurricane Michael?
  - We see recurring delays in providing temporary housing after disasters because of bureaucracy and FEMA’s efforts to shift the responsibility for disaster recovery onto state and local governments, regardless of whether the state/local governments have the capacity. In this case, FEMA said that they were unable to move forward with providing temporary housing assistance at all, until the state submitted a formal request with the specific details on the type/amount of temporary housing that was needed. It took 3 weeks for the state to submit a request for assistance and for FEMA to approve it. Another 3 weeks have passed since then. FEMA is scheduled to put down the first trailers next week – 6 weeks after the storm hit. FEMA needs to be preparing in advance of storms to ensure that temporary housing is available immediately after a disaster.
- Leslie Powell-Boudreaux spoke about how domestic violence survivors are forced to relocate but have no place to go after disasters. What other groups are at a heightened risk of vulnerability and violence?
  - Farmworkers, low-income renters, homeless, undocumented workers, and the disabled.
- What's the difference between DHAP and currently available FEMA rental assistance? Is DHAP targeted on people who aren't eligible for FEMA rental assistance?

- Here are factsheets comparing DHAP with other FEMA rental assistance programs: <https://bit.ly/2TkgEvk>, <https://bit.ly/2FAb1q2>, and <https://bit.ly/2Tj2ydC>
- Do you have examples of case studies or best practices from communities that have incorporated equity and reversing institutional racism into their process for deployment of FEMA and CDBG-DR resources? Who is doing it right?
  - Since last December we have been advocating in the Hill about the inefficiency of FEMA attending to Puerto Rico's recovery. Together with OXFAM we presented to the Committee on Homeland Security and other congress staff the issues faced, and suggested to them to look into USAID for effective models of disaster relief intervention, specifically the way they from the outset create a grid-system-type of workgroups where ALL entities (not only government or government-identified) working for disaster relief convene to make clear who is doing what and how to best get things done. It is not efficient, and I think all of us in the call would agree, to rely entirely on local governments as FEMA usually does. It is necessary to involve from the outset and give importance to civil society institutions.
- What is the nature of the complaints about the home repair program in Puerto Rico? (Your Home Reborn program)
  - There are many complaints about the repairs being completely inadequate (ex. doors and windows installed that are smaller than the size of the door/window space, materials that break instantly, half finished work that leaves electric cables exposed, etc). Complaints on the contractors have been presented even by the employees, who allege about contractors making them inflate the estimates/prices of the repairs, not paying them and bad treatment due to race/ethnic discrimination. The FBI is even investigating some of the contractors. The PR Housing Department opened a complaint system, and the lawyers we funded have worked with victims helping them submit these types of complains.