Subject: Hurricane Maria Approaching USVI & Puerto Rico - WE NEED YOU!
Importance: High

DISASTER DIVISION STAFFS AND REGIONAL DISASTER OFFICERS: PLEASE SHARE WITH YOUR STAFFS, VOLUNTEERS, AND COLLEAGUES

Colleagues – We are actively and urgently recruiting teams to deploy to the U.S. Virgin Islands and Puerto Rico as soon as possible following the imminent landfall there of Hurricane Maria, which is now a Category 4 storm with the potential to be a Category 5—the most dangerous—by landfall on Wednesday.  If you’re interested and able to operate in prolonged, austere conditions (no power, substantial damage, MREs, little sleep, no creature comforts), we need you.  Please contact disasterstaffingcenter@redcross.org (on the cc line above).

We presently have a team of 59 Red Crossers who will ride out Maria on USVI (led by Laura Hevesi) and 100+ Red Cross staff and volunteers who will do the same on Puerto Rico (led by Keith Alvey). As you can see below, Maria is an extremely large and dangerous major hurricane currently approaching the Leeward Islands.

One of the reasons we’re appealing for your help is that 2017 is fast becoming one of the most notorious Hurricane Seasons on record—and we still have more than one-third of the season remaining.  As of Monday, 13 named storms, seven hurricanes, and four major (Category 3 or stronger) hurricanes had formed in the 2017 Atlantic hurricane season.  Over the past 25 days:

   Hurricane Harvey made landfall in Rockport, Texas on August 25th as a Category 4 storm inundating the Southeast portion of the Lone Star with up to 52 inches of rain, which caused extensive river flooding driving a peak shelter population of over 42,000 people.  Three weeks after impact, we still have over 4,000 clients in 24 shelters and tens of thousands of Texans remain displaced due to extensive damage.
   12 days later on September 6th, Hurricane Irma struck St Thomas and St John in the USVI and Puerto Rico as an extremely powerful Category 5 Hurricane causing widespread and catastrophic damage in USVI with at least 12 inches of rain and 185 MPH winds.  USVI suffered considerable structural damage, including the destruction of the electrical infrastructure on St Thomas and St John.
   Then, Hurricane Irma made landfall 4 days later, on September 10th in Cudjoe Key, Florida as a Category 4 Hurricane.  The shelter population in Florida grew to over 225,000 people—the largest evacuation in Florida’s history—as Irma barreled up the West Coast of Florida turning parts of Monroe, Lee, Collier, and Highland Counties into scenes from a war zone and shutting down power to more than 80% of the State.  Irma then drove on into Georgia, South Carolina, and Alabama.  A week later, we still have over 4,000 clients in shelters in Florida and Georgia, and much of the Keys remains without power and strewn with debris.
   As we approach Wednesday, September 20th, Hurricane Jose is threatening New England with storm surge and tropical storm force winds, while at the same time, Hurricane Maria is forecast to make devastating landfalls on St Thomas and Puerto Rico.
And, while it’s still too early to call, many long-range forecasts have Hurricane Maria making landfall again next week somewhere along the Eastern Seaboard of the United States.
Here are Hurricanes Jose and Maria this afternoon:
<https://media.npr.org/assets/img/2017/09/18/satellit-maria_wide-c86944e788ffcdc50353a8cac00a46c3635ea4de.jpg?s=6>
Since August 23rd, we’ve made over 9,000 assignments to at least 12 Disaster Relief Operations in 13 States and Territories, not including our nationwide response to the historic eclipse on August 21st and our ongoing responses to multiple wildfires in the West.  We are incredibly grateful to the volunteers and staff who have answered the call to date—together, we’ve helped literally hundreds of thousands of people faced with catastrophic loss in the past month.
As you know, the intensive level of disaster activity required postponement of our critically important Sound the Alarm Campaign and Readiness Initiatives.  So, this is all hands on deck, folks.  We really need you.

Thanks,
Brad

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