



GOVERNOR OF PUERTO RICO
Pedro R. Pierluisi

**REQUEST FOR PRESIDENTIAL DISASTER DECLARATION
COVER LETTER
MAJOR DISASTER OR EMERGENCY**

September 20, 2022

The Honorable Joseph R. Biden
President of the United States
The White House
Washington, D. C.

Through: Regional Administrator David Warrington
FEMA Region II
One World Trade Center
52 Floor, New York, 10007

Dear Mr. President:

Under the provisions of Section 401 of the Robert T. Stafford Disaster Relief and Emergency Assistance Act, 42 U.S.C. §§ 5121-5207 (Stafford Act), and implemented by 44 CFR § 206.36, Emergency citation (206.35), I request that you issue an expedited major disaster declaration for the Commonwealth of Puerto Rico because of the damages caused by Hurricane Fiona throughout Puerto Rico during September 17th of 2022 and still ongoing.

On September 17th, 2022, the Government of Puerto Rico submitted a Request for Presidential Emergency Declaration, under the provisions of Section 501 of the Robert T. Stafford Disaster Relief and Emergency Assistance Act, 42 U.S.C. §§ 5121-5207 (Stafford Act), and implemented by 44 CFR § 206.35. The following day, you promptly issued the emergency declaration for Tropical Storm Fiona (FEMA-3583-EM), consequently authorizing the Department of Homeland Security, Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA), to provide appropriate assistance for required emergency protective measures under Title V of the Stafford Act, to save lives and to protect property, public health and safety, or to lessen or avert the threat of a catastrophe in the designated areas. Specifically, FEMA authorized to

provide emergency protective measures (Category B), including direct federal assistance, for all 78 municipalities in the Commonwealth of Puerto Rico under the Public Assistance program at 75 percent federal funding.

As Governor of Puerto Rico, I, Pedro R. Pierluisi, issued a declaration of State of Emergency on the 17th of September for the 78 municipalities on the Island through Executive Order No. 2022-045. Furthermore, I issued Executive Order No. 2022-046, activating the Puerto Rico National Guard to provide assistance during the emergency declared due to the impending passing of tropical storm Fiona, then Hurricane Fiona, through the Island. I also issued Executive Order No. 2022-047 for the purpose of prohibiting the sale of alcoholic beverages due to the state of emergency caused by the passage of Hurricane Fiona to help keep the people of Puerto Rico out of harm's way. And I issued Executive Order No. 2022-048, for the purpose of granting immunity to physicians, osteopaths, physician assistants, medical professionals, and nurse assisting the government during the emergency declared in light of the passage of hurricane Fiona.

On September 18th, 2022, Tropical Storm Fiona strengthened into a hurricane category 1, as it was making landfall over Puerto Rico. The magnitude of Hurricane Fiona has caused unprecedented catastrophic floodings, mudslides, a complete blackout and subsequent power outages. The land debris and affected bodies of water, such as lakes, rivers, and ravines, plus the impacted public infrastructure, businesses, and residences across the entire island of Puerto Rico, has resulted in significant, catastrophic-level damages and economic losses.

In addition, Puerto Rico is still recovering from the effects of Hurricane Irma (DR-4336), Hurricane María (DR-4339), Earthquakes (DR-4473) and COVID-19 (DR-4493). As a result of the foregoing, the expected severe damages from Hurricane Fiona, and the forecasted magnitude of the atmospheric event, an effective response to the storm is beyond the current capabilities of Puerto Rico and its dependencies. Consequently, the Government of Puerto Rico and its dependencies require supplementary federal assistance.

Specifically, Mr. President, I request the activation of Individual Assistance Programs, including, but not limited to, Individuals and Households Programs, Direct Federal Assistance and Public Assistance, Emergency Works categories A and B and Permanent Works Categories C through G, and Hazard Mitigation Grants Island wide. We anticipate the possibility of having unmet emergency needs that could be met through Direct Federal Assistance (DFA) in order to save lives and protect property, public health and safety, and to lessen or avert the current threat.

I also request you consider increasing the federal cost share to one hundred (100%) percent Federal Share for thirty (30) days for DFAs missions and after that, ninety (90%) percent Federal Share for all Public Assistance categories of work to the extent allowed by applicable statutory, regulatory or administrative authority.

In execution of the State Emergency Plan, I have directed the focus on the emergency response and stabilization in order to save lives, protect property, public health and safety. Simultaneously, we will begin preparations to perform the necessary preliminary damage assessments (PDA's) to further support this expedited request.

Hurricane Fiona's magnitude could further complicate Puerto Rico's recovery from Hurricanes Irma and María in 2017, as well as from the 2019-2020 earthquakes. Thus, the requested assistance is crucial to lessen that storm's impact on the ongoing recovery efforts. The Government of Puerto Rico is committed to recovering from the damages this natural disaster has caused, to which we have already expended substantial resources. However, without the assistance of federal government, the local communities will be unable to recover effectively and efficiently.

During the passage of the Hurricane Fiona, Puerto Rico has received rain amounting up to 29 inches in the central and southern eastern parts of the Island, and up to 16 inches in the northern areas, as it bordered the southwestern tip of Puerto Rico. Because of its size, it affected all municipalities of Puerto Rico with heavy rains and catastrophic floods, mudslides, and landslides. Fiona affected Puerto Rico with hurricane winds of up to 103 miles per hour in the south and tropical storm winds of up to 65 miles per hour through the north, moving slowly at 8 miles per hour. Consequently, the effects of winds and heavy rains of the hurricane caused the catastrophic floodings, affecting the hardest in rural low-income and agricultural communities. Due to those catastrophic flash floods, several rivers flowed out of their banks, causing damage to over 128 public roads and dozens of bridges and structures, as well as residences throughout the Island.

The accumulated flood level was up to 10 feet of water. Due to such levels of flooding, mass evacuations missions had to be carried out in communities in the municipalities of Añasco, Loíza, Dorado, Toa Alta, Yabucoa and Salinas. Precisely in Salinas, the combination of the accumulation of rains and the storm surge caused an emergency evacuation for hundreds of families. We still have over 400 people and over 100 pets in shelters in this municipality. Similar situations like the aforementioned, arose in many other municipalities. As a result, 2,198 citizens and their pets had to seek refuge in 116 shelters throughout the island.

As of September 19th, four fatalities have been reported due in part to Hurricane Fiona's wrath. A dozen cases have been reported of injuries because of

catastrophic floods and landslides and over 82 operations of search and rescue have been conducted. Also, 35 missions from the Puerto Rico National Guard have been completed.

Mr. President, in summary we request the activation of Individual Assistance Programs, Direct Federal Assistance, all Public Assistance Categories, and Hazard Mitigation Grants islandwide through an expedited Major Disaster Declaration. I do so in order to save lives and to protect the property, public health and safety of the American citizens of Puerto Rico.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read "Pedro Pierluisi".

Enclosures

OMB No. 1660-0009/FEMA Form 010-0-13

A: Individual Assistance

B: Public Assistance

C: Requirements for Other Federal Agency Programs

D: Historic and Current Snowfall Data

ENCLOSURE A TO MAJOR DISASTER REQUEST

Estimated Requirements for Individual Assistance under the Stafford Act

Enclose Individual Assistance Joint Preliminary Damage Assessment Cost Estimate Worksheets

ENCLOSURE B TO MAJOR DISASTER REQUEST

Estimated Stafford Act Requirements for Public Assistance

Enclose Public Assistance Preliminary Damage Assessment Cost Estimate Worksheet

At this early moment of the response phase, I don't have a complete assessment and estimated costs to be addressed with Public Assistance Program.

ENCLOSURE C TO MAJOR DISASTER REQUEST

Estimated Assistance from Other Federal Agency Programs.

At this early moment of the response phase, I don't have confirmation of the Assistance from OFA.

Note: Provide numbers and amounts, as appropriate.

ENCLOSURE D TO MAJOR DISASTER REQUEST

Does not apply to Puerto Rico.

Note: Provide National Weather Service statement.