



Preparedness



Response



Recovery



Mitigation

## FEMA Sheltering and Temporary Essential Power (STEP)

Puerto Rico Department of Housing (PRDOH)



**Prime Contractor:**  
Tidal Basin



**Project Dates:**  
January 2018 to  
June 2019



**Allocation:**  
\$1.7 billion

### Project Overview

In September 2017, Hurricanes Irma and Maria caused catastrophic and widespread damage to the Island of Puerto Rico. Hurricane Maria, a Category 5 storm with 150 mph winds, struck just two weeks after Hurricane Irma and left Puerto Rico with a 100% power outage, nearly 100% loss of telecommunications, and severe damage to the island's infrastructure. Tens of thousands of homes were damaged or destroyed, creating an immediate need for sheltering.

[tidalbasingroup.com](http://tidalbasingroup.com)

**Be  
stronger  
than  
before**

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## Challenge

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Hurricane Maria was the third most costly Atlantic hurricane in history, causing \$91.6 billion dollars in damage. All 78 municipalities on the island of Puerto Rico suffered some type of damage, ranging from flooding and collapsed structures to almost total decimation. An estimated 75,504 homes were affected, leaving most of the impacted residents in shelters, displaced, or living in the rubble of their former homes. Many challenges existed due to the damage caused by Maria and Irma, some of which came to light after the damages were assessed.

### Issues

- Homes previously repaired by the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers Blue Roof program were not allowed to receive any roof repairs under STEP, and many had developed leaks and other issues.
- FEMA DRCs were opened and closed through a rotating schedule that surged to over 80 locations needing STEP representatives present to provide intake services for applicants.
- FEMA representatives required the verification of homeowner insurance despite STEP repairs being temporary.

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## Solution

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Tidal Basin worked with the PRDOH to develop a strategic plan that commenced the project in less than five days. At the peak of the Puerto Rico STEP project, our team employed and contracted more than 1,500 people on the island. In a single 72-hour weekend, the recruiting team interviewed and hired more than 700 people from a variety of backgrounds – doctors, lawyers, teachers, hotel managers; people who were out of work and willing to do whatever was needed to help rebuild their community. Our team of experts, some of whom speak fluent Spanish, trained and supported the staff throughout the project's duration. The program was

established within nine months, and Tidal Basin successfully closed out the project within 15 months.

The program manager petitioned FEMA to allow homes into the program to undergo roof repairs (e.g., crack, and puddling repairs, elastomeric sealing, and coating). Tidal Basin DRC intake and eligibility managers coordinated surge staffing needs around the entire island to accommodate the increased need for DRCs and requested clarification from FEMA regarding the requirement of insurance.



Maria caused more than  
**\$91B**  
in damage



All of Puerto Rico's  
**78**  
municipalities were affected



We hired more than  
**700**  
people in 72 hours

## Resilience Delivered

**Tidal Basin collaborated with the Department of Housing to create a work plan and strategy that launched the project in less than five days.**

### Outreach

Tidal Basin performed outreach using local media with unified communication messages outlining the overall program. All communications were in English and Spanish to accommodate all residents and applicants. We coordinated with state representatives, the media, and local officials during the outreach phase.

### Call Center Management

Our team completed status reports for call centers, disaster recovery centers (DRC), and outreach programs. We coordinated with the FEMA disaster recovery branch director for Puerto Rico, distributing resources where high volumes of applicants reside. The call centers were staffed with residents, and they provided information to applicants and assisted with the eligibility process. The call centers managed hundreds of calls daily, all of which were recorded and documented.

### Housing Program

Tidal Basin designed and enacted a proprietary system that processed all functions of the program, including intake and eligibility of applicants, housing inspections, contractor billing, agency reviews and audits, and project closeout. The program, implemented in Spanish and English, was fully auditable in real time by the client, FEMA, and the office of the Inspector General.

Our team managed the administration and reporting related to the system that tracked inspections and construction, call center data input, QA/QC, and registration and eligibility verification of 215,000 program applicants. We set forth procedural protocols necessary for appeal determinations, developed case management, and special case solutions, and coordinated with the department's legal teams, who were responsible for establishing the eligibility and approval processes. In addition, we were also responsible for overseeing the documentation integrity required for reimbursement under the program. Our efforts enabled essential repairs to be made to homes across Puerto Rico and surrounding islands.



### Project by the Numbers

<b>215,000</b>	Residents reached
<b>122,000</b>	Applicants
<b>108,000</b>	Repaired homes
<b>15,154</b>	Home inspections conducted in peak week
<b>700</b>	People interviewed, hired and trained
<b>1,100</b>	Trained staff for outreach and intake
<b>9 Months</b>	Program Implementation
<b>15 Months</b>	Program closeout
<b>5 Days</b>	Program startup