

VAU.S. Department
of Veterans Affairs

News Release

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(202) 461-7600
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VA Providing Support to Veterans in Puerto Rico & the U.S. Virgin Islands in Aftermath of Hurricanes Irma and Maria

WASHINGTON — In the aftermath of hurricanes Irma and Maria, the Department of Veterans Affairs (VA) announced today that it continues to provide vital health care and other support to displaced Veterans in Puerto Rico and the U.S. Virgin Islands (USVI).

In Puerto Rico where electricity was knocked out by Hurricane Maria, the San Juan VA Medical Center (VAMC) — currently operating on generator power and staffed by 800 employees — is providing health care for 338 inpatients, with primary care and mental health services available for walk-in patients.

“We have been in constant contact with VA Caribbean Healthcare System leadership in San Juan and are sending relief resources to the VA Medical Center as soon as possible through available transportation assets,” said VA Press Secretary Curt Cashour. “Along with hurricane-hardened construction standards, the San Juan VAMC has enough fuel, water and other supplies to last at least seven days, if not more.”

Since Hurricane Maria also damaged communication systems, such as cellular phone towers and telephone landlines, VA officials have been monitoring the [VA Caribbean Facebook page](#), and responding to family requests for status of both patients and staff.

Meanwhile, all community clinics, including Vet Centers in Puerto Rico and USVI, have been closed until further notice. Patients with appointments will be contacted as soon as possible to reschedule. Veterans Benefits Administration offices are also closed. VA national cemeteries in Puerto Rico are also temporarily closed.

VA is also coordinating standby personnel to deploy in the event they are needed, along with mobile shelters for use as sleeping quarters, as well as mobile medical units, which can be used to augment medical services in the area.

VA teams will begin damage assessments as soon as it is safe to do so and travel routes are clear. Once assessments are complete, officials will share information about when VA clinics will be operational.

The following resources are available for Veterans and employees impacted by the hurricanes:

- VA Employee Accountability hotline for staff to report their status and safety: 866-233-0152
- VISN 8 TelCare 24/7 hotline to assist Veterans with health-care advice and information, to include facility status updates and emergency prescription refill information: 877-741-3400
- Current operating status of VA Caribbean Healthcare System: <https://www.caribbean.va.gov/emergency/index.asp>
- Get more information about the VA Caribbean Healthcare System at <https://www.caribbean.va.gov/> or on its Facebook page at: <https://www.facebook.com/VACaribbean>
- VA’s blog with information on VA facilities and services impacted by hurricanes Irma and Maria: <http://www.blogs.va.gov/VAntage/hurricane-irma/>.

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