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HURRICANE MARIA UPDATE

BRIDGETOWN, Barbados (19 Sept, 2017) - The eye of Hurricane Maria passed over the **Commonwealth of Dominica** last night and into the early hours of this morning.

Even while it was still impacting, Dominica Prime Minister Roosevelt Skerrit posted the following:

“Initial reports are of widespread devastation. So far we have lost all what money can buy and replace. My greatest fear for the morning is that we will wake to news of serious physical injury and possible deaths as a result of likely landslides triggered by persistent rains.

So, far the winds have swept away the roofs of almost every person I have spoken to or otherwise made contact with. The roof to my own official residence was among the first to go and this apparently triggered an avalanche of torn away roofs in the city and the countryside. Come tomorrow morning we will hit the road, as soon as the all clear is given, in search of the injured and those trapped in the rubble.

I am honestly not preoccupied with physical damage at this time, because it is devastating...indeed, mind boggling. My focus now is in rescuing the trapped and securing medical assistance for the injured.

We will need help, my friend, we will need help of all kinds. It is too early to speak of the condition of the air and seaports, but I suspect both will be inoperable for a few days. That is why I am eager now to solicit the support of friendly nations and organisations with helicopter services, for I personally am eager to get up and get around the country to see and determine what's needed.”

There has been no updates since, and efforts to reach the island have so far been unsuccessful.

This morning, the government of Trinidad and Tobago announced it would offer assistance to Dominica.

“The **Government of Trinidad and Tobago** is mobilizing to send assistance to the Commonwealth of Dominica. Currently coordination is taking place under the leadership of the Office of the Prime Minister, Ministry of National Security and the Ministry of Foreign and Caricom Affairs.

It is envisaged that as soon as it is safe, a National Helicopter Services Limited helicopter will be sent to Dominica with Trinidad and Tobago Defence Force personnel.

The Trinidad and Tobago Coast Guard is also preparing to send a supply vessel and to take Defence Force personnel as well as supplies up to Dominica.

Later today further announcements will be made as to where the public can drop off goods and supplies to be transported to assist the citizens of Dominica.”

The **Puerto Rico Tourism Company (PRTC)** has also issued a statement encouraging all industry stakeholders to finish all emergency preparations as soon as possible and safeguard the lives of all staff members and guests. The path of Hurricane María directly over Puerto Rico is imminent and will be a dangerous incident, the PRTC said in the following advisory:

Airport & Airline Information:

Airports

- The San Juan International Airport remains open. AEROSTAR is maintaining regular operations until 7:00 pm.
- The airport is expected to reopen on Thursday once damages are assessed.
- A meeting will be held at 10:00am today (Tuesday morning), with airlines and agencies involved. Operations schedule and updates will be communicated throughout the day.

Airlines

- Each airline defines its flight schedule today and potential cancellations.
- Contact airlines' 1-800 numbers or website for information for flight status and arrangements.
- Travelers without flight arrangements should not head over to the airport, and should instead call the airlines to confirm travel.

Important Note for Hotels

- Note that airport and major airlines will continue to operate flights weather permitting. Last minute cancelations are expected as Hurricane María approaches. We ask that all lodging partners consider that travelers whose flights are canceled at the last minute, and have recently checked out, will need to quickly return to safety.
- To lessen the possibility of having to handle tourists or visitors without lodging arrangements, we strongly encourage you to allow guests that will be checking out today, to promptly check in again if flight cancelations are experienced.

- If your property can enact this policy, please inform guests upon checkout so as to minimize the possibility of having travelers without lodging arrangements in this life-threatening situation.

PRTC Support

The PRTC HOTLINE is available for hotels, travelers and industry partners 24/7 at 1(877) 976-2400. Travelers can also contact a customer service representative via online chat at seepuertorico.com

Emergency Assistance

If you require emergency assistance, Madeline Santiago, the PRTC Interagency Emergency Coordinator, can be reached at 787-525-4899 or at 787- 724-0124 ext. 30031 or 3000. (madeline.santiago@tourism.pr.gov)

Executive Liaison

The PRTC team is standing by to assist all industry stakeholders before, during and after the passing of Hurricane María.

Each PRTC endorsed property has been assigned a high level or regional executive available to answer any questions and assist you throughout (cellular connection permitting). Direct contact information for the PRTC liaisons:

- Carla Campos, Deputy Director (787-356-7474)
- Imaris Arocho, Special Aide to the Deputy Director (787-908-1400)
- Carlos Romo, Special Aide to the Executive Director (787-602-3015)
- Saúl Suárez, Director of Planning and Development (787-531-4250)
- Jovani Narváez, Director of Administration and Human Resources (787-379-7063)
- Janice Ramírez, Director of Legal Advising (787-509-4972)
- Luis Umpierre, Chief Financial Officer (787-349-8030)
- Shelyn Silva, Vieques Information Center Supervisor (787-413-2008)
- Miguel Santiago, Regional Director for Porta del Sol (787-248-0303)

Traveler & Industry Information:

Please refer travelers to www.puertoriconow.seepuertorico.com for updated information on weather, hotels, flights, cruises, island attractions, important contact information and links.
Agency Telephone

PRTC Hurricane Hotline for Hotels, Guests and Industry Partners 1(877) 976-2400

Madeline Santiago, PRTC, Interagency Emergency Coordinator, 787-525-4899

The Puerto Rico State Agency for Emergency and Disaster Management 787-724-0124

FEMA 787-296-3500

Puerto Rico Electric Power Authority 787-289-3434

The Puerto Rico Firefighters Corps 787-343-2330

Puerto Rico National Weather Service 787-253-4586

Police Department 787-343-2020

Red Cross 787-758-8150

Lodging Preparedness:

- The most dangerous part of this system will be crossing directly over Puerto Rico.
- Please identify safe zones within hotel properties that can shelter guests and staff during the peak of the storm.
- Monitor the hurricane path closely and make sure to inform guests and staff of the approximate time when they should report to the previously identified safe zones.
- Ensure preparedness measures are in place by 3:00P.M. on Tuesday, September 20 for tourism businesses located on mainland Puerto Rico. Vieques and Culebra properties should have already enacted full emergency protocols.

Attractions:

Casinos

- Casinos are now closed (effective at 5:30am on Tuesday, September 19).
- Opening times are yet to be confirmed but tentatively scheduled for Friday, September 22 at 11:20am or 7:30pm.

Other Attractions

- All other major tourist attractions remain closed.

Official Media Statement:

OFFICIAL STATEMENT FROM JOSE IZQUIERDO, EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR OF THE PUERTO RICO TOURISM COMPANY

The safety and security of our visitors is of utmost priority as we prepare for Hurricane Maria. We've been open for business on the tourism front post-Irma, and feel very confident we have the right preparedness plans in place to recover quickly. We are collaborating tourism industry partners to ensure preparedness plans are in place and everyone is well-informed and safe.

We're fortunate to have recovered very from Irma. Our tourism infrastructure has been fully operational and we have continued to welcome visitors to the Island these past few weeks. While it's too soon to tell, we feel optimistic it will be "business as usual" across our major hotel and tourism attractions as soon as possible after hurricane Maria.

As always, the safety and security of our visitors and residents is our number one priority. Government agencies are prepared and on standby to assist residents and visitors and the PRTC is here to help as best we can through this time. We urge you to take all necessary precautions in preparation for Hurricane Maria.

José R. Izquierdo
Executive Director
Puerto Rico Tourism Company

CTO has activated its CTO Relief Fund through GoFundMe to help families and countries rebuild after hurricanes, with monies raised being sent directly to CTO-member destinations affected by the catastrophic storm. For more information on CTO's Relief Fund or to make a donation, visit www.gofundme.com/hurricane-relief-fund-cto.

About the Caribbean Tourism Organization

The Caribbean Tourism Organization (CTO), with headquarters in Barbados and offices in New York and London, is the Caribbean's tourism development agency comprising membership of the region's finest countries and territories including Dutch, English, French and Spanish, as well as a myriad of private sector allied members. The CTO's vision is to position the Caribbean as the most desirable, year round, warm weather destination, and its purpose is Leading Sustainable Tourism - One Sea, One Voice, One Caribbean.

Among the benefits to its members the organization provides specialized support and technical assistance in sustainable tourism development, marketing, communications, advocacy, human resource development, event planning & execution and research & information technology.

In addition the CTO, in partnership with the Caribbean Hotel & Tourism Association, jointly and equally owns the Caribbean Tourism Development Company, a marketing and business development entity dedicated to promoting the Caribbean brand worldwide.

The CTO's Headquarters is located at Baobab Tower, Warrens, St. Michael, Barbados BB 22026; Tel: (246) 427-5242; Fax: (246) 429-3065; E-mail: CTObarbados@caribtourism.com;
The CTO's New York office is located at 80 Broad St., Suite 3302, New York, NY 10004, USA: Tel: (212) 635-9530; Fax: (212) 635-9511; E-mail: CTOny@caribtourism.com;
The CTO's London office is located at The Quadrant, Richmond, Surrey TW9 1BP, England. Tel: 011 44 208 948 0057; Fax: 011 44 208 948 0067; E-mail: CTOlondon@caribtourism.com.

For more information on the Caribbean Tourism Organization, please visit www.OneCaribbean.org. Get the latest updates and connect with CTO via [Facebook](#), [Twitter](#), [Instagram](#) and [LinkedIn](#).