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Governor Christie Announces Information Line Open for New Jerseyans Affected by Hurricane Maria

Monday, September 25, 2017

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Trenton, NJ – In response to the devastation caused by Hurricane Maria in Puerto Rico and in deference to the half million New Jersey residents of Puerto Rican ancestry, Governor Chris Christie today announced the opening of a toll-free information line. Residents who are searching for friends and loved ones, or are interested in volunteering and/or donating to reputable relief organizations can call the help line to request free information and referral assistance at 833-NJ-HELPS (833-654-3577), as of 11 a.m. today.

The Department of State's Center for Hispanic Policy, Research and Development and Governor's Office of Volunteerism, together with the state Office of Emergency Management and Office of Homeland Security and Preparedness have teamed up with the Puerto Rican Congress of New Jersey and New Jersey For Puerto Rico Hurricane Relief to provide help to residents.

"Hurricane Maria has disrupted every aspect of life in Puerto Rico, and New Jerseyans are ready to help in any way they can," said Governor Christie. "We send our thoughts and prayers to hurricane victims in Puerto Rico, as the tragic toll this storm has taken on our fellow Americans is fully understood. We extend our condolences to those who lost loved ones and encourage New Jersey residents to get involved in the relief effort. We are confident we will be able to help this island that is, in so many ways, connected to the Garden State."

The hotline is open to residents who need help related to the disaster. Assistance will be available in both English and Spanish. The hotline will be staffed during normal business hours, but messages can be left at any time. Residents interested in learning how they can get involved with disaster relief efforts are encouraged to visit: www.HelpNJNow.org

"As they have in other disasters, our volunteers are ready to help people whose lives have been forever altered by this storm," said Rowena Madden, Executive Director of the Governor's Office of Volunteerism.

Background:

New Jersey is home to the third largest population of Puerto Ricans, at a total of 434,092 New Jersey residents of Puerto Rican ancestry, nearly 10 percent of the nation's Puerto Rican Citizenry, representing represent 5.24 percent of the entire state population. Puerto Rico has not faced a Category 4 or 5 hurricane in almost 100 years. There are well over 11,200 people and 580 pets spread out in the over 500 shelters the Government of Puerto Rico established in anticipation of the storm. Many of those victims are directly connected to the nearly half million New Jersey residents of Puerto Rican Ancestry. Communication lines are down in most of the island.

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