

AFL-CIO disaster relief effort deploys nurses, truckers to Puerto Rico

More than 50 volunteer registered nurses from across the U.S. are in Puerto Rico with the Registered Nurse Response Network (RNRN). The volunteer nurses are providing medical aid in the wake of the ongoing humanitarian crisis following Hurricane Maria. The most recent contingent of nurses left San Francisco on Oct. 3.

RNRN is a national network of volunteer nurses created by National Nurses United, AFL-CIO. It recruited the RN team as part of a multi-union, two-week disaster relief effort organized by the national AFL-CIO.

The AFL-CIO is working directly with the Puerto Rican Federation of Labor in coordination with the San Juan mayor's office. The labor federation also has teamed up with the Teamsters Union to recruit truckers to travel to Puerto Rico and help distribute relief supplies. More than 2,000 Teamsters who live in Puerto Rico have been affected by the hurricane.

The RNs are focusing on immediate medical needs in local

hospitals, nursing homes, and other sites based on immediate need for island residents who have endured unprecedented devastation as a result of the superstorm.

Press reports indicate that in addition to the general poor conditions, hospitals have been overwhelmed, struggling to meet medical needs, clinics and doctor's offices have failed to reopen, patients with chronic illnesses have not had access to needed medications, and concerns are emerging about the potential of cholera and other epidemics.

RNRN has more than 12 years of experience in providing disaster medical aid dating back to Hurricane Katrina and the South Asian tsunami. Most recently, volunteers worked in a convention center in Houston and other locales in South Texas after Hurricane Harvey.

To donate to the nurses go to RNResponseNetwork.org or call 1-800-578-8225; a Teamsters disaster relief fund has been set up at tdr.teamster.org.

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