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## We Energies, WPS advance team await arrival of crews in Puerto Rico

Managers, supervisors, fleet mechanics and a safety liaison from We Energies and Wisconsin Public Service (WPS) are in Puerto Rico preparing for the arrival of crews, scheduled for Saturday, Jan. 13. In total, approximately 35 We Energies and 25 WPS employees are expected to be on the island for an estimated six-week assignment, restoring power in the aftermath of Hurricane Maria. Vehicles and equipment from both utilities were sent by barge earlier this month.



The advance team from We Energies and WPS left from Mitchell International Airport in Milwaukee earlier this week.

While crews from We Energies and WPS responded to Hurricane Irma in Florida and Georgia in 2017 and to other hurricanes in years past, this is the first time the utilities have performed restoration efforts outside of the continental U.S. The two utilities will work together to respond to the widespread loss of power,

working 12- to 16-hour days while facing uncertainty, unfamiliar conditions and terrain, and the complete devastation of the island's power infrastructure.

Three months after Hurricane Maria hit Puerto Rico in September 2017, an estimated 40 to 50 percent of residents are still without electric service.

The We Energies and WPS employees are among thousands of utility workers from U.S. energy companies answering the island's need for support as part of the mutual assistance program, coordinated by Edison Electric Institute (EEI) at the request of the Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA).

More about mutual assistance from the EEI:

"Partnerships in our mutual assistance program are based upon voluntary agreements among electric companies within the same region. Most of these agreements are managed by seven Regional Mutual Assistance Groups (RMAGs) throughout the country. When a member determines that it needs restoration assistance, it initiates a request through an RMAG.

"RMAGs facilitate the process of identifying available restoration workers and help companies coordinate the logistics and personnel involved in restoration efforts. For example, RMAGs can help companies locate specialized skill sets, equipment, or materials, and can assist in identifying other types of resources that may be needed, including lineworkers, tree trimmers, damage assessors, and even call center support.

"Company restoration workers involved in mutual assistance typically travel many miles to help the requesting company rebuild power lines, replace poles, and restore power to customers. Before their restoration work begins, the volunteer restoration workers receive any necessary safety training and an overview of the affected facilities from the host electric company."

[More information about mutual assistance is available on the EEI website](#), including this overview document "[Understanding the Electric Power Industry's Response and Restoration Process](#)."

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