

# Puerto Rico toll hits 44 as governor asks Congress for more aid

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Puerto Rico remains in crisis three weeks after Hurricane Maria struck as a Category Four storm

The death toll from Hurricane Maria in Puerto Rico has risen to 44 three weeks after the storm ripped through the island, Governor Ricardo Rossello said Wednesday.

In a statement in which he also asked Congress for more [financial](#)

[assistance](#), Rossello updated the toll released on Tuesday after another person died due to a fractured skull.

"There are also four deaths confirmed to be related to leptospirosis," he added, referring to a rare bacterial disease contracted through the urine of infected animals.

With over 5,700 people living in shelters and most of the island still without electricity and running water, the risk posed by [contagious diseases](#) is amplified because the landscape and infrastructure remains severely damaged following the Category Four storm.

As a result, Rossello added that he has asked President Trump for an additional \$4.9 billion under the Community Disaster Loan program.

"This program will allow the island the funds it needs to meet operational and payroll expenses," the governor wrote.

Last Wednesday, Trump asked Congress to approve an emergency aid package of \$29 billion for Puerto Rico.

The latest request adds to "billions we expect to receive for other aid we have requested," Rossello said.

The governor's office did not respond to queries about the total amount of aid requested, which is now equivalent to around half of Puerto Rico's debt of some \$73 billion.

Maria devastated the island amid a severe financial crisis, with the government filing for bankruptcy in May.

The crisis has caused 10 percent of the population to leave since 2006, with unemployment reaching 12 percent and poverty 46 percent.

Figures of the latest exodus are unknown, but it is believed Maria's destruction has prompted thousands of Puerto Ricans to leave for the US mainland, with most heading for Florida.

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