

The Virgin Islands Consortium

Durable Medical Equipment Arrives For Hurricane Survivors In Need

VIC News / **Published On November 18, 2017 10:31 PM /**

Staff **November 18, 2017**



The woman at the Herbert Grigg Home for the Aged seemed a bit hesitant as she tried out her new wheelchair for the first time. Having lost her own wheelchair during Hurricane Maria, the survivor had gone without one for several weeks. But once she was able to maneuver the new chair, a huge smile spread across her face.

“It’s wonderful to see people light up from the inside like this,” said Roxann Crawford, who leads FEMA’s Disability Integration team. “Providing durable medical equipment helps them regain some independence, which improves their overall health and well-being.”

Scenes like this may be repeated many times over in the coming weeks as hundreds of assistive medical devices are delivered to hurricane survivors in need – all of it donated by the Atlanta-based relief organization Friends of Disabled Adults and Children (FODAC).

FODAC, which supplies durable medical equipment free of charge to people with disabilities and access and functional needs, is partnering with the Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA) to get this vital equipment delivered to survivors in the U.S. Virgin Islands. The equipment FODAC is providing includes wheelchairs, walkers, shower supports, hospital beds, nebulizers, CPAP machines and hearing aids. The initiative was made possible as a result of another FEMA partnership, this one with the Pass it On Center, a nonprofit organization that matches donors with communities in need. Pass It On is part of the Georgia Institute of Technology, which identifies and promotes the use of appropriate assistive technology for people with disabilities.

To ensure the donated items get to survivors who need it, FEMA's Disability Integration specialists have been reaching out to survivors who indicated they have unmet needs for durable medical equipment or other assistive technologies when they registered with FEMA.

"Our partnerships with voluntary and nongovernmental organizations are crucial to this recovery effort," said Federal Coordinating Officer William Vogel. "Together we do what government entities alone cannot do – meet survivors' needs."

Survivors who lack medical equipment or have other accessibility needs should alert FEMA when registering for assistance or speak to someone on FEMA's helpline.

Survivors have until the **December 18 deadline** to register with FEMA for assistance. Register at DisasterAssistance.gov or by calling **800-621-3362** (for the Helpline request to speak to a representative). Individuals who have a speech disability or hearing loss and use TTY should call 800-462-7585 directly. Those who use 711 or Video Relay Service (VRS) may call 800-621-3362.

These toll-free telephone numbers operate from 7 a.m. to 11 p.m. (local time) seven days a week. Operators are standing by to assist survivors in multiple languages.