

The Virgin Islands Consortium

Federal Aviation Administration Brings San Juan Weather Radar Back To PR And USVI

Weather Updates / **Published On July 26, 2018 11:35 AM /**

Staff **July 26, 2018**



In June, the Next Generation Weather Radar (NEXRAD) in Cayey, Puerto Rico, owned by the Federal Aviation Administration (F.A.A.) was fully restored in partnership with the National Weather Service (N.W.S.) and the Department of Defense. The restoration of NEXRAD was the latest milestone after the F.A.A.'s air traffic infrastructure across the Caribbean was severely degraded by Hurricanes Irma and Maria.

According to a release the F.A.A. issued this week, NEXRAD was the last major F.A.A. facility of many in the area to be returned to full operation.

In the immediate aftermath of the Hurricane, air transport was the fastest way to get much needed supplies and rescue support to the area, according to the release. The F.A.A. said its employees worked tirelessly in the hours and days following to restore the air traffic towers, radars, navigational equipment and airport facilities in Puerto Rico and Employees referred to the effort as rebuilding an "air bridge" to



The restored NEXRAD helps FAA Air Traffic Controllers better

manage flights with more reliable weather radar.

Leaving their own families, F.A.A. technicians flew by helicopter to remote radar and navigational aid sites to assess damage and repair as much as possible right after the hurricanes struck, according to the release. Some FAA technicians even stayed at the remote facilities to monitor equipment. One crew sheltered overnight in inclement weather at the remote Long Range Radar facility in Pico Del Este, Puerto Rico.

Many F.A.A. employee families were still without power, as were many other residents of Puerto Rico. To accommodate employee families, a daycare center was set up in the conference room at the Luiz Munoz International Air Traffic Control Tower so employees could work and know their children were safe.

F.A.A. air traffic controllers started handling the rescue and recovery aircraft that came into the Luis Munoz International Airport, as soon as the runways were cleared of debris and opened for use, the release said. Controllers initially relied on radar data from the Terminal Doppler Weather Radar (TDWR) in Punta Salinas. However, the TDWR's weather data is not as accurate as a NEXRAD.

The NEXRAD is the largest long-range radar facility in the Eastern Caribbean, serving crucial weather data to areas including Puerto Rico and the U.S. Virgin Islands. The restoration of the NEXRAD facility brings needed detailed weather not only to the air traffic facilities in the region but also to the people who now can rely on better weather apps and reporting as they prepare to face another hurricane season.

"I am so grateful and proud of this entire effort! Great total team effort to include both FAA and NWS superstars. I went on my NOAA app a little while ago.....And I can see weather in PR again," said David Meuse, Miami district manager

The restoration work included more than just the NEXRAD. Many other FAA facilities were damaged by Hurricanes Maria and Irma including the Air Traffic Control Towers at the Luiz Munoz International Airport, Puerto Rico, Cyril E. King Airport, St. Thomas and Henry E. Rohlsen Airports, Saint Croix, U.S. Virgin Islands; FAA ground-based navigational and communications systems at the Rafael Hernandez Airport, Aguadilla, Puerto Rico and St Croix and St Thomas, U.S. Virgin Islands; the Airport Surveillance Radar at St Thomas and the Long Range Radar in Pico Del Este, Puerto Rico.

Feature Image: Teams from Federal Aviation Administration, National Weather Service, and the Department of Defense arrived as soon as possible to help restore crucial infrastructure on the island. (Credit: F.A.A.)

[Watch the original video](#)

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