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DSNY Returns From Puerto Rico After Island-wide Strategic Assessment Of Damage by Hurricane Maria

*Three-week Deployment Provided Roadmap to Distribute Necessities,
Support Debris Removal and Help Rebuilding Effort*

Sanitation Workers and Chiefs from the New York City Department of Sanitation have completed their three-week deployment to Puerto Rico supporting the Puerto Rico Emergency Management Agency (PREMA), the US Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA) and sister agencies from New York City. Initially scheduled to support recovery efforts for two weeks, support by the uniformed and civilian DSNY employees proved critical, and their deployment was extended to more than three weeks. During that time, they performed crucial damage assessment in all 78 respective municipalities of Puerto Rico, including islands Vieques and Culebra, and assisted federal agencies and other groups to distribute supplies. The damage assessment DSNY provided allows local and federal response to better assess the personnel and heavy- and light-duty equipment needed to deliver supplies, remove debris and assist in rebuilding. This deployment was thanks in part to JetBlue, which quickly provided DSNY's transportation to and from Puerto Rico at no cost to New York City.

"As New Yorkers, we're no strangers to natural disasters, and I'm proud that Sanitation's expertise helped our fellow Americans in Puerto Rico," said **Sanitation Commissioner Kathryn Garcia**. "Our team played a critical role in the path to recovery – assessing damage and debris, providing desperately needed materials and providing comfort to Puerto Ricans in their time of need. I am thrilled to welcome them home and celebrate their acts of patriotism."

DSNY's employees wearing safety-compliant fluorescent shirts quickly became nicknamed "The Yellow Shirts" by residents, who observed that supplies and services arrived shortly after Sanitation Workers determined how to overcome obstacles preventing support from arriving.

"As New York's Hometown Airline and the largest airline in Puerto Rico, we are committed to assisting the island get back up and running," said **JetBlue's Director of Corporate Social Responsibility, Icema Gibbs**. "Our fellow New Yorkers have donated supplies and resources far exceeding our expectations. Thanks to DSNY for their assistance and care for these communities."

JetBlue is the largest airline in Puerto Rico. JetBlue previously outlined its 100x35JetBlue commitment to launch 35 initiatives over 100 days – and beyond – to support the immediate needs of crewmembers, customers and communities in Puerto Rico.

Dedicated public servants, more than 1,000 Sanitation employees volunteered for the PREMA deployment and 31 were selected, based upon various criteria, such as: prior military training; skill in operating heavy-duty machinery; large-scale debris management experience; and proficiency in Spanish. Given DSNY's status as a paramilitary organization, DSNY deployed Chiefs, Sanitation Workers and a technology expert to establish a clear chain of command in its emergency response.

Reporting directly to FEMA's Debris Removal Unit, DSNY's employees leveraged their ability to assess evolving conditions and quickly modify response accordingly. Each day in New York City, Sanitation removes 12,200 of garbage, recyclables and food scraps, requiring constant monitoring of conditions, reassigning personnel and quickly shifting equipment to different locations. In Puerto Rico, employees' ability to quickly assess and report on emergency conditions were incorporated into real-time maps that other responders use to perform their duties.

The deployment provided ancillary benefits. The team's efforts laid the foundation for what will be a long-term Debris Removal System – while setting an important precedent for DSNY support after future storms of this magnitude.

FEMA has provided photos of NYC Sanitation's employees surveying damage and determining the types of heavy- and light-duty machinery that will be needed to clear obstacles, distribute supplies to less-accessible areas and support the rebuilding effort.

<https://www.fema.gov/media-library/assets/images/148345>

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<https://www.fema.gov/media-library/assets/images/148350>

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About the New York City Department of Sanitation

The Department of Sanitation (DSNY) promotes a healthy environment through the efficient management of solid waste and the development of environmentally sound long-range planning for handling refuse, including recyclables. The Department operates 59 district garages and manages a fleet of more than 2,000 rear-loading collection trucks, 450 mechanical brooms and 500 salt/sand spreaders. The Department clears litter, snow and ice from approximately 6,500 miles of City streets and removes debris from vacant lots as well as abandoned vehicles from City streets.