

Rebuilding for Resiliency: How Puerto Rico's Environmental Health Department Managed Several Public Health Emergencies and Emerged Stronger

Editor's Note: The National Environmental Health Association (NEHA) strives to provide up-to-date and relevant information on environmental health and to build partnerships in the profession. In pursuit of these goals, NEHA features this column on environmental

The island of Puerto Rico endured several emergencies/disasters between 2017 and 2021 that threatened both its physical infrastructure and human resource capital. From a devastating hurricane to a worldwide pandemic, the Puerto Rico Department of Health (PRDOH) Environmental Health Program faced each challenge with the mission-minded resolve that is key for rising above seemingly insurmountable setbacks. When Hurricane Maria made landfall in September 2017, the catastrophic Category 5 storm brought a laal emsCassessment procedures with electronic applications, and use REDCap (www.project-redcap.org) as an electronic assessment tool.

3. Design a long-term workforce development program for the department (e.g., develop and deliver classroom and field-based training on scientific, technical, and procedural

and other at-risk populations. Immediately, project staff and resources shifted from hurricane recovery to emergency response, specifically inspecting shelters, mobile medical units, food service facilities, and water supply trucks. The department also addressed issues involving stray animals, pests, food safety, water sanitation, and sewage. In total, the department developed 38 different educational resources for digital and print distribution to provide guidance and help improve food safety and water sanitation for the local

