

Official Hurricane Death Toll in Puerto Rico at 48, Likely to Increase



San Juan, October 16 (RHC)-- In Puerto Rico, the official death toll from Hurricane Maria rose to 48 over the weekend, but authorities warned the true toll could be far higher, since power outages across the island have forced medical officials to rely on handwritten records rather than electronic data.

The news comes as residents desperate for drinking water have begun pumping the Dorado Groundwater Contamination Site -- a hazardous waste Superfund site. The EPA warns the water contains chemicals that cause liver damage and an increased risk of cancer.

About one-third of Puerto Rico still lacks clean drinking water, and a majority of the island's 3.4 million residents still lack electricity. Governor Ricardo Rosselló says he's pushing a plan to restore power to 95 percent of the grid by the end of December.

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