

# Puerto Ricans search for cellphone signals after Hurricane Maria

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People congregate at a Wi-Fi hotspot in the aftermath of Hurricane Maria with many cellphone towers down in San Juan, Puerto Rico, September 24, 2017. Photo by: AP Photo/Carlos Giusti

**SAN JUAN, Puerto Rico** — On September 20, 2017, a hurricane hit Puerto Rico. A hurricane is a kind of storm. When one hits, it can do a lot of damage.

Puerto Rico is a small island in the Atlantic Ocean. It isn't one of the states, but it is part of the U.S. It is called a U.S. territory. It is home to more than 3 million people.

The hurricane that hit Puerto Rico was named Hurricane Maria. It was one of the worst in Puerto Rico's history. The rain, wind, and flooding were historic. The storm has destroyed many homes. It also knocked out all of the electricity on the island.

## Storm Knocked Out Cellphone Service

The storm knocked something else out, too. It affected Internet and cellular phone service. As a result, Puerto Ricans have had trouble communicating with the rest of the world. Many have been unable to tell their family members in other countries that they are OK.

Maria Aponte has had a hard time. She and her family drove all the way to San Juan, Puerto Rico's largest city, in search of Wi-Fi.

When they finally connected, they were overjoyed.

### **"It's Ringing, It's Ringing"**

"It's ringing, it's ringing, it's ringing!" Aponte screamed.

Her eyes filled with tears. She talked with family members in Florida and Massachusetts. It was the first time since the hurricane.

All over Puerto Rico, people are looking for a signal. Without signal, cellphones will not work.

Carlos Ocasio picked his way through tree branches and broken glass to find a signal. Eventually, he got some cellphone service. When he did, he called his brother in New Jersey.

"My throat got a little choked up and I couldn't talk for a minute," he said. "They're calling me from everywhere, asking when I'm going to arrive."

The phone problems have been hard for family members of people in Puerto Rico, too. They have had to wait in silence. They have seen Hurricane Maria on the news. Many have not been able to speak to their loved ones.

### **Many Cellphone Towers Not Working In San Juan**

Most of the cellphone towers in San Juan were not working. Cellphone and Internet companies say they are working on the problems.

Ricardo Rossello is the governor of Puerto Rico. He said a major underwater cable had been repaired. This would let people make long-distance calls again.

Meanwhile, people in Puerto Rico will keep trying to use their phones.

Wanda Nieves went to a Wi-Fi hotspot in San Juan. She was finally able to connect. She spoke to her family in Florida and Michigan.

She said she was relieved. Now, she said, she'll turn her attention to helping the island.