Power on Puerto Rice – An Amicus/Amurtel Partnership

In response to the ongoing humanitarian disaster in Puerto Rico, a group of U.S. solar companies and a global relief agency are mobilizing to bring portable emergency power trailers to remote areas of the unincorporated U.S. territory.

More than 50% of Puerto Rico is still without power and clean drinking water after Hurricane Maria tore across the island in September leaving catastrophic consequences in its wake. Hundreds of thousands of island residents are risking serious illness daily as they are forced to collect water from streams and other untreated water sources that are known to be contaminated. Without access to power to charge cell phones or computers and roads destroyed or blocked by fallen trees, many island residents are isolated and unable to get information on aid opportunities.

Amurtel, a non-profit disaster relief agency, and Amicus, a purchasing cooperative of 44 solar photovoltaic installation companies, have created a partnership to bring emergency solar power and drinking water systems to those struggling to recover from the hurricane. The effort, called **Power On Puerto Rico,** is enlisting volunteers from Amicus member-companies to design and build *Solar Outreach Systems (SOS)* that will be delivered to the areas of greatest need identified by Amurtel staff on the ground in Puerto Rico.

The SOS, which are portable community-based communication, water purification and emergency power hubs, will immediately assist on-the-ground relief efforts. Each SOS is comprised of an enclosed trailer with exterior solar panels and power outlets, along with batteries and a water purification system inside the trailer. Once parked in a sunny location, the exterior solar panels are deployed and switched on to provide 300-400 watts of emergency power while simultaneously purifying up to 600 gallons of clean potable water a day. Each SOS unit can charge up to 10 phones and five laptops simultaneously. Two large outdoor floodlights affixed to the roof of the SOS units will enable community members to have light at night. They will provide an opportunity for residents of remote areas to gather at a central location to enhance community with each other and meet some of their basic needs for water and communication.

The SOS units will be deployed by the Aireko Foundation, an offshoot of Aireko Energy Solutions, which is a Puerto Rico-based member of Amicus. These units will be loaned to the communities for the duration of their need and then be redeployed to other disaster areas around the globe as needs and events dictate. This means that this project will not only help to meet the needs of our fellow citizens in Puerto Rico, but it will continue to provide benefits to those in need when disaster strikes in another area of the world.

“The aftermath of Hurricane Maria has been as difficult and often even harder than surviving the storm itself, especially for those communities in the interior of the island. After more than two months, reestablishment of electric power for those communities is still unknown, and the quality of water is not the best - for those communities that are lucky enough to have this service, which are very few. Sadly, those communities are far from returning to their normal lives,” said Hector Rivera Russe of Aireko Energy Solutions. “I’m deeply touched by how my Amicus partners, alongside Amurtel, have jumped without hesitation, to putting their time, resources and effort to give relief to my people in Puerto Rico. I will always be thankful to them,” said Russe.

The first 10 Puerto Rican communities that will receive SOS’s have already been identified, and are anxiously awaiting their units. Each community will be responsible for the maintenance and security of their unit, but there will be no cost associated with the use.

The first three SOS units are being manufactured in the North Andover, MA warehouse of ReVision Energy, an Amicus member. “We are chomping at the bit to build these portable emergency power units,” said Phil Coupe, a co-founder of ReVision Energy. “The great news is that we already have more than enough volunteers to build the units once we obtain all the necessary components.”

Power On Puerto Rico is a powerful way that individuals and businesses can help fellow Americans in crisis. Although all of the SOS design work, and many of the components, have been donated, Amurtel and Amicus need additional funds to finish manufacturing the SOS units and to deliver them. The estimated cost of each SOS unit is $15,000 to purchase the trailer base, water purification system, charging outlets, lights and batteries. The remaining funds required to complete the first ten units is currently $130,000.

For more information, please visit: <http://www.amicussolar.com/power-on-puerto-rico/>

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