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GPA Requests $6 Billion from FEMA for Guam Infrastructure Resiliency Plan

Funds to support efforts to strengthen Guam's Island-Wide Power System and place power lines underground

(Fadian, Guam) – The Guam Power Authority (GPA) met with U.S. Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA) Administrator Deanne Criswell, FEMA Region 9 Administrator Robert Fenton, and Public Assistance Division Director Robert Pesapane on February 7, 2024, to appeal to the agency for funding to harden the island's power system. GPA General Manager John M. Benavente, P.E. met with the FEMA officials at the Fadian conference room to provide further insight into GPA's request for $6.4 billion in funding for the island's Infrastructure Resiliency Plan, a mitigation plan to improve resiliency from threats such as natural disasters. GPA is requesting federal support in making critical investments that will bolster resiliency and capacity for Guam's Island-Wide Power System. Guam Waterworks Authority General Manager Miguel C. Bordallo, P.E., FEMA Region 9 Response Division Director Johanna Johnna, and FEMA Federal Coordinating Officer Benigno Ruiz also participated in the discussion.

FEMA officials were on island on February 6, 2024 to meet with Governor Lou Leon Guerrero and Lt. Governor Joshua Tenorio to assess the damages and recovery efforts from Typhoon Mawar in May 2023. Gov. Leon Guerrero conveyed the island's appreciation to FEMA for its commitment to Guam's recovery post-Mawar.

"We discussed the challenges we endured because of Typhoon Mawar and how Guam needs to place its power lines underground. This will significantly reduce the threat of losing assets during future storms, minimize power outages, and improve recovery time after natural disasters," said GPA GM Benavente.

"Strengthening our system will put us in a better position to supply energy to residents, businesses and military facilities; support vital communications systems; and continue to defend our island against prevalent cyber threats."

GPA is requesting **$6.4 billion** for its *One Guam Comprehensive Infrastructure Resiliency plan*. Preliminary costs for the Infrastructure Resiliency Plan are broken down as follows:

- Underground transmission lines and indoor substations (Islandwide Power System including assets serving military facilities) - **$833 million**
- Critical distribution system mitigation (Underground feeders for water wells, treatment facilities/reservoirs, wastewater treatment plants, communications sites, medical facilities GDOE schools, GCC & UOG, etc.) - **$813 million**
- Other critical infrastructure resiliency projects (Energy storage batteries, standby generator upgrades placed in concrete housings, T&D operations center, fiber optic system, etc.) - **$730 million**
- Underground remaining distribution system (convert remaining distribution systems to a fully underground system) - $ **4.025 billion**

GPA remains optimistic about FEMA's support as the federal agency expressed the importance of strengthening the island's critical infrastructure, which affects all emergency services.

GM Benavente said, "Because of our location in the world and our history of extreme weather, we remain focused on strengthening our power system for the people of Guam. FEMA recognizes that taking this next step to place power lines underground will positively affect future recovery efforts after natural disasters. We are grateful for Administrator Criswell and her leadership team's time and attention while on Guam. We will continue our important discussions with FEMA about how this plan best serves our community's needs."

GPA continues to seek reimbursements and support for post-Mawar recovery

GPA calculates that damage due to Typhoon Mawar cost the utility agency $39.6 million. The estimated cost breakdown includes:

- Emergency protective measures (pre-typhoon preparation, equipment, fuel, and labor)- $6.4 million
- Utilities (damages to utility infrastructure, mutual aid, and restoration labor) - $33.1 million
- Buildings and equipment/vehicles - $100,000.00

GPA has submitted the totals for all damages and is currently working with FEMA to provide the necessary documentation for eligible reimbursements, which is estimated at 90 percent under President Biden's order and the federal share for public assistance, hazard mitigation, and other needs.

In November of 2023, Guam Delegate Jim Moylan introduced a bill in the U.S. House of Representatives (H.R. 6478), which requests FEMA's assistance with repairs to critical infrastructure which includes the island's power system, Guam's water and wastewater systems, Guam Memorial Hospital, communications, and cybersecurity. The bill was referred by the Committee on Transportation and Infrastructure and is currently with the Subcommittee on Economic Development, Public Buildings, and Emergency Management.

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Photo caption:
Guam Power Authority (GPA) meets with Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA) Administrator of the U.S. Deanne Criswell and key FEMA officials on February 7, 2024. GPA is requesting $6.4 billion in funding to strengthen the island's power system as outlined in its Infrastructure Resiliency Plan. Pictured front row from left are Miguel C. Bordallo, P.E., General Manager, Guam Waterworks Authority; Criswell; John M. Benavente, P.E., General Manager, GPA; and Benigno Ruiz, Federal Coordinating Officer, FEMA. Back row from left are Robert Fenton, Region 9 Administrator, FEMA; Robert Pesapane, Public Assistance Division Director, FEMA; and Johanna Johnna, Region 9 Response Division Director, FEMA.