

FLASH Joins FEMA Mitigation Assessment Team in Puerto Rico

FEMA Mitigation Assessment Team (MAT) Building Codes, Standards and Regulations Team hit the ground running in Puerto Rico December 5-9 as one of three MAT Teams to survey the United States Territory. Team members included STARR II Program Manager Stuart Adams, who serves as program area manager to the [FEMA Building Science Branch](#), FEMA Safety, Planning & Building Science Division Director Edward M. Laatsch, P.E., FEMA Program Analyst, Federal Insurance & Mitigation Administration Julie Grauer, and FLASH Senior Vice President Michael Rimoldi. Adams served as the Team Leader.

During four days of assessments, the team achieved two major objectives. The first was to meet with municipalities to determine strengths and weaknesses of their permitting process and hear first-hand, how local officials felt the system worked, especially in a post-hurricane scenario. The second arm of the field operations included site visits to assess the damage. The observations are crucial to help understand how buildings withstand severe forces of a hurricane, including wind, rain, and storm surge in coastal settings.

“Concrete built structures without any wood components survived the hurricane wind and flood damages much better,” said Grauer.

Capturing post-disaster evidence in real-time is crucial to identifying ways to improve construction practices in the future. Building codes and standards can be updated and modified using the information to support enhanced construction practices.

Two additional MAT teams will be in Puerto Rico until mid-December collecting data and making field observations. This information will be share through a series of publications produced by FEMA Building Science Branch, including MAT Reports and Recovery Advisories.