



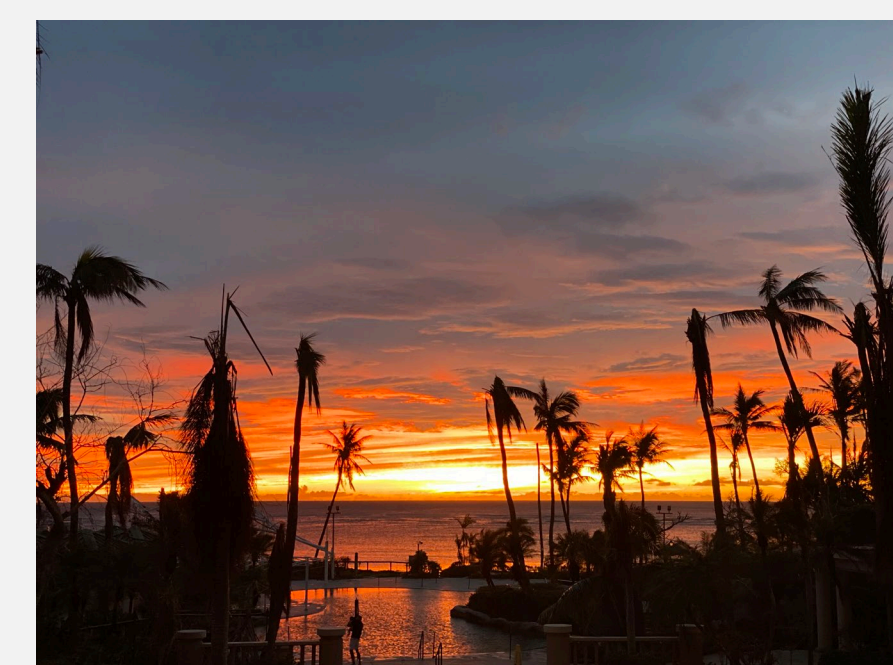
# United in Crisis: The U.S. Food & Drug Administration's Collaborative Interagency Approach in Response and Recovery to Super Typhoon Mawar on Guam



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## Background

On May 24, 2023, the U.S. Territory of Guam, a strategic base of operations for the U.S. military in the Pacific region, was struck by Category 4 Typhoon Mawar. With over 140 mph winds and 25 ft storm surge, the strongest typhoon to strike Guam in over 20 years caused widespread destruction, flooding, and infrastructure failures. In response, the U.S. Food & Drug Administration (FDA) was integrated into Emergency Support Function (ESF) 8 and immediately established an Incident Management Team (IMT) for 17 days to secure the safety of FDA personnel stationed on island and ensure operational continuity through strategic collaborations with local, federal, and Department of Defense (DoD) partners, including the Guam Department of Public Health & Social Services (DPHSS), Guam Customs & Quarantine Agency (CQA), U.S. Army Public Health Activity (PHA), Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA), Administration for Strategic Preparedness and Response (ASPR), U.S. Environmental Protection Agency (EPA), and leadership from the DoD Joint Region Marianas.



## Interventions and Outcomes

Despite challenges, the IMT successfully met its incident objectives, including prioritizing staff safety, establishing crucial communication channels with local partners to identify areas of support, and confirming the status of FDA assets on island. Specifically, the IMT facilitated the following activities, all of which are outside the normal duties of FDA personnel.

### Mission Accomplishments:

- Coordinated with a Multiagency Coordination (MAC) Group comprised of PHA, FDA, DPHSS, and Guam Division of Environmental Health (DEH) to secure the national supply chain by conducting post-disaster surveillance assessments of 53 FDA-regulated firms to assess the public health impact on private industry.
- Developed and delivered three Public Health Advisories to advise the public and private industries on food safety, health fraud, and insulin storage best practices in post-disaster settings for dissemination by ASPR Joint Information Center (JIC) and DPHSS.
- Assisted APSR and local authorities with the rapid transport and delivery of a crucial shipment of perishable blood supplies to nearby medical facilities experiencing shortages.
- Coordinated with FEMA to secure a portable generator for DEH Laboratories, improving DEH's ability to conduct crucial post-disaster environmental health assessments on island.
- Collaborated with EPA to collect and test over 200 samples of emergency water supplies in Guam, ensuring safe drinking water for citizens while repairs were made to offline public water system.
- Worked closely with CQA to prevent the importation of two cases of enoki mushrooms under Import Alert #25-21 for possible Listeria monocytogenes contamination.
- Provided situational awareness briefing to the CDC Disaster Response Team prior to their deployment to enhance mission efficiency.
- Served as an unofficial liaison between the Guam Office of Public Health and federal agencies.

This interagency cooperation ensured the efficient deployment of crucial resources and expertise to address the diverse challenges posed by the typhoon.



## Summary

This poster highlights the innovative strategies employed by the FDA to navigate the challenges posed by a Category 4 Typhoon in Guam. It underscores the agency's dedication to protecting public health through interagency collaboration and ensuring regulated firms can continue to meet their responsibilities even in the face of natural disasters. The lessons learned from this experience will contribute to improve disaster preparedness and response efforts in the future, benefiting both the FDA and the communities it serves.

## References

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## Disclaimer

All authors are members of the United States Public Health Service Commissioned Corps assigned to the FDA. The findings and conclusions in this report are those of the authors in their roles with the Incident Management Team and do not necessarily represent the views of the FDA or the USPHS Commissioned Corps.

## Objectives

Following this presentation, the participant will be able to:

- Understand the key characteristics and impacts of a Category 4 Typhoon on a U.S. Territory like Guam, including the challenges it poses to public health and infrastructure.
- Describe the role of the FDA in disaster response and responsibilities in ensuring personnel safety and operational continuity.
- Identify the FDA IMT's incident objectives and how they were achieved using interagency collaboration and efficiently deploying resources during disaster response.
- Summarize lessons learned from the FDA IMT's Typhoon Mawar response.

## Challenges

The FDA Typhoon Mawar IMT encountered numerous challenges. Operating across three vastly different time zones led to late-night operations, straining personnel. Establishing FDA authority amid disrupted import operations added complexity. Managing personnel movements posed logistical difficulties. Guam's compromised infrastructure, extended lack of essential services, and post-disaster conditions strained staff morale and effectiveness. Shortages of water, power, and air conditioning jeopardized hygiene and safety. Unreliable communications disrupted coordination efforts. Overcoming these hurdles demanded resilience and emphasized the importance of disaster preparedness and adaptable strategies in safeguarding public health during crises.

