



Solar storage bahamas

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Efforts to engineer a more resilient grid could provide a blueprint for other islands as the effects of climate change intensify.

It's been several weeks since Category 5 Hurricane Dorian blew into the Bahamas and winds above 180 miles per hour lashed some northern islands for days. After the storm moved on, thousands were missing. So far, the death toll has risen to 50. According to Justin Locke, senior director of Rocky Mountain Institute's Islands Energy Program, Dorian obliterated 90 percent of infrastructure on the Abaco Islands and 75 to 80 percent on Grand Bahama Island.

"You can't have a worse disaster," he said. "We haven't seen anything like this."

When it comes to rebuilding the energy system, Locke said, "We're starting from scratch."

The dire situation in the Bahamas echoes the devastation wrought by Hurricanes Maria and Irma, which tore up Puerto Rico's grid in 2017 and left many residents without power for months. Maria and Irma, which both also reached Category 5, didn't leave the Bahamas and other Caribbean islands unscathed, either.

In the eyes of many, the 2017 storms underscored the case for a distributed and renewable energy system, something RMI has worked toward in the Bahamas since 2014.

After the hurricanes, RMI's energy transition work became more urgent. And as post-Dorian humanitarian efforts in the Bahamas evolve into longer-term planning, RMI said it will translate its experience there and in other parts of the Caribbean to rebuilding the areas Dorian impacted most heavily.

Working alongside national utility Bahamas Power and Light (BPL) and the Caribbean Electric Utility Services Corporation, RMI says its efforts to engineer a more resilient system for the country could provide a blueprint for other electricity grids as the effects of climate change intensify.

"The government and the utility have asked us to support them in redesigning the new electricity system on the Abaco Islands," said Locke. "We'll be doing that with the hypothesis that a decentralized renewable system will be optimal both from a cost and resiliency perspective."



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RMI established its Islands Energy Program in 2014 to help transition island partners “from a heavy dependence on fossil fuels to a diverse platform of clean energy and energy efficiency.” So far, the program has worked with 15 countries in the Caribbean.

Most longstanding electric grids, including the grid in the Bahamas, favor a centralized, fossil-fuel-based electricity system that uses transmission and distribution to bring electrons from the source of their generation to consumers.

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