

Puerto Rican hands help Haiti recover electricity

BY GINA M. HERNÁNDEZ
gina@caribbeanbusinesspr.com

A team of four Puerto Rico Electric Power Authority (Prepa) technicians deployed in Haiti, has already inspected 700 distribution posts, started tests on Port-au-Prince substations and conducted a partial inspection of its generating plants to assess damages caused by the Jan. 12 earthquake that struck Haiti's capital.

In addition, they expect to have about 12 megawatts available this week to start giving electric service to sectors in Port-au-Prince, announced Prepa Executive Director Miguel A. Cordero.

On a mission to rehabilitate Port-au-Prince's electric infrastructure, the team of specialists—José Collazo Laracunte, Jessel Martínez Butler, José Márquez Martínez and Nelson Vélez Ruiz—has the logistics support of the Dominican Electric Co. and of the U.S. Department of Energy.

This first assessment report also indicates that the fieldwork will

continue organizing inspection groups and focusing on nine substations, as well as transmission lines surrounding Port-au-Prince.

Meanwhile, electrical & computer engineers at the Laboratory for Applied Remote Sensing & Image Processing (LARSIP) at Mayagüez' University of Puerto Rico (UPR) campus supported scientists from the Rochester Institute of Technology (RIT) in data collection, transfer and analysis efforts to assess damages caused by the earthquake.

For five days, RIT scientists flew over Port-au-Prince with high-tech digital imaging equipment that allows them to produce a detailed map of the disaster zone.

According to LARSIP Director Miguel Vélez, there are two parts to the assessment: visible damages (bridges, roads, etc.) and hidden damages (trapped bodies, gas leakages, etc.). High-tech imaging also lets scientists identify where the refugees are relocating. "It makes the assessment much more accurate," said Vélez. ■