

INFORMATION BULLETIN



International Federation of Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies
Fédération Internationale des Sociétés de la Croix-Rouge et du Croissant-Rouge
Federación Internacional de Sociedades de la Cruz Roja y de la Media Luna Roja
الاتحاد الدولي لجمعيات الصليب الأحمر والهلال الأحمر

UNITED STATES: HURRICANE KATRINA

1 September 2005

The Federation's mission is to improve the lives of vulnerable people by mobilizing the power of humanity. It is the world's largest humanitarian organization and its millions of volunteers are active in over 181 countries.

In Brief

This Bulletin (no. 02/2005) is being issued for information only, and reflects the status of the situation and information available at this time. The Federation is not seeking funding or other assistance from donors for this operation at this time.

For further information specifically related to this operation please contact:

- In the United States: American Red Cross National Headquarters, Stacy Ragan, Operations Lead; email ragans@usa.redcross.org; phone 1-202-303-5089; fax 1-202-303-0059; Stephanie Millian, Media and Public Affairs; email millianst@usa.redcross.org; phone 1-202-303-5551; Nadia Mitchem, Fundraising; email mitchemn@usa.redcross.org; phone 1-202-303-4826
- In Geneva for all enquiries from National Societies:
- Linda Stops, Operations Coordinator, Operations Support Department, Geneva; email linda.stops@ifrc.org, phone 41-22-730-4300, fax 41-22-733-0395
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All International Federation assistance seeks to adhere to the [Code of Conduct for the International Red Cross and Red Crescent Movement and Non-Governmental Organisations \(NGO's\) in Disaster Relief](#) and is committed to the [Humanitarian Charter and Minimum Standards in Disaster Response \(Sphere\)](#) in delivering assistance to the most vulnerable.

For longer-term programmes in this or other countries or regions, please refer to the Federation's Annual Appeal. For support to or for further information concerning Federation programmes or operations in this or other countries, or for national society profiles, please also access the Federation's website at <http://www.ifrc.org>

The Situation

Now a tropical depression, Katrina's maximum sustained winds are near 30 mph, with higher gusts. The storm continues to push through the Ohio Valley causing severe flooding. Flood and flash flood watches or warnings are in effect for portions of Alabama, Indiana, Tennessee, Kentucky, West Virginia, Ohio, Pennsylvania, New York, Vermont, Massachusetts, Connecticut, New Hampshire, and Maine.

As the storm moved north multiple tornadoes were reported in states along its path. A tornado watch was in effect for portions of Kentucky, Tennessee, West Virginia, Virginia, North Carolina, South Carolina and Georgia until 9:00 pm (EDT) on Tuesday, 30 August.

Casualty estimates from the storm vary, but extend into the hundreds. Extensive wind and water damage is currently being assessed throughout the gulf states of Louisiana, Mississippi and Alabama where an estimated two million customers reportedly lost power. Entergy, just one of the primary companies in the region reported an estimated 790,000 customers in Louisiana and 300,000 customers in Mississippi without power as of Tuesday, 30 August. The company reports an anticipated "long and difficult restoration." Gulf Power, which serves Alabama

and the panhandle of Florida, reported that electricity has been restored for more than 51,000 of its customers who lost power.

Although spared a widely feared direct hit, New Orleans experienced significant power outages, wind damage, and serious flooding. Boil water alerts have been issued throughout the region. The mayor of New Orleans has declared that 80 percent of the city is under water, and media sources report the water level still rising, due in part to broken levees and failed water pumps in the city. Throughout the day on Tuesday, 30 August, streets continued to flood, including those not already affected by the storm. Gas leaks are the suspected cause of multiple fires that have erupted throughout the city. The US Coast Guard and other emergency personnel continue to rescue people trapped in homes due to the flood waters.

People who are rescued via boat and helicopter and some who are able to move on their own have been going to the Superdome, the local football stadium, for shelter. Emergency officials decided on Wednesday, 31 August, officials decided that at least 25,000 of Hurricane Katrina's displaced residents, a majority of them at the New Orleans Superdome, will be moved to alternate shelter facilities. Buses will convoy to Houston and will be sheltered at the Astrodome, which has not been used for professional sporting events in years. Evacuees with special problems already have been evacuated to hospitals in other Louisiana cities, but the 23,000 people now confined to the Superdome, as well as some other refugees will go to Houston, about 350 miles away.

, A curfew remains effective in New Orleans from dusk until dawn. The Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA) reports that the storm's survivors face months of displacement. FEMA is preparing to house thousands of victims, likely for several months.

Red Cross and Red Crescent action

As the full extent of Hurricane Katrina's devastation is revealed, the task ahead dwarfs the capacity of any one organization to respond. To meet the needs of the thousands of Americans facing loss, the American Red Cross (ARC) will work shoulder-to-shoulder with its partners in the federal government and the non-profit community. The American Red Cross is coordinating efforts with local, state and federal agencies and partners to meet the enormous needs of so many thousands across seven states. The American Red Cross is undertaking historically unprecedented relief efforts to bring lifesaving aid to tens of thousands left devastated by Katrina. The ARC is focused on providing life's most elemental essentials—food, shelter and water.

The American Red Cross is currently operating more than 250 shelters across seven states, providing a safe haven for nearly 53,000 evacuees—many of whom have been left homeless by Katrina. Since the night of the storm, the number of victims seeking refuge in Red Cross shelters has tripled. The first priority is meeting the urgent, critical needs of those people, which includes providing emergency shelter, food and water. The ARC is mobilizing to provide blankets, food, and safe places to stay and has already dispatched cots and blankets to shelters in Louisiana, Texas and Arkansas. Along with partners, the Red Cross is mobilizing efforts and preparing sites for more than 15 kitchens, with a capacity to feed more than 350,000 residents daily, with additional capacity en route. The ARC is also in the process of acquiring 50,000 additional meals ready to eat (MRE). In addition, 288,000 heater meals are ready for distribution in Baton Rouge, Louisiana, with another 150,000 in Montgomery, Alabama.

Red Cross staff have been mobilized to Mississippi, Louisiana, Florida, and Texas. The ARC is working to obtain security for their headquarters, shelters, kitchen and other requested facilities sites and an evacuation plan for the headquarters facility has been completed. The ARC is working with FEMA for equipment requests (fuel, dry boxes, generators, dumpsters, grey water containers, ice, water, forklifts, pallet jacks, shower units, port), and has 2,500 clean-up kits and 5,000 comfort kits ready for distribution in Mississippi.

The ARC is currently working to establish a wide area communication plan and to set up coordinated communication networks for the affected areas. The ARC worked with Local Amateur Radio Club in Baton Rouge, Louisiana to establish communication between chapters and shelters and has shipped 20 generators and 80 cell phones to Louisiana.

Disaster Tracing

The American Red Cross is only able to process disaster tracing cases which involve medical or mental health emergencies. Examples of emergency requests which will be accepted include those regarding individuals who are insulin-dependent diabetic, oxygen-dependent, on dialysis, blind, handicapped, bedridden, or have some other medical emergency. Any requests that fall within these new criteria should be sent to:

International Family Tracing Services at American Red Cross

Fax: +1-202-303-0058

E-mail: intltracing@usa.redcross.org

The American Red Cross is unable to accept any other types of disaster tracing requests for Hurricane Katrina. At this time American Red Cross relief efforts are focused on providing food and shelter to the thousands of victims. With widespread power and communications outages and thousands displaced, families are naturally concerned about their loved ones in the disaster affected areas. The following information should be provided to concerned relatives.

- Rest assured that emergency responders are working as quickly as possible and are doing all that they can to help those affected.
- Remember that storms mean power outages and downed phone lines. Please be patient and keep trying to contact loved ones by phone.
- Phone lines are often overwhelmed after a disaster. Try sending an email if you can—sometimes email works when phones don't.
- Try to contact other friends or family members outside of the disaster area who may have information.
- Information on injured or deceased foreign nationals will be relayed by the US State Department to the appropriate foreign embassy. If relatives overseas have still not heard from their relatives in the disaster affected area after a number of days, they may contact their foreign ministry for possible information.

Fundraising

National Societies interested in supporting the response to Hurricane Katrina are invited to contact American Red Cross national headquarters (Nadia Mitchem, phone 1-202-303-4826) directly. The American Red Cross has been contacted by National Societies interested in making a financial contribution and has made arrangements with them for accepting funds.

The total amount raised for this effort as of 31 August is USD 21 million. The American Red Cross Disaster Relief Fund enables the Red Cross to provide shelter, food, counselling, and other assistance to those in need for this disaster and other disasters across the country each year.

The ARC Public Affairs office has fielded over a thousand media calls from the international and local press. International media inquiries are now being fielded by the Media and Public Relations Unit of the International Federation of Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies in Geneva. ARC banners and print ads are being updated for this disaster. Key messages are being coordinated with Federal partners, including working on Welfare Information and creating Fact Sheets and other deliverables. The ARC is seeking to promote the message that the primary focus of the American Red Cross in the coming weeks will be on feeding and sheltering. The ARC is also providing a list of appropriate brochures to community services for public distribution to enhance awareness on safety information. The ARC is adjusting the content of these communications materials to focus on people using bottled water and less on water treatment due to the significant amount of flood water, chemicals, or other hazards that can compromise water sources. The ARC is also encouraging people living in the affected areas to make personal safety and the safety of others their highest priority and warns that rising flood waters, downed power lines and compromised structures present extreme danger.

The International Federation has offered support to the American Red Cross, should there be a need. Dialogue is ongoing as regards possible assistance from participating National Societies, from the Federation's Pan American Disaster Response Unit (PADRU), located in Panama City, Panama, or through the Federation's international disaster response mechanisms.

The American Red Cross webpage (www.redcross.org) contains additional information about the response to Hurricane Katrina, as well as information on donating to the National Disaster Relief Fund.

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