

Information bulletin



International Federation
of Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies

Costa Rica: Earthquake

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This bulletin is being issued for information only. An earthquake measuring 6.2 on the Richter scale hit Costa Rica at 1:22 pm local time on 8 January 2009. Preliminary reports indicate that several people were killed, injured, some are missing and infrastructure has been damaged, isolating several communities. According to the Costa Rican Seismologic Observatory the epicentre was located 10 km. east from the Poas Volcano, in the province of Alajuela, north of the capital city of San Jose. The earthquake was felt throughout the country and even in some border communities in neighbouring Panama.

The Costa Rican Red Cross (CRRC) and the International Federation are in the process of requesting funds from the Disaster Relief Emergency Fund (DREF) in order to cover evacuation, search and rescue activities, provide pre-hospital care, temporary shelter and carry out additional assessments.

[<Click here for detailed contact information>](#)

Costa Rican Red Cross rescue workers along with local authorities found two dead children in Alajuela. Source: La Nacion



The Situation

On Monday 5 January, the first quake, a lighter one, was registered 5 km east from the Poas Volcano. On Thursday 8 January an earthquake measuring 6.2 on the Richter scale trembled over Costa Rica with the epicentre located about 35 km from the capital city of San Jose and 10 km. away from the Poas Volcano, a major tourist attraction. More than 1,000 aftershocks have been felt since then. The earthquake affected the central provinces of Alajuela, Heredia, San Jose and Cartago, which make the Central Valley. The earthquake caused landslides and mud flows blocking main roads and isolating communities. Approximately, six houses have collapsed and infrastructure including one bridge and six access roads are blocked delaying rescue workers from reaching the affected zones. The most affected communities are Cinchona and Vara Blanca located north of Heredia, province neighbouring Alajuela. According to the National Emergency Commission (NEC), latest reports confirm that 6 people died, 91 people are injured, 42 are missing and 2,377 are directly affected. Also, 1,228 people are housed in seven emergency shelters, 1,246 people are isolated and 36 are trapped in rubble.

Authorities have issued a preventive red alert for five districts, but report that the situation is under control. The government has sent messages to the population to remain calm, but to make reserves of drinking water and preparations to leave their homes in case strong aftershocks should occur. All national emergency committees

have been activated. Thus far, the main needs identified are non perishable food items (milk, water), hygiene items, kitchen items, blankets and mattresses. As government agencies and the Costa Rican Red Cross continue performing damage and needs assessments, additional needs will be identified and any development on the situation will be informed.

Red Cross and Red Crescent action

The CRRC search and rescue teams responded to the emergency minutes after the event occurred and tried to reach the people in the affected areas, evacuating them and providing first aid care. The relief committee, national counsel and relief operation directory have been activated. The main actions of CRRC are to carry out damage and needs assessments, search, rescue and evacuation activities. The CRRC is also providing pre-hospital care to the affected people. Activities have begun in the management of emergency shelters. 20 Red Cross auxiliary committees are currently operating and 60 others are on alert. CRRC has sent four relief officers, National Intervention Teams (NITs) with the logistic support of approximately 400 men and women volunteers and more than 40 vehicles (4 x 4, rescue, ambulances) and one all terrain vehicle (unimog) to the affected zones.



The earthquake damaged electric poles which are blocking roads in an affected area. Source: La Nacion.

The Emergency Operations Center in San Jose has been activated for 24 hours to tabulate and centralize all information received from the field. A helicopter from the CRRC has been dispatched to the affected area to assess the damages. The Costa Rican Red Cross is working in a preliminary Plan of Action that will be elaborated and detailed in the DREF bulletin that will be issued once funds are approved. This preliminary Plan of Action will focus on monitoring and evaluating the situation, maintaining the response teams in the field to assist in rescue, evacuation and shelter activities. The main objective at this moment is to complete damage and needs assessments, reach isolated communities, and commence distributions of relief items such as water and food items.

The International Federation through its Pan American Disaster Response Unit (PADRU) and the Central America Regional Representation are in constant communication with the National Society in order to provide support. A PADRU disaster management delegate is in the field providing support to the Costa Rican Red Cross and PADRU's regional shelter advisor is participating in meetings with several UN agencies in Panama to coordinate relief response actions.

How we work

All International Federation assistance seeks to adhere to the [Code of Conduct for the International Red Cross and Red Crescent Movement and Non-Governmental Organizations \(NGO's\) in Disaster Relief](#) and is committed to the [Humanitarian Charter and Minimum Standards in Disaster Response \(Sphere\)](#) in delivering assistance to the most vulnerable.

The International Federation's activities are aligned with its Global Agenda, which sets out four broad goals to meet the Federation's mission to "improve the lives of vulnerable people by mobilizing the power of humanity".

Global Agenda Goals:

- Reduce the numbers of deaths, injuries and impact from disasters.
- Reduce the number of deaths, illnesses and impact from diseases and public health emergencies.
- Increase local community, civil society and Red Cross Red Crescent capacity to address the most urgent situations of vulnerability.
- Reduce intolerance, discrimination and social exclusion and promote respect for diversity and human dignity.

Contact information

For further information specifically related to this operation please contact:

- **In Costa Rica:** Miguel Carmona Jimenez, President Costa Rican Red Cross; email: presidencia@cruzroja.or.cr; phone: (506) 2233-7033; fax: (506) 255-3098.
- **In Panama:** Ariel Kestens, Head of Pan American Disaster Response Unit, Panama; email: ariel.kestens@ifrc.org; phone: (507) 316 1001; fax: (507) 316 1082.
- **In Costa Rica:** Jean-Pierre Taschereau, Operations Coordinator, PADRU; email: jp.taschereau@ifrc.org; phone: (507) 316-1001, fax: (507) 316-1082; cell phone: (507) 6677 6347.
- **In Panama:** Fabricio Lopez, Regional Representative of the Regional Representation Office for Central America and Mexico; email: fabricio.lopez@ifrc.org; phone: (507) 380 0250; fax: (507) 317 1304.
- **In Panama:** Maria Alcázar, Resource Mobilization Coordinator for the Americas; email: maria.alcazar@ifrc.org; phone: (507) 380 0250; fax: (507) 317 1304.
- **In Geneva:** Pablo Medina, Operations Coordinator for the Americas; e-mail: pablo.medina@ifrc.org; phone: (41) 22 730 4300.

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