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Information bulletin

Mongolia: Snowstorm

 International Federation
of Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies

Glide number: ST-2019-000046-MNG	Date of issue: 14 May 2019
Date of disaster: 10 May 2019	Point of contract: Munguntuya Sharavnyambu, Disaster Management Programme Manager
Categorization of disaster: Yellow	
Host National Society: Mongolian Red Cross Society (MRCS)	
Number of people affected: 500 (approximate)	
N° of other partner organizations involved in the operation: Government agencies (local emergency management, meteorology office, local police)	

This bulletin is being issued for information only, and reflects the current situation and details available at this time. The Mongolian Red Cross Society (MRCS), with the support of the International Federation of Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies (IFRC), is not seeking external assistance at this time, but continues to monitor the evolving situation.

The situation

Heavy snowfall and violent wind gusts hit southern parts of the country including Khentii, Tuv, Dornogovi, Umnugovi, Bayankhongor, Uvurkhangai, and Govi-Altai provinces between 10 May and 11 May 2019. As stated by NAMEM¹, wind speeds fluctuated between 18 and 24 m/s (-17 degrees Celsius wind chill factor²) and reached 28 to 30 m/s (-24 degrees Celsius wind chill factor), in Altai, Tonkhil, and Sharga soums³ of Govi-Altai province, and Jinst soum of Bayankhongor province. Even though early warnings were disseminated through media channels, including television and radio, social media by local meteorology offices, and emergency management agencies on 10 May, there were many calls from herders to emergency agencies for losing their livestock in the snowstorm. Most herders had their livestock grazing out in the field as it was tranquil in the morning, and then a sudden change of weather occurred within 30 to 40 minutes, according to the herders.

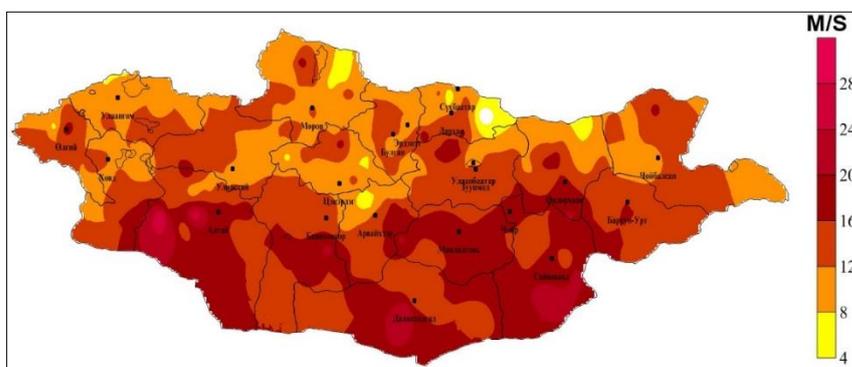


Figure 1: Highs of wind speed between 6 May – 13 May. (Map: NAMEM)

Snowdrifts and blowing snow induced poor visibility of less than 0.5 kilometers (as stated by herders) and disrupted movement between cities due to road closures in many areas. The weather forced livestock into the wilderness and severely affected the herdsman. The overall damage caused by the snowstorm in Mongolia has not yet been officially announced, but known losses include 20 households from 8 soums in Umnugovi province that lost about 3,000 livestock in sheep units⁴, while another 10 households are still looking for their lost livestock.

¹ National Agency for Meteorology and Environmental Monitoring (NAMEM).

² Goodcalculators.com/wind-chill-factor.

³ A sum or soum is the second level administrative subdivision below the Aimags (provinces), roughly comparable to a County in the United States.

⁴ In sheep units, a camel is equal to 9 sheep, a horse to 7 sheep, a cow to 5 sheep, a goat to 0.9 sheep.



A vehicle stuck in the snow. (Photo: Montsame)

Also, roughly 2,000 horses from Delgerekh and Ikhkhet soums were driven across the border to China in Dornogovi province, and 11,592 livestock in sheep units perished during the snowstorm in Zuunbayan-Ulaan, Bogd, and Guchin-Us soums of Uvurkhangai province.

The most tragic cases happened in Umnugovi province in which three (3) persons in Tsogt-tsetsii soum and one (1) person in Sevrei soum got lost in the snowstorm and were later found dead by the local emergency management agency around midnight on 12 May, and in Bogd soum of Uvurkhangai province where two (2) persons were found dead on 13 May. The police stated that most people started wearing thinner clothes and, since the weather had been warmer, the sudden snowstorm caught them off guard. The victims seem to have gotten lost while following their livestock, which had been driven off by the storm. Massive

snowfall (25 to 30 cm, as stated by local authorities) accumulated and is now melting, causing a potential risk of flash floods in Sevrei and Tsogttsetsii soums of Umnugovi province.

Red Cross and Red Crescent action

Umnugovi MRCS Branch Emergency Team along with Umnugovi emergency management agency assisted to dig out at least 1000 sheep that had been trapped under snow near Dalanzadgad soum. MRCS Branch Secretaries will join Emergency Commissions as members to update MRCS Headquarters (HQ) with timely information and decisions. National Disaster Response Team (NDRT) and Branch Disaster Response Team (BDRT) members are on high alert, if an operation will be taken into action.



Team works to save livestock under snow. (Photo: Altangerel.B)

Overview of non-RCRC actors in country

As mentioned above, early warnings were disseminated by both local emergency management agencies and the meteorology office. Local emergency management agencies deployed search and rescue teams along with specialized units from local police agencies to track missing people and livestock as calls were received from the people. Currently, Ulaanbaatar – Dornogovi – Ulaanbaatar, Ulaanbaatar – Khentii – Ulaanbaatar, and Ulaanbaatar – Umnugovi – Ulaanbaatar roads have been closed for safety reasons. In addition, NAMEM has also warned of another potential storm on 14 May night.



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How we work

All IFRC assistance seeks to adhere to the [Code of Conduct](#) for the International Red Cross and Red Crescent Movement and Non-Governmental Organizations (NGOs) in Disaster Relief and the [Humanitarian Charter and Minimum Standards in Humanitarian Response \(Sphere\)](#) in delivering assistance to the most vulnerable. The IFRC's vision is to inspire, **encourage, facilitate and promote at all times all forms of humanitarian activities** by National Societies, with a view to **preventing and alleviating human suffering**, and thereby contributing to the maintenance and promotion of human dignity and peace in the world.

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Save lives.
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and strengthen recovery
from disaster and crises.



Enable **healthy**
and **safe** living.



Promote social inclusion
and a culture of
non-violence and **peace**.
