

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

CENTRAL AMERICA/CARIBBEAN: TROPICAL STORM

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This Information Bulletin is being issued for information purposes only. The Federation is not seeking any funding or other assistance from donors for this operation at this time.

The Situation

Winds caused by tropical Storm “Chantal” were today lashing Mexico’s Yucatán Peninsula, gusting at 110 kilometres per hour. Reports say two fishermen are missing and at least 500 families have been evacuated from low-lying areas. The storm is expected to grow in intensity over its predicted life of three more days. The storm is the third of the hurricane season.

On Sunday, 19 August, a state of alert was declared on the Yucatán Peninsula and a hurricane watch was in place from Belize city northwards to Cancún. A tropical storm warning remains in place for the entire coastline of Belize. Last week, Chantal passed over the Antilles without causing significant damage and then lost strength, regaining intensity last Friday. In both Jamaica and the Cayman Islands tropical storm warnings were issued. Lightning killed two people in Trinidad and Tobago on 16 August. Honduras and Costa Rica declared a state of emergency on 17 August. In Honduras, the permanent emergency commission advised all regional emergency organisations to be on alert along the Caribbean coast and recommended that fishing boats not put to sea.

Should the storm increase to 118 kilometres per hour, Chantal would become a category one hurricane.

Red Cross/Red Crescent Action

The Mexican Red Cross arranged for a trailer with a total of 28 tons of relief goods including food, clothing and emergency first aid goods to be sent to the State of Mérida on the Peninsula of Yucatán. Four additional trailers at the Mexican Red Cross logistics base in the state of Toluca are on standby for mobilisation in Cancún, Campeche, Tabasco and Mérida. A total of 375 volunteers are on call in the following areas: Cancún - 50; Merida - 120; Tabasco - 60; Campeche - 45; and Chiapas - 100. At 14.00

hours yesterday, a meeting was arranged with the governors of Mérida and Cancún to define the role of each body for any relief operation.

Previously, Costa Rica was on alert for heavy rains and the National Society organised an urgent prevention campaign for the population of the South Pacific region: Quepos, Parrita, Jacó and Perez Zeldón. On Sunday morning, 19 August, floods were reported in Sixaola and Talamanca in the department of Limón.

The regional delegations in Central America and the Caribbean as well as the Pan American Disaster Response Unit (PADRU) have been in contact with the National Societies of Mexico and Belize, and contingency plans are in place. Before Chantal made landfall, two landcruisers from the El Salvador delegation were en route to Guatemala, from where they could have been sent to Belize, if necessary. A water tanker from El Salvador was also on standby. The landcruisers would have been used to take a team from Guatemala to Belize or to Cancún, in the event of the local airport being closed. An experienced member of the regional intervention team is on standby in Mexico, ready for deployment. Furthermore, USD 3,000 has been released from PADRU for emergency use.

Needs

Depending on the damage incurred by tropical storm Chantal, and whether the storm takes on hurricane strength, the Red Cross Societies of Mexico and Belize, supported by the Federation's regional delegation in Guatemala, PADRU and the Federation, would undertake immediate damage and needs assessments in the affected regions.

Further information can be obtained from the Mexican Red Cross: Mr. Issac Oxenhaut, Relief Director, e-mail address desastres@supernet.com.mx, Ph: 52 5 395 1111

All International Federation Operations seek to adhere to the Code of Conduct and are committed to the Humanitarian Charter and Minimum Standards in Disaster Response (SPHERE Project) in delivering assistance to the most vulnerable.

For support to or for further information concerning Federation operations in this or other countries, please access the Federation website at <http://www.ifrc.org>

For longer-term programmes, please refer to the Federation's Annual Appeal.

Peter Rees-Gildea
Head, a.i.
Relationship Management Department

Santiago Gil
Head
Americas Department