

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

MEXICO: HURRICANE ISIDORE

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This Information Bulletin is being issued based on the needs described below reflecting the information available at this time.

The Situation

After hitting western Cuba with winds of up to 160 km/hour and heavy rains, forcing 250,000 to evacuate the Pinar del Rio province, hurricane Isidore hit the Yucatán Peninsula on 22 September and continues to impact on eastern Mexico.

As a result of the passage of the category 3 hurricane, trees were uprooted, roofs ripped from houses and some 70,000 people were evacuated from high risk, coastal areas. Winds of 180 km/hour hit the region as well as rains which have flooded 80% of the state capital, Mérida, with levels of flood water of between 20 and 30 centimetres. The town of Mérida is suffering from power cuts, blocked roads, failed communications and 70% of the electricity lines are down. Reports state that one person has died and some 30 people have been wounded. 18 shelters have been set up in the town of Mérida which are each accommodating an average of between 2,500 and 3,000 people (with a total of approximately 54,000 people). In Puerto Progreso which was evacuated and which is the most affected area, the hurricane has destroyed housing belonging to those living in absolute poverty.

Although the hurricane has now been downgraded to a tropical storm, on Monday, 23 September, further intense rainfall is expected and a storm surge of between 4 and 6 feet above normal is anticipated along the coast. Forecasters predict that Isidore will regain hurricane strength when it moves back into the Gulf of Mexico.

Red Cross/Red Crescent Action

The Mexican Red Cross (MRC) branches in the State of Yucatan: Quintana Roo, Campeche, and Tabasco took emergency preparatory measures and advised communities about the threats posed by the hurricane, and the precautionary steps to be taken to protect life and property. The state branch of Yucatán was involved in the evacuation of ports and high risk areas, together with the setting up of shelters.

To respond to the imminent needs as soon as landfall took place, on the evening of 20 September, the Mexican Red Cross mobilized a trailer containing 25 metric tonnes of food, clothing, kitchen sets, hygiene kits, basic medication and tents, to assist 5,000 persons in Mérida. These items were issued from the central warehouse of the National Society and have been distributed in the shelters. In addition, two relief

experts, a logistician and a doctor with specialized knowledge in shelter management, were deployed to the area. The airport has been closed given that the air traffic control equipment has been damaged.

Three ambulances are on the spot and there are five doctors, 50 paramedics and 2 nurses available. In addition, two centres have been set up in the town to receive donations. Food is currently being prepared by the army and it is estimated that food supplies will be required for a further ten day period for those with meagre resources who are living in the shelters.

The president of the state branch of the MRC, the national relief director, the state governor and other authorities which make up the state emergency committee met to exchange information and to define roles and responsibilities and allocate duties. The Mexican Red Cross has been designated the responsibility of carrying out the needs assessment; a first evaluation will take place over a two day period, followed by a more extensive evaluation over two weeks. At the headquarters of the state branch in Mérida, a team of 22 people was formed to carry out the assessment made up of 8 members of personnel from the Mexican Red Cross and 14 from state institutions who were trained by the MRC.

On the afternoon of 23 September, the Mexican Red Cross team began an initial damage and needs assessment in Puerto Progreso.

The Federation secretariat regional communication delegate in Mexico has been in close contact with the MRC, and is participating in planning meetings. He is also ensuring coordination with the PNS and members of the international community in Mexico. Ten regional intervention team (RITs) members in Mexico are on alert, as well as a Federation secretariat regional delegates in Central America, who will provide support, if requested. The regional delegation

The regional delegation in Guatemala has since Friday, 20 September, been in constant contact with the Mexican Red Cross (MRC). The Federation, through the regional delegation in Guatemala and the Pan-American Disaster Response Unit (PADRU), is coordinating all support to ensure effective assistance to the Mexican Red Cross.

Needs

It is not anticipated that international assistance will be required. However, there are immediate outstanding needs for food, water, blankets and petrol; the Mexican Red Cross is planning to apply for disaster response emergency (DREF) funds for the provision of further relief.

More information on the impact of the disaster and action taken by the Mexican Red Cross will be provided as soon as it is available.

For a full description of the National Society profile, see www.ifrc.org

For further details please contact :

- *Martín Gonzalez, Mexican Red Cross National Headquarters; Phone (52-55) 3951111 Fax (52) 5 3951598, Mobile (52-55) 91090779, email cruzroja@mexporta.com*
- *Fabricio López, Federation secretariat regional communication delegate, Phone: (52-55) 5255 4355; Mobile (52-55) 31431687; e-mail: fabricio1@cruzroja.org*
- *Josephine Shields, Guatemala Regional Delegation, Mobile (502) 301-0070, Fax (502) 363-1449, email: ifrcgu04@ifrc.org*
- *Olaug Bergseth, Americas department, Phone 41 22 730 45 35; Fax 41 22 733 0395; email bergseth@ifrc.org*

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.

John Horekens
Director
External Relations

Santiago Gil
Head
Americas Department