

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

COOK ISLANDS: TROPICAL CYCLONE OLAF

18 February 2005

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

In Brief

This Information Bulletin (no. 01/2005) is being issued for information only. The Federation is not seeking funding or other assistance from donors for this operation at this time.

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The Situation

Tropical Cyclone Olaf changed course and skirted around Samoa between February 14 and 16, 2005 (Samoa local time) with wind speeds reaching more than 200 kilometres per hour. The Samoa National Disaster Council reported that no injuries or major damage were sustained.

Now rated at category four, Cyclone Olaf is (at the time of writing) heading south-east. Its present course is expected to pass between about 300-350km to the west of the Southern Cooks and to the east of Niue in the next 12-24 hours, remaining at category four – a strong tropical cyclone. The Cook Islands Red Cross (CIRC) reports that Rarotonga is now experiencing heavy seas and high winds.

Olaf is the third cyclone to threaten the Cook Islands in the past two weeks. No casualties were reported as a result of the first two, tropical cyclones Meena and Nancy, but some buildings and other infrastructure were damaged. About 30-40 per cent of homes on Rarotonga were without electricity or communications yesterday, but these services have since been restored. The Cook Islands Emergency Operations Centre reports that approximately 60 houses on Rarotonga suffered damage to their roofs. On the island of Palmerston, sea water is reported to have surged up to 100 meters inland as Cyclone Olaf drew nearer. No information was available at the time of writing about casualties or damage. Numbers of people in the Cook Islands in general affected by the series of cyclones was not yet available either.

Red Cross and Red Crescent action

The Cook Islands Red Cross is responding to needs arising from cyclones Nancy and Meena as these become clearer (it is not anticipated that these needs will be extensive). For the past two days, CIRC volunteers have distributed relief items from disaster preparedness containers (see table 1, below).

Table 1. Relief items distributed by CIRC

Tarpaulins	68
Blankets	40
Kerosene lanterns	50
Candles	NA
Ropes	NA

The national society has also procured extra tarpaulins and ropes from local suppliers in preparation for Cyclone Olaf's approach. Unless it changes course in the next 24 hours, however, damage from Cyclone Olaf is not expected to be extensive.

The Federation's regional delegation for the Pacific, located in Suva, Fiji, has transferred FJD5,000 (or NZD4,200) to the CIRC for logistical support and the immediate replenishment of relief stocks. The CIRC has also been approached by the Canada Fund regarding a possible contribution of NZD20,000. New Zealand Red Cross, meanwhile, has indicated its willingness to contribute a further NZD5,000 for replenishment of stocks for disaster preparedness containers. The New Zealand and Canadian contributions are still to be finalised.

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