

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

UNITED STATES: HURRICANE KATRINA

29 August 2005

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

In Brief

This Bulletin (no. 01/2005) is being issued for information only, and reflects the status of the situation and information available at this time. The Federation is not seeking funding or other assistance from donors for this operation at this time.

For further information specifically related to this operation please contact:

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

For longer-term programmes in this or other countries or regions, please refer to the Federation's Annual Appeal. For support to or for further information concerning Federation programmes or operations in this or other countries, or for national society profiles, please also access the Federation's website at <http://www.ifrc.org>

The Situation

Hurricane Katrina was a category-five hurricane on the Saffir-Simpson scale as it churned towards the southern coast of the United States on Sunday. The powerful storm weakened slightly to a category-four hurricane just before making landfall in the southern state of Louisiana early Monday morning with winds at around 140 miles per hour. The storm is continuing to weaken as it moves over land, but is still battering the region with winds of more than 100 miles per hour.

According to the U.S. National Hurricane Centre, hurricane force winds are expected to spread as far as 125 miles inland along the storm's path, and rainfall is expected to total between 5 and 10 inches. Significant damage and flooding is expected to result from storm surges, which could reach up to 20 feet above normal tide levels. This is of particular concern in low lying coastal areas. The city of New Orleans is especially vulnerable as 70 percent of the city lies below sea level. According to local authorities, parts of city's system of levees and pumps have failed, leaving portions of the city under five to six feet of water. In the state of Mississippi, there are reports of up to ten

feet of water in some areas and extensive structural damage to buildings. It is expected that police and emergency workers will be able to enter the area late Monday afternoon to rescue stranded residents and assess damages.

The hurricane previously passed over southern Florida on Thursday, 25 August, causing extensive damage and killing at least eleven people. There are some 496,400 residents still without power in the Miami-Dade and Broward County areas.

In anticipation of the hurricane, local authorities urged residents to evacuate the area. In New Orleans, the local football stadium was opened as a last resort emergency shelter by the local government for 10,000 residents who were unable or unwilling to leave the city. Evacuated residents have been encouraged to bring with them at least five days worth of supplies as authorities say that it is likely that it will be several days after the passage of the storm before it is safe to return to affected areas.

The country's Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA) went into disaster mode Monday as it prepared for Katrina's aftermath. FEMA has emergency responders in place around New Orleans ready to move in once the storm passes. The Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) is also on alert as forecasters are predicting that the storm could cause oil and chemical spills. In addition, President Bush declared emergencies in Louisiana, Mississippi, Florida and Alabama in order to ensure that federal aid would be available to assist in the relief effort.

Red Cross and Red Crescent action

The American Red Cross has established multiple disaster relief operations in the Gulf Coast states. Disaster assessment is underway in southern Florida, but many roads remain blocked by debris and water. In Florida, shelters remain open where needed and mobile feeding is underway.

The Red Cross is launching the largest mobilization of resources for a single natural disaster, including the recruitment of 1,900 staff and volunteers. All available resources are moving to safe areas so relief efforts can begin immediately after the storm passes. More than 250 emergency response vehicles (ERVs) and countless other Red Cross resources are en route or on the scene to provide hot meals, snacks, bottled water and distribute other much-needed relief supplies. The Red Cross is opening shelters in support of the massive evacuations in all affected states. As of Monday, 29 August, some 230 Red Cross shelters had been opened in Mississippi, Louisiana and Texas, housing over 40,000 people. In coordination with the Southern Baptists, preparations have been made to provide more than 500,000 hot meals to storm-weary residents each day.

In addition, the American Red Cross has an experienced group of press officers who form the Rapid Response Team (RRT). The RRT deploys in pairs to facilitate and conduct preparedness and safety messages and interviews with national media on-site where communities are preparing for a storm to strike. This team stays in place, or move to the heaviest hit areas following the storm, to manage response messages until national and international media interest has subsided.

Disaster Welfare Inquiries

American Red Cross only processes disaster tracing cases which involve medical or mental health emergencies. Examples of emergency requests which will be accepted include those regarding individuals who are insulin-dependent diabetic, oxygen-dependent, on dialysis, blind, handicapped, bedridden, or have some other medical emergency. Any requests that fall within these criteria should be sent to:

International Family Tracing Services at American Red Cross

Fax: +202-303-0058

E-mail: intltracing@usa.redcross.org

The American Red Cross webpage (www.redcross.org) contains additional information about the Red Cross response to Hurricane Katrina, as well information about donating to the ARC's Disaster Relief Fund.

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