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Information bulletin

La Hispaniola: Tropical Storm Emily

 International Federation
of Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies

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This bulletin is being issued for information only, and reflects the current situation and details available at this time. The Haitian Red Cross (HRC) and the Dominican Red Cross (DRC), with the support of the International Federation of Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies (IFRC), have determined that external assistance is not required yet, and is therefore not seeking funding or other assistance from donors at this time.

As Tropical Storm Emily approached the Island of La Hispaniola with sustained winds of 85 km/h, the National Societies in Haiti and the Dominican Republic prepared themselves to monitor the situation and respond in a comprehensive way. Since both the Dominican Republic and Haiti are confronting a cholera outbreak, there is a general concern that the flooding produced by Tropical Storm Emily could exacerbate the situation.

At the moment, the Dominican Red Cross is coordinating with the governmental authorities, carrying out evacuations, and assessments, as well as assisting people currently staying in collective centres, and maintaining cholera control efforts. The Haitian Red Cross has opened an Emergency Operation Centre to maintain communications with all regional branches, and is working alongside Partner National Societies and the IFRC, to undertake awareness-raising activities by disseminating key preparedness messages.

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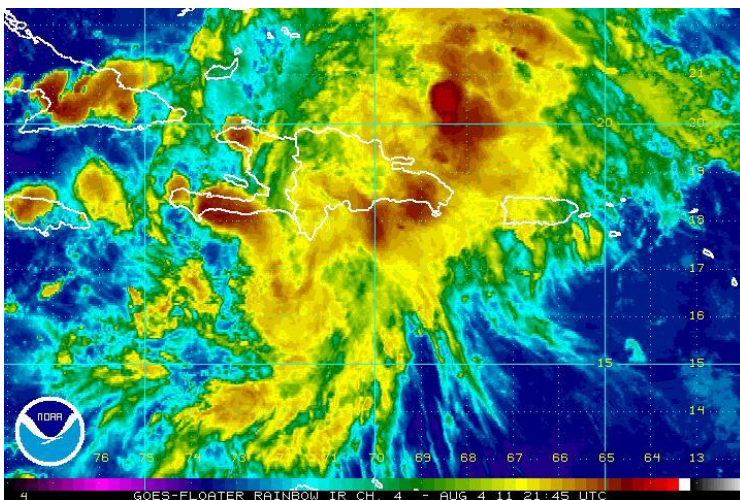
Volunteers from the Haitian Red Cross and the Dominican Red Cross have been mobilized as Tropical Storm Emily approached La Hispaniola Island. Source: HRC

The situation

Tropical Storm Emily approached La Hispaniola Island on 4 August 2011 with sustained winds that measured as high as 85 km/h and had stronger wind gust. The National Hurricane Centre (NHC) expected that Tropical Storm Emily could produce total rainfall accumulation of 15 to 30 cm (6 to 12 inches), with isolated pockets producing as much as 50 cm over the Dominican Republic and Haiti. However, the latest advisory of the NHC ([no. 13](#)) indicated that Emily lost organization in its interaction with the mountains of La Hispaniola and became an area of low pressure with sustained winds of 55 km/h.

On 3 August 2011, the National Emergency Operation Centre (NEOC) in the **Dominican Republic** had declared a red alert for 26 provinces, and a yellow alert for 6 more¹. As Tropical Storm Emily approached the island of La Hispaniola, the NEOC reported that the strongest rain was felt from the southern side of the central mountain range to the Caribbean plains and the south-western side of the Dominican Republic. On midday, 4 August, the number of displaced people registered by the NEOC had raised to 5,013 persons. Of these, 1,239 persons are currently sheltered in collective centres in the provinces of Barahona, San Juan, San Cristobal, Monte Plata and Santo Domingo. The storm has isolated nine communities. Access to six of these communities was severed as the rivers Masipetro (in the Monseñor Noel province) and Soco (San Pedro province) have over flown. In the province of Azúa, the three other communities were isolated after a bridge collapsed. At the moment, access to beaches and all fishing activities have been banned by the national authorities in Dominican Republic.

In **Haiti**, the Permanent Secretariat of Risk Management and Disaster (SPGRD) maintains a vigilance level of red alert and predicts persistent threats of heavy rainfall, strong winds, with risks of landslides and floods across the country including the South-East, West, South, Grand-Anse, Nippes, and Artibonite departments. Due to heavy rainfall overnight, flooding has already been reported in Colombier in the First Section of Savanette in Plateau Central, which is located on the border with the Dominican Republic. The Civil Protection Agency (Direction de la Protection Civile - DPC) reports that one house in Source-Gene has been destroyed. In addition, 76 volunteers of the Haitian Red Cross (HRC) evacuated 72 families last night in Jérémie as a precautionary measure, even though the families returned to their homes in the morning. If the situation worsens, in conjunction with the DPC, the HRC is prepared to evacuate 1,200 people to two emergency shelters. In Bas Artibonite, the focal point in the Red Cross branch reports that the Grande Saline city centre is flooded due the heavy rainfall experienced on 3 August 2011. Moreover, several houses have been reported as destroyed. In the South department, in Cayes, ten emergency shelters have been opened in preparation for evacuation of persons from their homes. Eighteen volunteers of the HRC will be working alongside DPC volunteers to support these shelters.



Source: National Hurricane Centre, National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration (NOAA).

Due to the complex emergency situation in La Hispaniola, the passing of Tropical Storm Emily could have serious consequences and bring an increased need for assistance. Some of these consequences could be: contamination of water sources, difficulty in managing basic sanitation, interruption of disease prevention campaigns and hygiene promotion, increase in cases of communicable diseases, impact on livelihoods, limited accessibility and destruction of infrastructures. As both the Dominican Republic and Haiti are confronting a cholera outbreak, Emily could have a strong impact on the population's health. The Pan American Health Organization (PAHO) as reported 388,958 reported cases of cholera, and

5,899 deaths by the 28 epidemiological-week in Haiti, while in the Dominican Republic there were 13,200 cases and 87 deaths by the 29 epidemiological-week.

Red Cross and Red Crescent action

As part of its response to Tropical Storm Emily, the **Dominican Red Cross** activated its crisis management room on 2 August 2011 and started 24 hours operations in coordination with the National Emergency Operation Centre. Approximately 1,012 volunteers and staff were activated, including National Intervention Teams, Damage and Need Assessments teams, and Water, Sanitation and Hygiene Promotion (WASH) teams. DRC volunteers have supported the preventive evacuation of the Yabacao community (Monte de

¹ In red alert: San Juan de la Maguana, Barahona, La Altagracia, La Romana, San Cristóbal, Monte Plata, Azua, Sánchez Ramírez, Pedernales, Monseñor Noel, La Vega, Peravia, San Pedro de Macorís, Santiago, Santo Domingo, Distrito Nacional, El Seibo, San Jose de Ocoa, Duarte, Independencia, María Trinidad Sánchez, Bahoruco, Espaillat, Hermanas Mirabal, Elias Piña. In yellow alert: Valverde, Puerto Plata, Samana, Santiago Rodríguez, Hato Mayor, Monte Cristi.

Plata province), assessed the needs of 221 families (856 persons) and prepositioned 24 water plants across the country. In order to prevent further spread of cholera due to the movement of persons looking for shelter, the Dominican Red Cross has deployed their Epidemic Control Teams to different collective centres. These teams are assessing, in coordination with the national authorities, sanitation services and access to safe drinking water, and are also promoting preventive measures.

The **Haitian Red Cross** has led the preparedness activities in view of Tropical Storm Emily. On 3 August, the National Society set up an Emergency Operations Centre at their headquarters in Port-au-Prince, with the support of the IFRC in-country personnel. The HRC is currently monitoring the situation and in communication with all the regional and local branches, whose volunteers are active and on standby to respond as needed. There is a HRC representative at the National Emergency Operations Centre as well, who support response coordination efforts with the national system and other non-government organisations (NGOs). In addition, the National Society has undertaken awareness-raising activities by disseminating key preparedness messages via SMS and on the ground. Furthermore, all eight patients from the HRC Cholera Treatment Center (CTC) in Carrefour Feuille have been evacuated to the Médecins Sans Frontières (MSF) CTC in Carrefour.

During the last 36 hours, **Partner National Societies** (PNSs) in-country have alerted vigilance committees, activated early warning systems, and begun disseminating key preparedness messages via SMS and on the ground through their volunteers. In addition, PNSs have been targeting specific communities to reinforce preparedness. PNSs have also been contributing resources and personnel to facilitate deployment of a Red Cross assessment team, in coordination with the HRC and the IFRC, which are on standby for deployment if and when needed.

The IFRC personnel in Haiti has also supported with the dissemination of key preparedness messages, some of which have been delivered in Port-au-Prince via a sound trucks, while reaching country-wide via SMS. On the other hand, the Pan American Disaster Response Unit (PADRU) has also open its Emergency Operation Centre and is monitoring the situation while coordinating with the regional representation for the Latin Caribbean and the IFRC personnel present in Haiti. In addition, the Regional Logistic Unit (RLU) is working alongside PADRU to inventory the current stock in Haiti to determine what actions could be supported with the pre-positioned items. Over the past months, emergency stocks for 25,000 families have been pre-positioned at strategic locations throughout the country for mobilization by HRC branches. Finally, a message was sent to Regional Intervention Team members to prepare themselves for a possible deployment if future circumstances demand it.

The response of the HRC, the DRC, PNSs and the IFRC is being designed in view of the complex situation in La Hispaniola. Both the Dominican Republic and Haiti are confronting a cholera outbreak, and there is concern that the effects produced by Tropical Storm Emily could exacerbate the situation. In addition, some 600,000 persons are still living in camps in Haiti after having been internally displaced as a result of the January 2010 earthquake.

Therefore, the IFRC, through the Americas zone office and the regional representation for the Latin Caribbean, will work alongside the National Societies to keep monitoring the situation in La Hispaniola during the following days after the passage of Emily to detect any increase of waterborne diseases, paying particular attention to cholera cases. Some of the main challenges related to the population's health that could be confronted by the Red Cross actors include the necessity to meet existing needs through a comprehensive approach; ensure the quality of water for the population; ensure appropriate minimum sanitation services; reestablishment of cholera prevention and hygiene promotion programmes immediately after the storm has passed; and ensure access to and quality of health centres in light of possible saturation of services.

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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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The IFRC's work is guided by Strategy 2020 which puts forward three strategic aims:

1. Save lives, protect livelihoods, and strengthen recovery from disaster and crises.
2. Enable healthy and safe living.
3. Promote social inclusion and a culture of non-violence and peace.