

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

AUSTRALIA: BUSHFIRES

26 January, 2003

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- *This bulletin is for information only. The Federation is not seeking any funding or other assistance from donors for this operation at this time.*

The Situation

Bushfires around the nation's capital Canberra are the worst in the city's history. The disaster, reportedly sparked by lightning has killed four people, destroyed more than 530 homes and forced 2,500 residents to flee. 260,000 hectares of national parkland in the neighbouring state of Victoria has also been destroyed. The total estimated cost of the damage is AUD150 million. More than 60 fires are also continuing to burn in New South Wales.

Red Cross/Red Crescent Action

The Australian Red Cross (ARC) was quick to respond when bushfires began raging in the Canberra area. The ARC registered more than 1,000 people evacuated from their homes.

The ARC is the lead agency for registration and has activated a National Registration and Inquiry System (NRIS). NRIS is a computer database used to assist family and friends to locate those who have been evacuated.

- Total number of inquiries - around 9,500
- Total registrations in Canberra - around 4,100
- Number of volunteers - over 200 taking calls 24 hours per day

Canberra remains on alert with high temperatures and gale force winds forecast. The ARC is the lead agency in the Australian Capital Territory's (ACT) disaster management plan

In Victoria over 40,000 meals have been prepared and served by catering teams since the outbreak of fires across the state. Evacuation/Emergency Relief Centres have been established in Wodonga (2 centres), Yackandandah, Chiltern, Beechworth, Bright, Omeo, Mt Beauty and Myrtleford. Five first aid posts in Myrtleford, Dartmouth, Corryong, Omeo and Bonang have been set up. Other services offered by ARC in Victoria include:

- Four registration posts in Bright, Omeo and Swifts Creek

- Four relief centres (evacuation centres) in Bright, Omeo, Corryong, Mitta Mitta
- Over 600 people treated by first aid teams to date
- Over 300 volunteers in the field assisting teams

In New South Wales, the situation remains unchanged. Teams are on standby and are able to be re-activated at short notice.

In Western Australia, volunteers have been stood-down from the call-centre but are on standby for re-activation. The call centre has processed 360 inquiries.

Financial donations

Financial donations can be made to the Canberra Bushfire Recovery Appeal at any branch of the Commonwealth Bank.

For more information visit www.canberraconnect.act.gov.au

Donations of accommodation, food, clothing and furniture

No further donations of clothing, food, blankets or furniture are required as there is now a stockpile. People who want to donate goods should wait for further advice through news services on what, if anything, is needed.

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

For further details please contact :

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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.

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