

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

CARIBBEAN: HURRICANE FRANCES

3 September 2004

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 Information Bulletin (no. 03/2004) 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

On Wednesday, 1 September, Hurricane Frances, at that time a category 4 storm, impacted the Turks and Caicos Islands. Hundreds of people were forced to evacuate their homes and fierce winds of over 145 mph tore tin roofs off houses and uprooted trees. Nevertheless, initial reconnaissance on both Grand Turk and Providenciales reveals that the damage is less than anticipated, and there is minimal flooding. No casualties have been reported. Further details are expected from the Sister Islands – South, Middle and North Caicos. Minor flooding was also reported in the Dominican Republic where 50 people were evacuated, 250 people were rescued, six houses were destroyed and a total of 50 families were affected. On 2 September, Hurricane Frances continued on its track towards the Bahamas where ferocious winds affected the south eastern Bahamas. Huge waves and winds of 120 mph were reported on San Salvador Island, home to around 900 people. Electricity and phone services were down on Long Island which hosts a population of some 3,000 people. There were also reports of severe damage to crops and localized flooding. The southern islands of Mayaguana, San Salvador, Long Island and Crooked Island have also reported some damage in infrastructure. However, the hurricane warning has now been lifted for the southern Bahamas. Hurricane Frances diminished in strength to a category 3 storm just before entering the New Providence and Elutheran islands area. Severe winds left a path of debris early on Friday, 3 September in the capital, Nassau, and power outages occurred. However, no significant damage has been reported in New Providence which continues to experience strong winds, as a result of which trees have been uprooted. Elutheran Island is currently under the eye of the storm and communications with the island have been lost.

A hurricane warning remains in effect for the east coast of Florida and some 2.5 million people were instructed to evacuate. Forecasters predict that the storm will make landfall in Florida at approximately midnight on Saturday, 4 September.

Red Cross and Red Crescent action

In Turks and Caicos, the Overseas Branch reports that Red Cross personnel are participating in the damage assessment and needs analysis teams, and debriefings are being held on both Grand Turk and Providenciales. More detailed reports from the islands of North, Middle and South Caicos are expected. The Providenciales Red Cross Centre will relocate to its offices on Monday morning, 6 September. A meeting to review damage reports was held this afternoon, 3 September on Providenciales Island. Minimal damage was incurred to schools, and the Social Welfare Department is offering assistance to those whose homes were affected. Moreover, the communities of Five Cays and Q Town, with significant Haitian populations, were little affected; two unofficial shelters located at the All Saints Church and another church in the Blue Hills area took in many members of the Haitian population. The Turks and Caicos Overseas branch will ensure that potential needs of the Haitian community are addressed. Assessments on Grand Turk and the sister islands are continuing. Official reports from the shelters are, as yet, unavailable.

Two disaster management delegates from the Pan American Disaster Response Unit (PADRU) have been deployed to the Bahamas and are in Nassau working with the Bahamas Red Cross Society (BRCS). The initial focus is on post impact reconnaissance and recovery mechanisms. The BRCS placed volunteers specialized in first aid in the 30 shelters opened in Nassau which have a capacity of 6,000 people. The volunteers are working with the Civil Defence Force and Social Services which were trained in shelter management by the National Society. Volunteers took duty turns in the Red Cross communications centre last night, 2 September. The President of the National Society is in contact with the National Emergency Management Agency (NEMA) which is providing regular updates on the situation.

The Bahamas Red Cross Society has a small stock of relief supplies including 150 kitchen sets, 150 hygiene kits, 100 plastic tarpaulins, 80 folding cots, 500 mattresses, 200 sheets and a large quantity of clothing. Planning is taking place in the event of the need to carry out distributions of food and non-food items to affected families.

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.

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