

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/UNITED STATES: HURRICANE FRANCES

6 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. 04/2004 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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All International Federation assistance seeks to adhere to the [Code of Conduct](#) and is committed to the [Humanitarian Charter and Minimum Standards in Disaster Response](#) in delivering assistance to the most vulnerable. For support to or for further information concerning Federation programmes or operations in this or other countries, or for a full description of the national society profile, please access the Federation's website at <http://www.ifrc.org>

The Situation

In the early morning of Saturday, 4 September, Hurricane Frances, weakened to a category 2 storm, swirled away from New Providence Island in the Bahamas which had been affected by hurricane conditions for some 26 hours. Following the storm's displacement, heavy flooding occurred on Grand Bahamas Island with one death reported.

Shelters in New Providence accommodated a total of 1,281 persons. Throughout the day on Saturday, the majority of the shelters were closed, together with those in the southern Bahamas. However, those in the northern Bahamas remained open as a result of heavy rainfall and flooding. The National Emergency Management Agency (NEMA) provided information regarding damage in the southern islands; however, exact numbers of those affected remain unconfirmed as a result of communications problems. An aerial survey of damage scheduled for Saturday morning could not take place as a result of poor weather conditions.

Hurricane Frances made landfall in the early morning of Sunday, 5 September, on Florida's east coast, some 35 miles north of West Palm Beach. The hurricane knocked out power in at least three million homes, downed trees and was accompanied by torrential rain. Frances was downgraded to a tropical storm during the afternoon of

Sunday as it moved towards Tampa on the west coast of Florida. Later, on the afternoon of Monday, 6 September, the storm crossed the state and a corner of the Gulf of Mexico and made a second landfall in Florida, 20 miles south of Tallahassee. The storm is forecast to continue in a north westerly direction, affecting Alabama and Georgia where states of emergency have been declared. A Federal Disaster Declaration has been issued by the Federal Emergency Management Association in 18 counties of the State of Florida.

Red Cross and Red Crescent action

The Bahamas Red Cross Society (BRCS) reported the evacuation of two emergency shelters, together with the distribution of relief items. National Society staff were unable to conduct assessments on Saturday given communications problems between the affected islands. However, on Sunday, 5 September improved weather conditions allowed assessments to take place in the southern Bahamas islands. The two disaster management delegates from the Pan American Disaster Response Unit (PADRU) deployed to the Bahamas, together with the President and Secretary General of the BRCS, participated in the assessment team. On Cat Island, home to 450 people, ten houses had structural damage to roofs and two houses were totally destroyed. On the Island of San Salvador, with a population of 1,200 people, five homes were destroyed and around 80 houses had incurred structural damage to roofs. Power lines were down, but were under repair. On Rum Key, there was minimal damage to around 70 per cent of roofing. On the island of Eluthera, there was also slight damage to roofing. On the islands further south, Mayaguana Island, Acklins Island, Crooked Island and Long Island only minor damage was sustained, particularly to roofing shingles; however, road infrastructure was affected on Crooked Island.

From information received to date, and although detailed assessments have yet to take place, it appears that Grand Bahamas has suffered more serious damage. Shelters are still open, housing up to 2,000 people, many of whom are from the Haitian community. There is currently no electricity or telephone service and water supplies are cut off. The Bahamas Red Cross Society is working in close coordination with the government in order to identify needs and ensure that assistance is provided.

The American Red Cross (ARC) is carrying out assessments and deploying staff and resources, as required. As of 6 September, 6,232 shelters were open in Florida, providing accommodation for some 57,000 people. A total of 222 emergency response vehicles were deployed and 3,866 volunteers and staff were mobilized to assist with the relief effort. In cooperation with the Southern Baptist Disaster Relief Services, the ARC has secured 40 kitchens with a capacity of 282,000 meals a day, which are ready for deployment. Several areas have been established for the pre-deployment of material and volunteer resources in Georgia, North Carolina and Florida. In addition, 500 people are working at the response centre supporting operations and responding to enquires focusing on shelter information, disaster preparedness and response activities, post-disaster assistance and recovery. To date, since preparation for Hurricane Charley began on 11 August, over 83,200 calls have been received. Hurricane Frances represents the largest pre-positioning and mobilization of resources for a natural disaster in the history of the American Red Cross.

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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