

Information bulletin



International Federation
of Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies

China: Snow disaster

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Unusual cold accompanied by heavy snow, sleet and ice has affected at least 19 provinces of China over the past two weeks. Touted as the worst winter storm to hit the central, eastern and southern provinces of China in more than five decades, the string of storms has brought a second bout of disaster to provinces already reeling from this past summer's floods. The affected provinces, according to authorities, include Hunan, Hubei, Guizhou, Guangxi, Jiangxi, Anhui, Henan, Shaanxi, Gansu, Ningxia, Qinghai, Xinjiang, Sichuan, Chongqing, Yunnan, Jiangsu, Shanghai, and Zhejiang. So far, reports indicate that Hunan, Hubei, Guizhou, Guangxi, Jiangxi and Anhui are the most severely affected provinces. According to Ministry of Civil Affairs, by 1 February, the unusual weather has so far caused the deaths of 60 individuals and forced nearly 1.76 million people to relocate, toppled 223,000 houses and damaged another 862,000 homes. At this stage, it is estimated that the economic losses amount to approximately CNY 53.9 billion (CHF 8.98 billion).

The Red Cross Society of China (RCSC) headquarters has called on all branch levels to take action in the emergency response, by mobilizing relief items from local disaster preparedness centres and dispatching local First Aid and medical teams. Unaffected Red Cross branches throughout China have been giving support to the affected areas as well.

The Red Cross Society of China is welcoming direct assistance for the provision of relief items to affected populations, especially cash contributions that can allow Red Cross branches to purchase items locally, rather than rely on disrupted transportation routes.

[<click here to view the map of the affected area, or here for detailed contact information>](#)

The Situation

For the past two weeks in the central, eastern and southern provinces of China, both snow and ice have covered vast areas, causing deaths, the collapse of structures and major disruptions in transportation. As these areas of the country do not receive government-supplemented heating, the people in these areas are facing exposure to an unusually cold environment, and with power lines down and transportation cut off, many people have been stranded with what supplies they have in their immediate surroundings.



The Hubei Red Cross visited families whose houses have collapsed under the weight of the heavy snow. RCSC

Chinese authorities are claiming that Hunan Province and the western Guizhou Province have been the worst hit by the unprecedented spell of severe weather. The Public Security Bureau of Hunan has sent daily text warnings to the province's drivers that number over a million, and information on road conditions are being broadcast around the clock.

In Nanjing, the capital of eastern Jiangsu Province, the accumulated snow reached a record 36 centimetres. About 250,000 people went out to clear the snow on Monday, answering a government call made on Sunday.

In the industrial city of Wuhan, in the central province of Hubei, 56 energy-intensive enterprises were required to cut power consumption. It is expected that 240,000 kilowatts of electricity would be saved in that way to meet the power demand of 120,000 households. Further power control measures could be imposed if necessary.

Eastern Jiangsu Province has seen 1,597 houses collapse under the heavy weight of the snow and at least 4,370 others have been damaged.



Many people suffered injury or death from collapsed housing, transportation accidents, and exposure to the cold conditions due to the severe weather. The Hubei Red Cross visited and provided assistance to those affected. RCSC

In the agricultural province of Jiangxi, where 13 people have died in snow-related accidents, 220,000 were forced to evacuate their homes and a total of 8.18 million have been affected. About 2,700 houses were toppled and 56,400 hectares of crops were destroyed by the snow.

In Anhui province, about half of the state and provincial highways have been crippled by the snow. With more than 11,000 vehicles piled up on the highways unable to either move forward or exit, the provincial authorities dispatched more than 8,000 traffic police to keep order on the 40-kilometre congested section. By 4 p.m. on 27 January, the snow had affected 5.97 million citizens and 3.93 million *mu* (some 648,500 hectares) of farmland in Anhui alone. At least 24,000 people are homeless, with 12,800 houses completely collapsed and another 49,600 damaged. The direct economic loss in Anhui is already estimated at CNY 1.6 billion (approximately CHF 267 million).

Public transportation across these massive regions of China has been paralyzed by snow. Millions of travelers are currently struggling to make their annual trip home as the Spring Festival, the most important Chinese holiday, is coming up on 6 February. Passenger build-up in Guangzhou has been especially heavy as the southern end of the Beijing-Guangzhou rail line, a north-south trunk railroad which experiences particularly heavy traffic during this season, has been paralyzed due to the snow in the central province of Hunan, where power transmission facilities have been knocked out. Adding to the woes, seven of the eight highways connecting Guangdong and Hunan provinces have been cut off. The Chinese Ministry of Railways mobilized 35 extra trains on the night of 27 January to help disperse about 500,000 passengers stranded at the station.

China's eastern business nucleus, Shanghai, halted rail ticket sales on 28 January, after 58 trains serving the municipality were delayed during a 12-hour period, which left about 30,000 passengers stranded. Trains traveling from Shanghai to southwestern Sichuan, Yunnan and Guizhou provinces were cancelled. The Shanghai railway bureau earmarked CNY 4 million (approximately CHF 667,000) for passengers who returned tickets. The disruptions also affected the Beijing and Wuhan transportation hubs. In Wuhan, more than ten trains made re-routed trips via the rail line linking Beijing and Shenzhen, a city bordering Hong Kong, in order to reach Guangdong.

The public transportation authorities in Shanghai sent out extra buses to major stations to deal with a surge of passengers as more people left their cars at home. Anti-skid devices were also installed on buses in Nanjing.

Airports in at least ten cities, including Wuhan, Nanjing, Guiyang and Changzhou, were closed temporarily on 28 January. At Shanghai Pudong International Airport, 96 international flights were cancelled or delayed on 27 and 28 January. The authorities reminded passengers to check flight information before heading to the airport. Huanghua airport in Changsha, Hunan's capital, has been closed for four consecutive days, and more than 10,000 stranded passengers have been temporarily accommodated in nearby hotels.

Food, winter clothes and winter tents are most needed by affected communities and stranded people on the roads. According to the Ministry of Civil Affairs, the response to the snow disaster is far more challenging than the response to flooding. It is hard to reach affected areas since roads and railways are cut off. Helicopters from the Armed Forces have already been mobilized to transfer emergency items.

It is predicted that this weather will continue over the weekend in the central, southern and eastern regions of China. The country is bracing for more bad weather this weekend as the National Meteorological Centre put the region on orange alert, the second highest rating on a scale of five.

Red Cross Red Crescent action

By 1 February, the RCSC headquarters mobilized 86,300 winter clothes, with a value of CNY 8 million (CHF 1.33 million), from regional disaster preparedness centres to the affected areas.

The RCSC has announced a national appeal for rice, winter clothes and winter tents, drinking water and food relief packages, medicines for asthmatic diseases and frostbite which are needed most. Since transportation routes have been paralyzed in many areas, the national society is asking for cash donations so that local RCSC branches can purchase relief goods and items locally, avoiding the delays caused by transportation challenges. There is also a big need for house reconstruction due to collapses from the heavy snow in some areas.

Besides a national appeal, Hunan and Chongqing Red Cross have announced an appeal to the general public for emergency relief donations as well.

The RCSC allocated 1,800 winter quilts to Guangdong on 30 January. These quilts will be distributed to stranded people along the Shao Guan section of the Beijing-Zhuhai Highway. Guangdong Red Cross sent medical teams to the Guangdong Railway stations to give medical help to stranded passengers and also distributed medicines for free.

The Shanghai Red Cross donated a total of CNY 2 million (approximately CHF 333,000) to affected areas in Guizhou, Anhui, Hunan, Hubei, Guangxi and Jiangxi provinces. This donation has been used to buy food and winter clothing.

The Anhui Red Cross received 6,500 pieces of winter clothes from the RCSC headquarters and these were distributed to the three most affected prefectures: Liu'an, Anqing, Chizhou. Meanwhile, Anhui Red Cross also received donations from Shanghai, Beijing, Macao and Qinghai Red Cross branches, totaling CNY 651,000 (CHF 108,000).

In Sichuan, the RCSC supported the distribution of 3,000 pieces of winter clothes and the Beijing Red Cross donated CNY 100,000 (CHF 16,667) for purchasing winter clothes to be distributed to the local people.

In Jiangxi, 10,000 winter clothes items were allocated from the Hangzhou Disaster Preparedness centres to assist the affected.



The RCSC distributed quilts, winter clothing and other relief items to affected populations suffering from exposure to the severe weather. RCSC

How we work

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

The International Federation's activities are aligned with its Global Agenda, which sets out four broad goals to meet the Federation's mission to "improve the lives of vulnerable people by mobilizing the power of humanity".

Global Agenda Goals:

- Reduce the numbers of deaths, injuries and impact from disasters.
- Reduce the number of deaths, illnesses and impact from diseases and public health emergencies.
- Increase local community, civil society and Red Cross Red Crescent capacity to address the most urgent situations of vulnerability.
- Reduce intolerance, discrimination and social exclusion and promote respect for diversity and human dignity.

Contact information

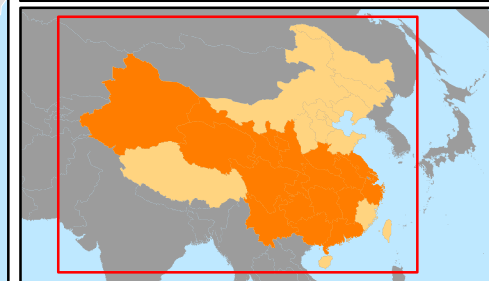
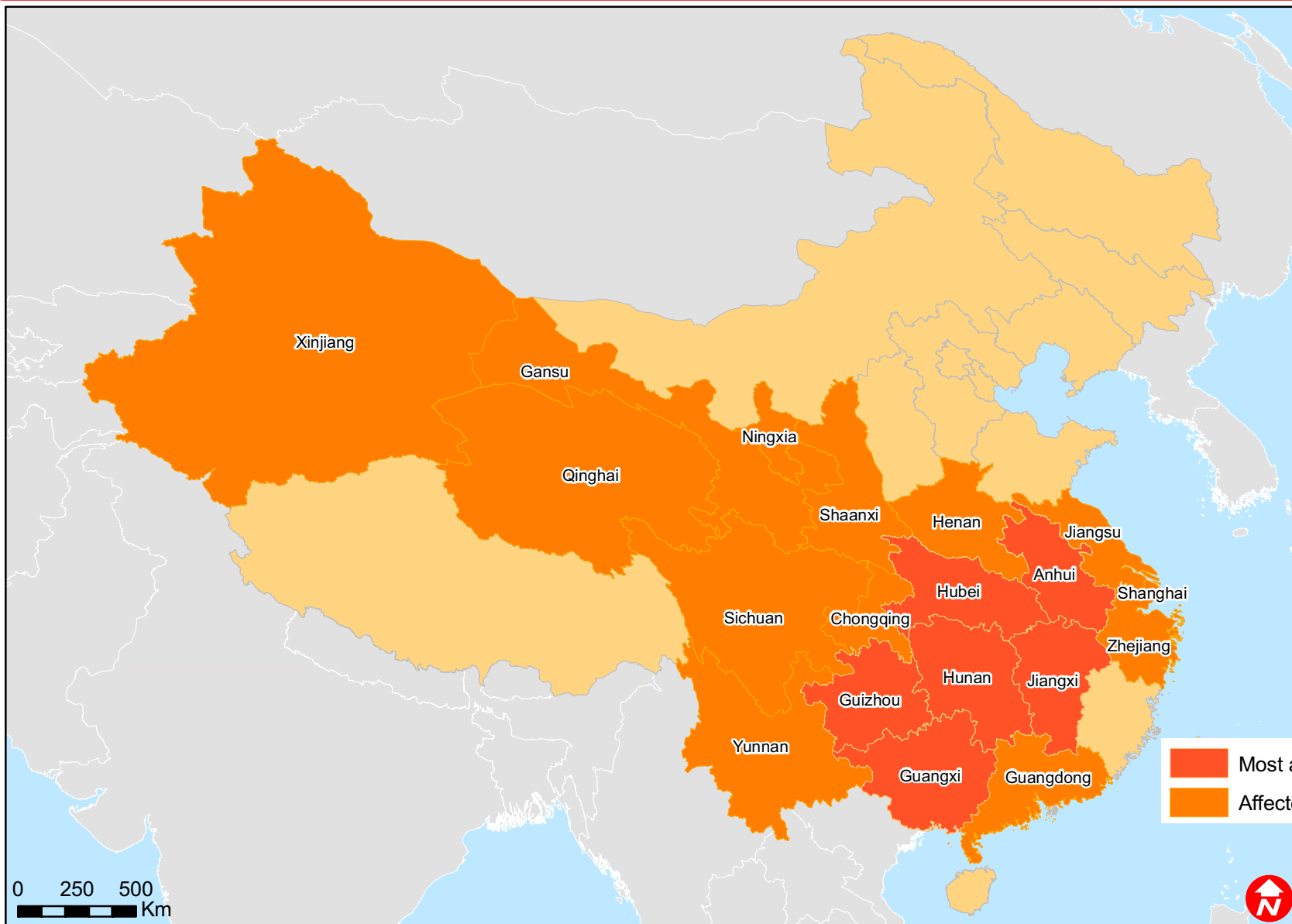
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[<map below: click here to return to title page>](#)



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The maps used do not imply the expression of any opinion on the part of the International Federation of the Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies or National Societies concerning the legal status of a territory or of its authorities.

Map data sources: ESRI, GIST, Federation