

# Information bulletin



International Federation  
of Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies

## China: Snow Disaster

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**This bulletin is being issued for information only.**

A new wave of ice and snow once again pounded the southern provinces of China on 4 and 5 February. The unusually low temperatures, ice and heavy snow have continued to plague 20 out of 31 provinces of China since 10 January. It is being touted as the worst winter disaster in more than five decades in most areas and the longest lasting blizzard in 100 years.

In the most severely hit areas, such as Guizhou and Hunan provinces, the basic infrastructure such as roads, communication lines and electrical facilities in many counties have been damaged. Hunan reported 30 to 60 millimetres of ice forming on electric wires. This has led to cut-offs in the supply of water and electricity, and has made it difficult to conduct disaster assessments and access the affected counties for the delivery of emergency relief. This has been especially dire for those communities in mountainous areas which have had no water and electricity over ten days and are unreachable by normal transport routes.

The Chinese government has emphasized that restoring transportation, electrical supply and people's normal livelihoods are current priorities in the relief work.

The Red Cross Society of China (RCSC) headquarters has dispatched five assessment and relief teams to the most affected areas in Hubei, Hunan, Guizhou, Guangxi, and Anhui provinces to support the provincial branches in combating the snow disaster. The teams have reported back that there is a great need to support people severely affected by the snow disasters, especially where roads are still blocked, and not accessible for relief supplies to be delivered. In light of this challenge, the RCSC has collected cash to send to local Red Cross branches to procure relief supplies locally. Hundreds of thousands of rural farmers' houses have collapsed due to the snow, all just before the most widely celebrated holiday in Chinese tradition. These people face a huge challenge in rebuilding their homes while the government is also looking to rebuild the basic infrastructure. For now, these people will have to stay in temporary shelters provided by the local government during the holiday season.

According to China's Meteorological Administration, these affected areas will see better weather during the long-awaited Spring Festival with daytime temperatures improving, but potentially cold nights that may cause heavy fogs, an additional concern for transportation safety during the most heavily travelled season of the year.



Affected by the snow, a beneficiary in Hubei province receives winter quilts from the Red Cross Society of China on 3 February to withstand the enduring cold weather. RCSC

The Red Cross Society of China welcomes direct assistance for the provision of relief items to affected populations, especially cash contributions that will 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<sup>1</sup>, or here for detailed contact information>](#)

## The Situation

Monday and Tuesday brought more ice and snow to already distressed regions of China. Since mid-January, a swath of ice and snow storms have stretched across central, eastern and southern China, leading to dozens of deaths, hundreds of thousands of structural collapses, widespread blackouts, fatal accidents, transport problems and the destruction of livestock and crops. According to the Ministry of Civil Affairs, the snow crisis has hit 20 provinces, municipalities and autonomous regions, toppled 223,000 homes and damaged another 862,000. The ministry is reporting that nearly 7.8 million have been affected, with 1.76 million of those having to be relocated, and at least 60 people have been killed as a result of the severe weather.



Villages, such as this one in the southernmost province of Guangdong, have been covered in thick layers of ice, coating power lines, roads and structures for weeks, leaving many without power or transportation in and out of many areas of southern, central and eastern China. RCSC



Heavy snow and thick ice on power lines pulled down a power station in Hunan province. Power transmission in Hunan has been badly hit following 20 days of unrelenting snow. Currently, just half of the total power demand is being met in Hunan and the province's 19 plants have 430,000 tons of stored coal. Tragically, to date, 11 electricians have died in the effort to restore power supplies in snow-hit China. RCSC

The latest estimates put economic losses at USD 7.5 billion (CHF 8.21 billion or EUR 5.1 billion) with excessive damage to agricultural production, water and electricity supplies as well as transportation and communication facilities. Heavy snow and the build-up of thick layers of ice have caused structural collapses. People have lost their homes and farmers, their winter crops and animals, many living in areas of the country still reeling from a summer of devastating floods.

The mid and lower Yangtze River region has experienced the worst loss of farmland, and according to the Ministry of Agriculture, a total of 9.4 million hectares of farmland have been covered by snow, with at least 1.08 million completely lost to the disaster. Food prices are already soaring just before the holiday celebrations, and authorities are worried about long-term food supplies for some of these areas of China worst affected.

In Guizhou province, over 50 counties have been without electricity for the past two

<sup>1</sup> Map indicates areas currently affected by the snow disaster as well as floods in the previous summer

weeks, and until today, 47 per cent remain without electricity in the province. Both Jiangxi and Hunan provinces are experiencing the same situation across their counties.

The Ministry of Civil Affairs has allocated 589,970 pieces of winter clothing and quilts to snow disaster areas by air, train and road transport. Due to inaccessibility to some areas of Sichuan and Guangxi, an air drop will be used for quilt distribution.

More than 12,000 medical teams with 65,500 staff have been dispatched to snow-stricken areas, according to the Ministry of Health. Local health facilities have been damaged and left incapacitated by the storms, and there are fears of epidemics spreading and other emergency health issues arising as people are stranded due to halted transportation routes during the holidays.

Up to 5 February, many train stations were overflowing with stranded passengers, all hoping to go home before the New Year holiday. With a massive migrant worker population flowing through its hub, the Guangzhou train station was host to more than 92,000 hopeful passengers on Sunday night alone. By Tuesday at noon, more than 3.5 million people had left the province by train. Much of the country's railway transportation has been restored just in time for the rush of travellers, hours before the official holiday began at the end of the work day on Tuesday.

The People's Liberation Army (PLA) of China has deployed 306,000 soldiers to remove ice on expressways and to help in other ways. About 1.07 million militia and army reservists were also participating in the relief efforts. With more than 17,000 vehicles stuck in nine sections of expressways across China, in some cases extending up to 70 kilometres long, roadways were blocked both for entry and exit. Relief goods had to be delivered to stranded vehicles along the highways.

## Red Cross and Red Crescent action



All hands on deck: An RCSC vice-president helps deliver rice to snow disaster beneficiaries on 4 February, in Chen Zhou, Hunan, an area heavily affected by the disaster with power outages and unusually cold weather. RCSC

After the Red Cross Society of China (RCSC) announced its national emergency appeal, by 2.00 p.m. (local time) on 4 February, the RCSC headquarters had received donations totalling CNY 31,246,000 (CHF 4.78 million) in value and local branches had received donations totalling CNY 28,280,000 (CHF 4.3 million) in value. Winter clothes, winter tents, medicines and relief food items have been locally purchased in affected areas, with a value of CNY 25,300,000 (CHF 3.87 million).

The RCSC headquarters has dispatched five assessment and relief teams to the most affected provinces being the Hubei, Hunan, Guizhou, Guangxi, and Anhui provinces. Relief teams have been trying to gain access

to the most affected areas, or at least, reach those communities as close as possible, but heavy snows and ice make it a difficult task. Currently, four relief teams are still in the field.

The RCSC relief team led by one of the national society's vice presidents arrived in Hunan on 3 February. The relief team witnessed a generous donation of CNY 2.5 million (CHF 381,000) from a private company to the Hunan Red Cross on 3 February. Currently, the relief team is continuing their assessment in Hunan. They visited Chen Zhou prefecture where electricity has been cut off for over 11 days. The Hunan Red Cross ordered 400,000 candles and distributed the first batch of 60,000 to Chen Zhou residents. In all, the Hunan Red Cross has received a value of CNY 5 million (CHF 770,000) in relief support thus far.

In Guangxi province, the RCSC relief team led by another of the national society's vice presidents, arrived on 3 February and delivered winter clothes and quilts to beneficiaries in Ling Chuan county, within Gui Ling prefecture. In all, the Guangxi Red Cross has received relief support with a value of CNY 6 million (CHF 920,000).

In Anhui province, the RCSC relief team also led by a vice president, arrived on 3 February and delivered winter clothes and quilts to those affected in Chang Feng county. The Anhui Red Cross has also received relief support with a total value of CNY 5 million (CHF 770,000) to date. The province has experienced continuous snow for 24 days, the worst of its kind in 50 years.

In Guizhou province, the RCSC relief team led by the national society's secretary-general, arrived on 3 February and also delivered winter clothes and quilts to those affected in the province. The Guizhou Red Cross has received relief support with a value of CNY 2.24 million (CHF 343,400).

In Hubei province, a team composed of members from the RCSC headquarters and the Hong Kong and Macao branches of the RCSC conducted a joint assessment. The Hong Kong and Macao branches also extended their assessment visits to Sichuan and Guangxi provinces. By 4 February, the Hong Kong branch had received HKD 12,250,000 (CHF 1.7 million) for relief efforts in China. The Macao branch had received CNY 3 million (CHF 457,800) by the same date. Donations will be used to purchase emergency relief goods locally and to provide long-term relief through the reconstruction of housing.



RCSC delivered warm quilts, winter clothing and food supplies to snow-affected villagers in Guizhou province, just before the onset of the Spring Festival, or Chinese Lunar New Year, which is the most important holiday in Chinese tradition. RCSC



The Red Cross distributed winter quilts to mountainous villages in Hubei province, where the rare weather has left many cold and without power, heating, and in many cases, without shelter after the collapse of their homes. RCSC

Many of the other branches of the RCSC have also contributed support to their sister branches. The RCSC reports that many private donors and corporations have been generous with donations. Governments and partner national societies have also offered their support to the RCSC which will use the donations initially for the purchase of winter clothing, medicines, relief goods and also look at other possible long-term relief options, based on available funding.

More information about the RCSC's relief efforts, including photos from around the country, can be found at <http://www.redcross.org.cn/> or <http://www.redcross.org.cn/english/index.htm> in English.

## 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 \(NGOs\) 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

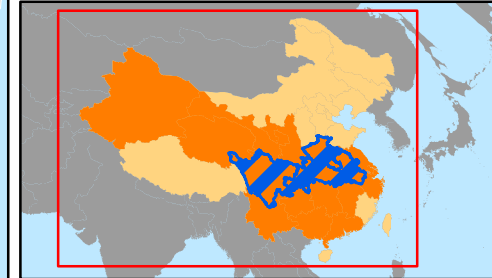
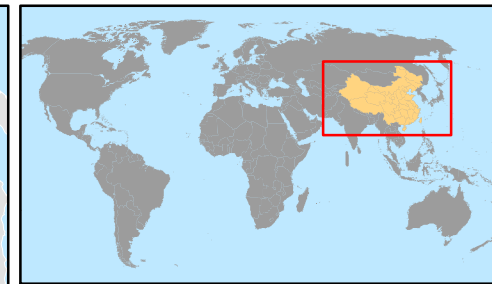
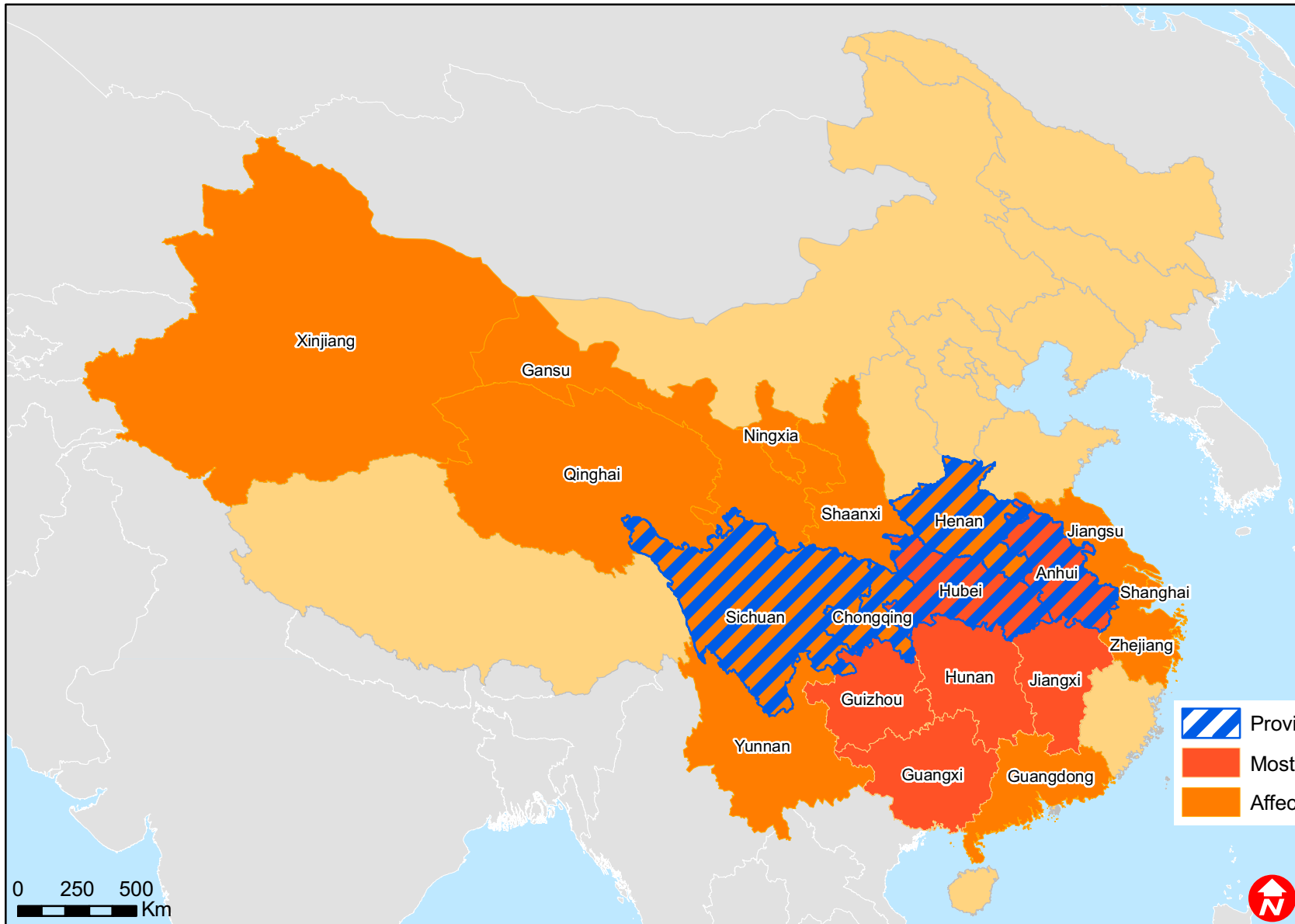
**For further information specifically related to this operation please contact:**




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[<Map below; click here to return to the title page>](#)



# China: Snow



-  Provinces affected by floods in summer 2007
-  Most affected provinces
-  Affected provinces

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