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## Information bulletin

# Belize: Hurricane Earl



**Date of issue: 4 August 2016, 1:00PM (CDT)**

**Date of disaster: 4 August 2016**

**Point of contact (name and title): Omar Robinson, Operations Coordinator (a.i.)**

**Host National Society(ies): Belize Red Cross**

*This bulletin is being issued for information only and reflects the current situation and details available at this time. The International Federation of Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies (IFRC) is preparing a Disaster Relief Emergency Fund (DREF) to support the actions of the Belize Red Cross Society. On 31 July 2016, a strong tropical wave started moving quickly over the Caribbean Sea. Tropical Storm Earl formed on 2 August in the north-western part of Caribbean Sea. The storm was upgraded to a Category 1 Hurricane on Wednesday, 3 August 2016 afternoon before making landfall in Belize with maximum sustained winds of 129 kph (80 mph).*

## The situation,

Hurricane Earl made landfall in Belize in the early hours of Thursday, 4 August, causing severe flooding. After it made landfall near Belize City, Earl was downgraded to a tropical storm, and it is forecast to move over the southern Yucatan Peninsula or northern Guatemala later today, 4 August 2016. Maximum sustained winds have decreased to near 50 mph (85 km/h) with higher gusts. Additional weakening is expected as the centre moves over high terrain, and Earl is forecast to weaken to a tropical depression by tonight.

There is still no detailed information on the extent of the damages due to the fact that the flood waters have yet to recede. The government of Belize gave the all clear at 9am today. Preliminary government information reports major infrastructure and building damage, many roads and streets are blocked in San Pedro, Caye Caulker, Belize City, and Ladyville, Belize River Valley, Orange Walk, Belmopan and other affected areas. In total, 29 collective centres were opened, and there were reports of 907 people in collective centres as of Thursday.

It is expected that the Philip Goldson International Airport (PGIA) will resume operations on Thursday, 4 August.

There were no reports of damage in the nearest countries of Honduras and Guatemala.

## Red Cross and Red Crescent action

Belize Red Cross has 300 volunteers, 15 staff, 8 branches and one headquarters office located in Belize city. The IFRC has been in constant coordination with the National Society through the regional disaster manager in order to provide needed support. The National Society has been in close coordination with the National Emergency Management Organization (NEMO).

It is expected that the Belize Red Cross Society, with support from the IFRC's shelter senior officer, will conduct preliminary damage assessments as soon as feasible and develop a detailed plan of action to accompany the Disaster Relief Emergency Fund (DREF).

The power supply and telecommunications were down in Belize City, making it difficult to get reliable information, especially from outside of the city. The IFRC, jointly with the American Red Cross, is deploying a team to support assessments and to prepare for an initial Cash Transfer Programme with Visa cards if needed.

IFRC's The health in emergency officer will be deployed to Belize to support the National Society on its provision of psychosocial support activities. Contact has been established with the Mexican Red Cross, which is available to support the Belize Red Cross Society with volunteers and vehicles to conduct assessments if needed.

The Belize Red Cross Society reportedly only has stock to support 100 families, and the composition of the relief items is not known yet. The IFRC's Logistics Unit, in coordination with the Pan American Disaster Response Unit (PADRU), will release all the pre-positioned stock in Guatemala in order to respond to the Hurricane Earl emergency for 500 families; it will take about 10 hours to transport the goods to Belize by truck. In parallel, Logistics started the coordination to move pre-positioned stock from the Honduran Red Cross's warehouse for 1,000 additional families if needed, which would suffice for the initial phase of the operation ( the first 24 to 48 hours after impact). Additionally, sea and air transport procurement processes are in progress in order to move additional stock from the IFRC's warehouse in Panama to Belize; in addition, the warehouse manager in Panama will be deployed to Guatemala and Honduras, respectively, to coordinate the dispatch process for both locations.

If needed, additional support from Panama will be provided in order to conduct the operation's procurement processes in a timely manner. If requested, a logistics Regional Intervention Team (RIT) member will be deployed as well to enhance existing capacities. The logistics unit is coordinating with the United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF) to guarantee additional support for local relief items procurement and logistics aspects in the country.

NEMO has declared that the priority areas of work should be: Search and Rescue, medical care, sheltering and looking after people affected, clearing of debris along the highways, restoration of utilities, inspection of airports and seaports.

Based on past hurricane and tropical storms that made landfall in Belize, the IFRC can expect an impact on humanitarian sectors such as water and sanitation, community health particularly on epidemiological surveillance and depending on the wind intensity damage to housing requiring emergency shelter support. Ongoing evaluations will determine the level of required support for affected vulnerable communities isolated by the mountainous terrain and flooded rivers.

The IFRC regional Office is in contact with the United Nation Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs (OCHA), Pan-American Health Organization (PAHO) and the Caribbean Disaster Emergency Management Agency (CDEMA) to coordinate possible actions in support of the affected population.

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## Contact information

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

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## How we work

All IFRC 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 the Humanitarian Charter and Minimum Standards in Disaster Response (Sphere) in delivering assistance to the most vulnerable.

The IFRC's vision is to inspire, encourage, facilitate and promote at all times all forms of humanitarian activities by National Societies, with a view to preventing and alleviating human suffering, and thereby contributing to the maintenance and promotion of human dignity and peace in the world.

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The IFRC's work is guided by Strategy 2020 which puts forward three strategic aims:

1. Save lives, protect livelihoods, and strengthen recovery from disaster and crises.
2. Enable healthy and safe living.
3. Promote social inclusion and a culture of non-violence and peace.