

Information bulletin



International Federation
of Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies

Cook Islands: Tropical Cyclone Pat

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11 February 2010

This bulletin is being issued for information only, and reflects the current situation and details available at this time. The Cook Islands Red Cross, with the support of the International Federation, is currently assessing the needs of the affected population and determining the level of ongoing external support required

The Situation

In a period of two weeks since 28 January 2010 the 15 atolls which make up the Cook Islands have been affected by three successive tropical cyclones. The latest and the strongest of the three is tropical cyclone Pat which has brought destructive winds to the island of Aitutaki; and gale force winds and rain to the islands of Rarotonga and Palmerston.

The force of the cyclone was the most powerful ever experienced by residents of Aitutaki with winds battering the island for four to six hours today in the early hours from 02:00am onwards.

As a result, the government of Cook Islands has declared Aitutaki a disaster zone. In addition, a state of emergency in Rarotonga was also announced. At its height tropical cyclone Pat was classified as a category three cyclone bringing destructive wind gusts of over 100 knots. CIRCS has been meeting regularly with government officials to coordinate closely on response. Preliminary assessments of the situation suggest that shelter and water will present the greatest needs on the island.

Aitutaki is a popular Island with tourists and has a population of approximately 2000 people. Initial reports indicate no deaths or serious injuries. It is estimated that 80 per cent of the trees on the island are down and there is significant damage to crops and other vegetation. The airport, hospital and most major buildings have only sustained minor damage and are still functional. The government is currently trying to restore communications and power on the island. The main water feed on the island is currently blocked.

Red Cross and Red Crescent action

The Cook Island Red Cross Society (CIRCS) took quick and early action in advance of the tropical cyclones by prepositioning additional relief supplies including tarpaulins, blankets first aid kits and ropes with their branches located in the Southern Cook Islands of Mangaia, Atiu, Mauke, Mitaro and Aitutaki on Wednesday, 9 February 2010 .

Branch volunteers on Aitutaki assisted some elderly residents with storm preparation and relocation to inland shelters.

The CIRCS disaster management officer (DMO) has joined government officials on a flight to Aitutaki to conduct an initial damage survey and to mobilize volunteers into assessment and relief teams.

The representatives from the International Federation's Pacific Regional Office located in Suva are coordinating offers of support to CIRCS from regional partners including the New Zealand Red Cross Society, the Australian Red Cross Society, the French Red Cross and the South Pacific Regional Intervention Platform (PIROPS). The International Federation's Pacific Regional Office is also liaising with UN OCHA for CIRCS.

To date, at the request of CIRCS, the New Zealand Red Cross Society has mobilized: 100 water containers, 100 tarpaulins, 50 first aid kits, five satellite phones, candles and rain coats were provided to supplement CIRCS' existing pre-positioned relief supplies. In effect, CIRCS is preparing to mobilize further relief items pending the outcome of assessments.

In its preparations and drawing on its auxiliary status to the government, CIRCS has also arranged with the custom authorities to facilitate the clearance of inbound humanitarian goods without incurring duty.

The current plan of action outlined by CIRCS is to focus on determining the extent and scale of the damage caused by tropical cyclone Pat by mobilizing a team of five staff and volunteers to travel to Aitutaki within the next twenty-four hours to undertake a damage and needs assessment: Whereupon, relief and recovery needs will be identified. The assessment team will also be supported by an experienced disaster management; and water and sanitation delegate from the Australian Red Cross Society.

Further support to CIRCS in undertaking the needs assessments, and potential relief and recovery work is being provided by the International Federation through its global disaster management resources including the Asia Pacific disaster management unit (DMU), located in Kuala Lumpur, Malaysia.

The need to release funds from the International Federation's global Disaster Relief Emergency Fund will be determined based on the outcomes of the damage and needs assessment currently being undertaken.

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 the [Humanitarian Charter and Minimum Standards in Disaster Response \(Sphere\)](#) in delivering assistance to the most vulnerable.

The International Federation'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.

The International Federation'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.

Contact information

For further information specifically related to this operation please contact:

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