

CDEMA Public Information Note – Tropical Storm Tomas - Outerbands impacting Jamaica and Haiti - (as of 5.00pm, November 4, 2010)

Message: The outer bands of Tropical Storm Tomas have begun to impact Jamaica and Haiti. Hurricane warnings are in effect for Bahamas and Turks and Caicos.

Situation:

At 5.00pm, November 4, 2010, the centre of the storm was located at latitude 16.6 north and longitude 76.0 west, which is about 110 miles south southeast of Kingston, Jamaica and 280 miles west south west of Port-au Prince Haiti. Maximum sustained winds are near 50 mph and tropical storm winds extend outward up to 120 miles mainly to the east of the center.

Tropical Storm warning remains in effect for Jamaica and Haiti. A Hurricane warning was issued at 2.00pm for the southeastern Bahamas and the Turks and Caicos Islands.

A tropical storm warning means that tropical storm conditions are expected somewhere within the warning area within 36 hours but in this instance within 12 - 24 hours.

A hurricane warning means that hurricane conditions are expected within the warning areas within 36 hours, but in this instance within 12-36 hours.

Prognosis:

Tomas is moving towards the north near 5 mph. A turn towards the north-northeast and northeast with an increase in forward speed is predicted over the next 48 hours. On this forecast track Tomas will pass near Jamaica and Haiti tonight (November 4, 2010) and near or over the southeast of the Bahamas late Friday (November 5, 2010)

Tomas is forecast to strengthen during the next 48 hours and could be at hurricane strength as the centre passes Haiti and over the southeastern Bahamas. The Southeast Islands of the Bahamas are Inagua, Mayaguana, Acklins, Crooked Island, Long Cay, Ragged Island and Long Island.

The system is expected to produce a total of 5-10 inches of rainfall with possible isolated amounts of 15 inches over Haiti; 1-3 inches over Jamaica and 3-5 inches over the Southeastern Bahamas and the Turks and Caicos islands. The rainfall could cause life threatening flash floods and mud slides over mountainous areas

Dangerous storm surge is forecast of 1 to 3 feet above normal tide levels in the warning areas and can be accompanied by large and potentially dangerous waves.

National Actions:

Jamaica

The National Emergency Operations Centre (NEOC) of Jamaica is fully activated.

The NEOC is the designated administrative hub of disaster or emergency response mechanisms, it is therefore the "nerve centre" of Disaster response and recovery services. Full activation of the NEOC involves all partner agencies reporting to the centre detailing and responding to all incidents pertaining to their portfolio responsibility. Partner Agencies include: The Ministry of Health, The Jamaica Defense Force, The Jamaica Constabulary Force, The Jamaica Fire Brigade, The Meteorological Service, Ministry of Labour and Social Security, National Works Agency, Utilities and the Media.

Priority Shelters in the parishes of Portland and St. Mary are opened and all Parish Emergency Operations Centres are also activated.

Relief supplies have been prepositioned in priority shelters in areas that are generally prone to flooding.

Earlier today, the Office of Disaster Preparedness and Emergency Management and the Ministry of Education had directed all schools in Kingston and St. Andrew, St. Thomas, St. Mary and Portland to be closed. Businesses and Government entities in the Parishes of Kingston and St. Andrew, St. Thomas, Portland and St. Mary were also recommended to initiate 12-24 hour pre impact activities which essentially entailed the phasing down of operations for non essential workers by mid- day today.

Haiti

The Civil Protection Directorate (CPD) in Haiti has reported that all disaster management committees have been mobilized. The National Emergency Operations Centre has been relocated to the Palace.

Every effort is being made by the CPD to inform citizens, particularly those near the seaside, of the approaching storm and the urgency to seek safer shelter. Camp dwellers have been advised to leave and seek refuge with family and friends. President Preval and CPD's Director Madame Alta Jean Baptiste also met with the various committees and visited some districts to emphasize the severity of the situation.

Tent dwellers have started to evacuate but most are reluctant to leave, however mandatory evacuation will be initiated as the storm advances.

CPD has also held discussions with UN Agencies and NGOs to identify accessible supplies in storage.

Bahamas

The National Emergency Management Agency, NEMA, has activated its Emergency Operations Centre (EOC). All islands have activated their emergency response teams and are continuing to track and monitor the storm.

The shelters on the islands opened Thursday afternoon in preparations for any evacuations

A series of press briefings were held and advisories sent out to caution the Bahamian public regarding the storm.

The Bahamas Red Cross activated its EOC at 5 p.m. and is on standby with basic supplies.

Turks and Caicos

The Department of Disaster and Emergency Management reported on November 3, 2010 that the Island Committees have met and preparations have begun. The Public has been advised and preparations and safety tips have been issued. An Executive Policy Group Meeting which is chaired by the Governor is scheduled for today, November 4, 2010 and will inform the further actions to be taken.

Regional Response:

The Caribbean Institute of Meteorology and Hydrology (CIMH) has briefed CDEMA on possible impact scenarios to Haiti.

The CARICOM Disaster Relief Unit (CDRU) has been placed on alert.

The Regional Response Mechanism remains on standby as we monitor the system's passage over the islands of Jamaica, Haiti, Bahamas and Turks and Caicos.

The CDEMA Coordinating Unit stands ready to provide response support should this become necessary.

Contact Details: The CDEMA CU 24hr contact number is 1 246 425 0386