

Dominica

At least 14 people have died in Dominica, with the number of fatalities expected to rise as large areas of the island remain inaccessible after category 5 Hurricane Maria decimated the island's east coast, according to initial reports from the ground.

A team comprising officials from Caribbean Disaster Emergency Management Agency (CDEMA), United Nations Disaster Assessment Coordination (UNDAC), the British Armed Forces and the Department for International Development (DFID) arrived in Dominica by a helicopter on 20 September.

At least 80 per cent of the island's population has been affected and needs support with shelter and water, according to CDEMA. Power and water supply was cut-off by the hurricane. The main hospital in the island does not have power and critical cases are being evacuated.

An estimated 90 per cent of the buildings have sustained some damage - most of the houses have lost at least some roof covering with a significant portion showing major structural damage. The team reports that the damage in the east coast was significantly worse.

Telephone communication - landline and mobile - remains affected. Dominican Prime Minister, Mr Roosevelt Skerit, told the team that people had stockpiled food which has been affected by rain. It is unclear if shops have adequate stocks of food.

The team estimates that all agricultural crops in the island have been destroyed. This damage is expected to have a significant impact on their economy, as the country's main exports are root crops, bay oil and bananas.

The main airport, Douglas-Charles, located on the north-east coast is fully functional. There is debris on the runway of the second airport, closer to the capital, Roseau. Access to the rural communities - coastal and inland - is a major issue. The aid community is considering using boats to transport relief goods from airport to other areas around the coast.

Water and tarpaulins are urgently needed.

A search and rescue team from the neighbouring Martinique island has arrived. Cuba and Venezuela are bringing a planeload of relief supplies each to Dominica on 22 September.

Dominican Republic

In the Dominican Republic, heavy rains, strong winds and storm surges are being reported along the eastern and northeastern coasts. Strong winds have already knocked down trees and electric posts.



Hurricane Maria damage in Dominica / Source: ABS Television/Radio

The National Center for Emergency Operations (NEOC) has declared all 32 provinces under hurricane alert: 23 provinces are under red alert, 4 are under yellow alert and 5 under green alert.

Some 6,657 people have been evacuated to 119 official shelters located across the provinces of La Altagracia, Dajabon, Duarte, Espaillat, Hato Mayor, Maria Trinidad Sanchez, Monte Plata, La Romana, Puerto Plata, Samana, San Cristobal, San Pedro, Sánchez Ramírez, El Seibo, Santo Domingo/National District, Santo Domingo/East and Valverde. Another 7,371 people have been placed under the care of family and friends.

Thus far, the NEOC is reporting that 1,286 houses have been affected and 15 communities are presently inaccessible.

As a preventive measure, five aqueducts have been sealed. Additionally, three aqueducts are out of service in Hato Mayor, San Pedro de Macoris and Santiago Rodriguez, leaving approximately 126,682 people without water supply. Several international airports have suspended operations until further notice. The International Airport of Las Americas in Santo Domingo is still operating. Authorities have suspended power supply to provinces located along the eastern, northeastern and northern coasts as a preventive measure.

Caribbean

There are reports from St Kitts and Nevis citing damage to housing and agriculture in Nevis, as well as downed electric poles and uprooted trees. The entire island of Nevis is without electricity. Ten emergency shelters have been activated for 100 evacuees. In the British Virgin Islands, the island of Tortola experienced rainfall and storm surge, damaging roads on the west end. The storm surge also resulted in debris on roadways and minor landslides. Additional shelters were opened to accommodate people whose homes were damaged.

OCHA staff already in the Caribbean continue to support CDEMA as the hurricane season of 2017 progresses.

The next OCHA Situation Report on Hurricane Season will be released on or around 25 September. For further information, please contact:

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