

# Response to Hurricane Irma: Cuba

## Situation Report No. 1. Office of the Resident Coordinator

(07/09/2017)



This report is produced by the Office of the Resident Coordinator. It covers the period from 20:00 hrs. on September 06<sup>th</sup> to 14:00 hrs. on September 07<sup>th</sup>. The next report will be issued on or around 08/09.

## Highlights

- Category 5 Hurricane Irma, the fifth strongest Atlantic hurricane on record, will hit Cuba in the coming hours.
- Cuba has declared the Hurricane Alarm Phase today in seven provinces in the country, with 5.2 million people (46% of the Cuban population) affected.
- More than 1,130,000 people (10% of the Cuban population) are expected to be evacuated to protection centers or houses of neighbors or relatives.
- Beginning this evening, heavy waves are forecasted in the eastern part of the country, causing coastal flooding on the northern shores of Guantánamo and Holguín Provinces.



1,130,000  
people  
evacuated

+ 600  
Tons of  
food secured

1,031  
pregnant  
women  
protected

## Situation overview

Heavy tidal waves that accompany Hurricane Irma, a Category 5 on the Saffir-Simpson Scale, began to affect the northern coast of Cuba's eastern provinces today, 7 September.

With maximum sustained winds exceeding 252 kilometers (km) per hour, the hurricane is advancing through the Caribbean waters under favorable atmospheric conditions that could contribute to its intensification.

According to the Forecast Center of the National Institute of Meteorology (Insmet), Hurricane Irma will impact the eastern part of Cuba in the early hours of Friday, 8 September, and continue its trajectory along the northern coast to the Central Region, where it is expected to make a shift to the north and continue moving towards Florida.

Coastal flooding is expected up to nine up to nine meters waves from tonight on in the northern coast of Guantánamo and Holguín. These provinces are still recovering from the impact of Hurricane Matthew in October 2016. The storm surge will extend over the northern coast of the central provinces of Cuba on Saturday, 9 September, before arriving in the capital on Sunday.

Forecasts include significant flooding and damage to low-lying coastal areas of the northern coast of all of these provinces. Possible flood warnings are also in place for low-lying areas of the southeastern Cuban coast.

\*Note: All the information in this report has been taken from Cuban official media (TV, radio, and press) and statements from Cuban authorities. Sources: Newspapers Periódicos Granma, Juventud Rebelde, Vanguardia, Invasor, Adelante, Periódico 26, Ahora, Sierra Maestra y Venceremos. Radio: Radio Habana Cuba, Radio Angulo, Radio Mambí; Press agencies: Prensa Latina (PL) y Agencia Cubana de Noticias (ACN); Web sites: Cubadebate. Supplementary data has been taken from the National Statistics Office website.

The Cuban Civil Defense announced the Hurricane Alarm Phase for seven provinces in Cuba, with a population of more than 5.2 million people. Current evacuation plans foresee providing shelter for more than one million people.

Institutions, organizations and economic enterprises are implementing the measures foreseen in disaster reduction plans at the provincial and local levels, including the protection of economic and family assets.

## Humanitarian Response

### National authorities

National Civil Defense declared at 11.00 am this Thursday September 7th:

- Alarm Phase for the provinces of Guantánamo, Santiago de Cuba, Granma, Holguín, Las Tunas, Camagüey and Ciego de Ávila; and for the municipality of Caibarién in the province of Villa Clara
- Alert phase for the provinces of Sancti Spíritus, Cienfuegos, Matanzas and Villa Clara (with the exception of Caibarién)
- Informative Phase for the provinces of Mayabeque, Havana and Artemisa.

Local defense councils in provinces and municipalities have been activated.

Plans to protect the population include the evacuation of vulnerable groups living in coastal settlements, isolated rural communities or unsafe housing. Available data estimates that more than 1,130,000 people will be relocated to specially enabled protection centers or to neighbors and family houses.

Province	ESTIMATES			Evacuation centers
	People to be evacuated (to homes of relatives or neighbors)	People to be evacuated (to evacuation centers)	Total	
Villa Clara	49,130	11,709	60,839	162
Santi Spíritus	<i>TBC</i>	<i>TBC</i>	244,000	<i>TBC</i>
Ciego de Ávila			<i>TBC</i>	
Camagüey			150,000	
Las Tunas	163,000	73,000	236,000	152
Holguín	170,000	61,000	231,000	269
Granma	<i>TBC</i>	<i>TBC</i>	<i>TBC</i>	<i>TBC</i>
Santiago de Cuba	20,000	38,000	58,000	125
Guantánamo	77,000	73,000	150,000	<i>TBC</i>

Source: Public information from national and local media

Provincial Defense Councils are implementing their evacuation plans for the protection of tourists in northern coast tourism facilities.

The Ministry of Foreign Affairs reported that the 1,221 people working as partners in Caribbean countries hit by Hurricane Irma are protected.

Educational authorities have begun to send students to their homes.

National media is transmitting guidelines, supervised by the Cuban Civil Defense, for the protection of families in urban and rural areas.

## Sectors



### Water, Sanitation and Hygiene

#### Response:

- There is increased hydro-meteorological monitoring at the national level.
- The Cuban Civil Defense's efforts are geared towards ensuring good hygiene and sanitation conditions as well as the availability of sodium hypochlorite for water treatment.
- At this stage, the technical review and fueling of different water pumps is being carried out. Tree pruning, the elimination of small garbage dumps and the cleaning of sewers have been accelerated. A hygiene and sanitation review of foreseen evacuation and food processing facilities is underway.

#### UNICEF

- UNICEF is coordinating the purchase of 3 million chlorine tablets to ensure water quality.



### Food Safety and Nutrition

#### Response/Preparatory measures:

**More than 600**  
Tons of food secured

#### Measures to ensure food accessibility:

- Small industries are preparing to process fruits and other produce blown off trees by strong winds.
- Authorities in Las Tunas started distributing 55 tons of sweet potato and selling eggs prior to the impact of the hurricane. Another 160 tons of plantain is being sent to the area. In addition, the production of four tons of biscuits to distribute to evacuees is underway. The availability of food stocks for more than 45,000 animals in the poultry and pig sector has been guaranteed.
- In Granma, the sale of roots and tubers, fruits and vegetables at risk of rotting has begun while in Baracoa and Maisí the opening hours for the sale of the "basic food basket" has been extended. Cooking facilities are ready to start preparing cooked food and bottling drinking water for emergency situations.

#### Measures for the protection of plantations, produce, and agricultural supplies:

- The authorities have prioritized the collection of plantain, pumpkin and sweet potato. A total of 1,300 greenhouses, 460 irrigation systems, tractors, harvesters and other agricultural equipment has been protected in hurricane watch areas.
- Livestock has been relocated to safer areas and poultry farmers have been protected.
- Windmills of cooperatives and state-owned farms have been dismantled.
- Around 125 tons of mature coffee have been collected and coffee processing equipment in the mountain areas has been protected.
- In Villa Clara, authorities have safeguarded animal feed and 3,000 tons of fertilizer.
- Livestock in Villa Clara's coastal municipalities of Encrucijada, Sagua la Grande and Quemado de Gûines and in Las Tunas Province (totaling more than 20,000 heads of livestock) have been moved to secure locations.
- In Las Tunas, more than 2,000 tons of plantains, 650 hectares of yucca and 40 hectares of sweet potato are being harvested. Protective measures have been taken to secure 40 hectares of sowed rice due to be harvested in the second half of September. Additionally, 480 tons of paddy rice have been protected.

#### FAO:

- FAO is closely observing the developments in order to stay up-to-date with the needs of national counterparts and to be able to provide a rapid and efficient response.

#### WFP:

- WFP has a contingency stock of 1,600 tons of food pre-positioned in Havana, Cienfuegos and Santiago de Cuba Provinces to support immediate assistance to at least 275,000 people for one month. Possible response scenarios are being assessed based on potential impact and priority needs for assistance.



## Infrastructures and Basic Services Rehabilitation

### Response/Preparatory measures:

- The Provincial Defense Councils of Guantánamo, Santiago de Cuba, Granma, Holguin, Las Tunas, Camagüey, Ciego de Avila, Villa Clara, Sancti Spíritus, Cienfuegos and Matanzas Provinces adopted measures to identify housing with the necessary capacity to accommodate families. They are also identifying the communities at risk of coastal floods.
- People's Councils are providing indications to the public on how to protect their homes, considering their condition and the safety of roofs as well as of the water tanks located on the roof.
- National authorities have staff prepared to repair possible damages to electrical and communications networks, construction equipment, transportation infrastructure and resources for recovery.
- The protection of windmills, construction equipment and solar panels has begun.
- The National Institute of Hydraulic Resources guaranteed the availability of generators for the pumping and supplying of water, even with cistern cars, if necessary.
- As part of the preparedness actions taken, trees have been pruned and canals and bridges with waterway drainage difficulties have been unobstructed.
- More than 1,700 cubic meters of solid waste have been collected in at-risk areas and work on unclogging gutters and cleaning small garbage dumps is underway.
- The Cuban Ministry of Communications is dismantling parabolic antennas with diameters greater than 60 centimeters and other at-risk equipment, including Wi-Fi systems and public telephones, among others.
- Cuban radio and television hope to maintain communications as scheduled to keep the public informed.

### UNDP:

- UNDP has activated its internal alert system in coordination with its Headquarters in New York and Panama and is ready to support the Housing and Early Recovery Sector.
- UNDP has made available 9,828 tarpaulins to Cuban authorities for pre-positioned roof decks in the country as well as the activation of the rapid response resources of the Organization.



## Health

1,031

Mujeres embarazadas protegidas

### Overview of health services in provinces likely to be affected:

Provinces/Municipalities	Hospitals	Polyclinics (Primary health care institutions)	Medical & nurse cabinets (basic primary Health care units)	Martentry homes	Elderly homes	Senior citizen homes
Guantanamo (Maisi, Baracoa)	4 (1)	22 (4)	556 (106)	3	5	12
Holguin (Moa, Frank País, Antilla, Banes, Rafael Freyre, Gibara)	15 (5)	42 (12)	1050 (348)	5	8	19
Las Tunas (Jesus Menendez, Puerto Padre, Manatí)	5 (3)	14 (5)	534 (189)	10	9	9
Camaguey (Nuevitás, Minas, Sierra de Cubitas, Esmeralda)	13 (2)	31 (6)	657 (143)	7	14	24
Ciego Avila (Bolivia, Morón, Chambas)	3 (1)	19 (6)	392 (141)	10	8	16
S.Spiritus (Yaguajay)	8 (1)	23 (4)	448 (76)	5	8	9
V.Clara (Caibarien, Camajuani, Encrucijada, Sagua)	13 (3)	37 (11)	837 (250)	8	16	26
Matanzas (Martí, Cardenas)	10 (1)	28 (6)	629 (139)	8	10	24

**Response/Preparatory measures:**

- Santiago de Cuba: Surgical brigades have been dispatched in Guamá and III Frente, which will guarantee medical services in case of isolation due to heavy rains or landslides. The Health Department decided to hospitalize the 108 nephrotic patients residing in difficult areas in order to avoid interruptions in their dialysis and hemodialysis treatments. In addition, 1,031 pregnant women at term or at risk will stay in hospitals and maternity care centers.
- Guantánamo: Health services are insured and five brigades are ready to reinforce medical care in areas of difficult access of several municipalities. Local media reports that the General Teaching Hospital "Agostinho Neto" and other health care units have guaranteed availability of medicines, food, fuel coverage, the efficient operation of generators and other resources that support the care of the residents in the most adverse conditions.
- Villa Clara: All hospitals, polyclinics, family medicine offices and medical posts are insured with the necessary medicines and instruments to guarantee health services.
- In all potentially affected provinces there are reinforcement of human and material resources to ensure no disruptions of provision of essential health services to the population,

**PAHO/WHO:**

- PAHO/WHO is in dialogue with authorities of the Ministry of Public Health to analyse the potential impacts of hurricane Irma in different provinces of the country and the possible needs for support in the health sector.
- PAHO/WHO is estimating needs following different scenarios of impact to guarantee continuity of essential health services.

**UNFPA:**

- The United Nations Population Fund (UNFPA) is estimating, according to municipalities that may be affected by Irma, the possible need of "Sexual and Reproductive Health Kits" and "Personal Hygiene Kits" to support national authorities in providing necessary health care to the population in these municipalities.

**Education****Response/Preparatory measures:**

- Under the Hurricane Alarm Phase, it has been established that all educational institutions will temporarily suspend educational activities.
- Students have been asked to stay with their families at home or in safe places.
- Students staying at boarding schools and residences have been sent home, including more than 8,000 in Holguín Province alone.
- Educational center infrastructure and equipment has been secured with the support of teachers.
- In the three provinces considered to be at high risk, schools have been established as evacuation centers: 101 in Villa Clara Province, 96 in Ciego de Ávila Province and 100 in Holguín Province. These centers will become temporary shelters for disaster-affected populations.

**UNICEF**

- UNICEF is defining the required interventions to ensure a rapid return of children and adolescents to safe and protective learning spaces.

**UNESCO**

- UNESCO is working to identify possible damages in schools in the affected municipalities to support educational centers rehabilitation to guarantee safe learning spaces.
- UNESCO will assess the damage extent to develop pedagogical strategies in order to overcome post-disaster stress in students and teachers.

**Logistics****Response/Preparatory measures:**

- In the provinces threatened by Hurricane Irma, local authorities are allocating resources to protect warehouses slated for food and other key commodities.
- In the Port of Santiago de Cuba, authorities are adopting measures to suspend activities from today on and to protect containers. Light towers donated by the World Food Programme (WFP) during Hurricane Sandy response are also being temporarily dismantled.

**WFP:**

- WFP has five mobile storage units (MSUs) in-country that could be re-directed to the most affected areas to protect food slated for the population, in support of local authorities.
- WFP is monitoring the potential impact of Hurricane Irma (taking into account the winds, heavy rains and storm surge) on the storage infrastructure and process of the distribution of food to vulnerable groups, taking into account lessons learned from previous experiences.

## General Coordination

The UN Disaster Management Team (UNDMT) maintains close communication with the Ministry of Foreign Trade and Investment, the main counterpart of the United Nation System (UNS) in Cuba, given the imminent hurricane impact on the national territory.

The UNDMT is closely monitoring the situation and under its leadership, the UN Emergency Technical Team (UNETT) is working on a first draft response plan. Staff of the UN Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs (OCHA) are expected to arrive shortly to the country to assist in the preparation of UNS response actions.

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For further information, please visit: [www.unocha.org](http://www.unocha.org), [www.reliefweb.int](http://www.reliefweb.int), [www.redhum.org](http://www.redhum.org), [www.onu.org.cu](http://www.onu.org.cu).

For further information, please visit:

Instituto de Meteorología de Cuba: <http://www.met.inf.cu>

Granma: <http://www.granma.cu>

Juventud Rebelde: <http://www.juventudrebelde.cu/>

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