

INFORMATION BULLETIN



International Federation of Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies
Fédération Internationale des Sociétés de la Croix-Rouge et du Croissant-Rouge
Federación Internacional de Sociedades de la Cruz Roja y de la Media Luna Roja
الاتحاد الدولي لجمعيات الصليب الأحمر والهلال الأحمر

CENTRAL EUROPE: HEAT WAVE

Information Bulletin
no. 02/2007¹
25 July 2007

The Federation's mission is to improve the lives of vulnerable people by mobilizing the power of humanity. It is the world's largest humanitarian organization and its millions of volunteers are active in 185 countries.

In Brief

This Bulletin is being issued for information only, and reflects the situation and the information available at this time. The Federation is not seeking funding or other assistance from donors for this operation at this time.

The International Federation undertakes activities that are aligned with its Global Agenda, which sets out four broad goals to achieve the Federation's mission to "improve the lives of vulnerable people by mobilizing the power of humanity."

Global Agenda Goals:

- Reduce the numbers of deaths, injuries and impact from disasters.
- Reduce the number of deaths, illnesses and impact from diseases and public health emergencies.
- Increase local community, civil society and Red Cross Red Crescent capacity to address the most urgent situations of vulnerability.
- Reduce intolerance, discrimination and social exclusion and promote respect for diversity and human dignity.

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

For longer-term programmes in this or other countries or regions, please refer to the Federation's Annual Appeal. For support to or for further information concerning Federation programmes or operations in this or other countries, or for national society profiles, please also access the Federation's website at <http://www.ifrc.org>

¹ A number of glide numbers apply to the heat wave in Central Europe:

HT-2007-000105-SRB, HT-2007-000105-ROM, HT-2007-000105-MKD, HT-2007-000105-MDA, HT-2007-000105-HRV

The Situation

Over the past few weeks the Central Europe region was hit by an unusually strong heat wave that came from Africa. The highest Europe temperature of 43.3 degrees Celsius was measured in Podgorica, capital of Montenegro. High heat combined with high UV radiation led to a health crisis and threat to life. As a consequence of high heat, more than 30 persons died in Romania this summer while in Hungary the high temperatures may have hastened the deaths of up to 500 sick and elderly people between 15 July and 22 July.

The heat and dry conditions sparked a rash of fires causing deaths too. In Romania two people died and 26 were injured, while in Montenegro one person died in fires. In Macedonia as a consequence of forest fire near Bitola town 50 families, altogether 202 persons, have been evacuated. Although the weather has become a bit cooler, with temperature now around 33-36 degrees Celsius across the whole region, it remained very dry causing serious problems to the water supply in Montenegro and Albania.

Due to the heat, and the careless behaviour of people, Albania is currently fighting with 300 forest fires all over the country. As a consequence of the fires, 150 people have been evacuated although most are able to stay with their relatives. 60 people have been affected by the heavy smoke and needed medical care. In general Albania is facing serious difficulties with its electricity as well as its water supply, which has worsened in the last days of the heat wave. Normally the electricity is cut for five hours in urban and 12 hours in rural areas, but on Tuesday the whole population remained without electricity for many more hours. As a result of the electric power shortage the water pumps could not provide a sufficient amount of water, therefore there are some parts of the country where there has not been water available for the last two weeks. Although the government has mobilized water tanks, the needs have not been fully met due to lack of sufficient resources.

Red Cross and Red Crescent action

Bulgarian Red Cross

Bulgarian Red Cross started distributing mineral water and offering blood pressure checks in all 28 regional branches in Bulgaria. Volunteers and staff, organized in teams, are located in squares and public places and provide water and medical support/assistance. Everything is done in cooperation with local authorities, municipalities and companies who support the Bulgarian Red Cross appeal by donating water to the Red Cross. Red Cross distribution points are opened in Burgas, Varna, Veliko Turnovo, Gabrovo, Dobrich, Lovech, Pazardjik, Plavdiv, Vidin and all other regions in Bulgaria.



Measuring blood pressure has been an important Red Cross activity across Central Europe. Here a volunteer in Bulgaria measures blood pressure of an elderly lady.

Hungarian Red Cross

Hungarian Red Cross distributed water at 30 locations in the centre of the capitals of 11 counties in cooperation with the disaster directories, the civil protection and the fire brigades. 68 Red Cross staff and 120 volunteers (out of which 113 volunteers were mobilized by the Hungarian Red Cross) participated in the distribution.

The Hungarian Red Cross together with the Hungarian Academy of Sciences has also been operating a website with special focus on safe sunbathing (www.napsugarzas.hu). During the heat wave special alert was placed on the opening page of the website and the visitor could also find useful information on the water distribution points in cities as well as educational materials about correct behaviour during the heat wave.

The Hungarian Red Cross this summer started a pilot project on First Aid around Lake Balaton. There are First Aid teams at 24 beaches around the lake providing first aid where needed. According to the statistics recorded by these teams the number of cases dramatically increased during the heat wave, as a result both of the heat and because the beaches were more crowded than usual.

Kosovo

One person died and more than 200 people requested medical assistance in Kosovo following high temperatures that reached up to 42 degrees Celsius. The Red Cross organizations of Kosovo mobilized youth and first aid volunteers to respond to the heat wave. In the capital, Pristina, Red Cross youth are located in five most frequented places to provide water and to distribute leaflets containing information on what to consider and what to do when exposed to high temperatures. First aid teams also responded based on the needs and provided assistance to people affected by heat. The Red Cross organizations are continuously assessing the situation and will respond accordingly.

Romanian Red Cross

Strong heat waves have hit Romania starting approximately 30 days ago. The southern and western parts of the country are currently facing temperatures of over 38-40 Celsius daily. The same forecasts are maintained for the coming 14 days.

Romanian Red Cross is conducting several water distribution operations in partnership with local city halls and prefect's offices. There are Red Cross tents set up in the most affected urban areas, with volunteers distributing water, measuring blood pressure and providing screening services to beneficiaries.

A separate operation was conducted in partnership with Coca-Cola Romania: Romanian Red Cross has distributed an overall quantity of 45,000 litres of water to people in affected areas. A full report will follow; clearance for a press release is still pending from Coca-Cola.

A new operation will be implemented in Bucharest, in cooperation with Bucharest Prefect's Office and several retail chains. Romanian Red Cross volunteers will provide the same services mentioned above, inside stores with air conditioning, in specially designed places.

Romanian Red Cross is present at all meetings of the Committees for Emergency Situations (CES), at county and national level.

Conclusion

Across Europe this summer there have been several examples of extreme weather. At the same time as Central Europe was sweltering in temperatures over 40 degrees Celsius, parts of the United Kingdom have been hit by severe flooding that has caused damage and disrupted people's lives (for more information on the situation in the UK regarding the floods and British Red Cross work, [click here](#)). The Red Cross Red Crescent Climate Centre based in the Netherlands supports National Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies reduce the impact of climate change and extreme weather on people's livelihoods. For more information on the work that they do [click here](#).

All the Red Cross National Societies have been quick and active in responding to the heat wave caused disasters in their respective countries. They have been working closely together with national and local disaster response authorities in providing coordinated assistance. The work of the Red Cross has been recognized and well covered by national media.

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Central Europe: Heat wave



- Capitals
- Territories mentioned in this IB
- Affected countries

0 125 250 km

