

# Information bulletin



International Federation  
of Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies

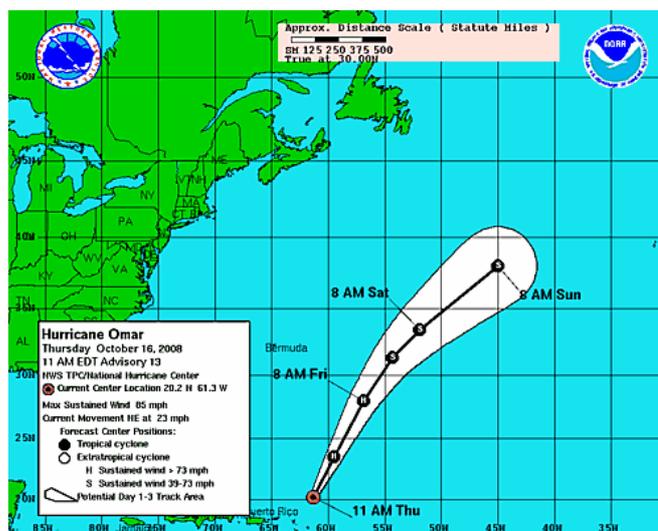
## Caribbean: Hurricane Omar

Information bulletin n° 1  
16 October, 2008

This bulletin is being issued for information only. Hurricane Omar formed on 16 October causing heavy rain and flooding in several Caribbean Islands including Antigua, St. Kitts, British Virgin Islands, Anguilla and the Netherlands Antilles.

The affected Overseas branches and National Societies, with the support of the Federation, have determined that external assistance is not required, and is therefore not seeking funding or other assistance from donors at this time.

[<click here for detailed contact information>](#)



Hurricane Omar's path.  
Source: National Hurricane Center

## The Situation

On 16 October 2008, the centre of hurricane Omar was located approximately 180 miles northeast of the northern Leeward Island. Currently, Hurricane Omar is quickly weakening as it moves from the northern Leeward Islands towards the north-northeast into the open central Atlantic Ocean. Heavy rainfall is expected for the northern and central Lesser Antilles.

A hurricane warning was issued for **Anguilla** and the **British Virgin Islands** (BVI). A hurricane watch is now in effect for St. Kitts and Nevis.

In **Antigua**, the National Emergency Management Organisation has met and is preparing for severe rainfalls due to the passage of Hurricane Omar. Heavy rains and flooding have already been reported.

In **Anguilla**, the National Emergency Operation Centre (NEOC) has met and was activated. All preventive measures are being considered due to expected flooding and landslides resulting from the storm. Evacuation orders have been issued to persons living in Sandy Ground, Valley Bottom, Welches and Mount Fortune areas. Shelters have been opened to house persons in need of refuge. Tourists were advised to leave the island before the arrival of the hurricane. Government offices and schools have been closed.

In **British Virgin Islands** the NEOC Operation Group met up. The following activities are being undertaken:

1. A census of tourists on the island

2. Non-essential workers have been sent home and ports will be closed by 4:00pm on 16 October 2008.
3. Government facilities including clinics have been closed and ferry services between the islands have been suspended.

The government issued a declaration stating residents could return to their normal routines. Eight people were housed in the various emergency shelters. There were no casualties and no major damages reported.

In **Montserrat** the Disaster Management Coordination Agency is monitoring the system due to the heavy rainfall which could produce a landslide of wet volcanic debris on the side of a volcano and affect the newly formed dome inside the volcano. Provisions have been made for evacuations should this become necessary.

In **St. Kitts and Nevis** there has been significant coastal damage on the south-western end of the island. Approximately 50 people have been displaced, 30 houses sustained minor damages while nine houses sustained major damages. The National Disaster Committee was activated and the government has started to clear and repair roads that were affected. Schools and public offices have been closed.

The Caribbean Disaster Emergency Response Agency (CDERA) Coordination Unit (CU) has been in contact with the countries affected by Hurricane Omar and continues to monitor the situation closely. The CU has also been in contact with the Regional Security System (RSS) and the Eastern Caribbean Donor Group (ECDG).

The ECDG will meet tomorrow to assess the situation and determine if external assistance is required. The Regional Response Mechanism will be on standby to ensure its availability should this become necessary.

Hurricane Omar passed around 3 am on 16 October near Sint Maarten, Saba and Statia in the **Netherlands Antilles**. Severe winds and heavy rainfall caused damages to trees, electricity cables and commercial signs. No injuries or casualties were reported. On Statia the storm did not cause many damages. The government has started clean-up operations. The airport is closed as an excess of mud posed a problem and there is no electricity and water.

## Red Cross and Red Crescent action

The International Federation through the Pan American Disaster Response Unit (PADRU) and the Caribbean Regional Representation Office in Port of Spain is in constant communication with the Overseas branch of the British Red Cross, the Overseas branch of the Netherlands Red Cross, the Antigua and Barbuda Red Cross Society and the Saint Kitts and Nevis Red Cross Society. PADRU has been trying to reach the director general of the Antigua and Barbuda Red Cross Society but has not been able to. PADRU will also contact St. Lucia Red Cross to verify if they sustained any damages.

The **St. Kitts and Nevis Red Cross Society** relief team completed initial damage and need assessments and has distributed hygiene kits, tarpaulins and blankets.

**The Red Cross in Sint Maarten** is on stand by. Red Cross volunteers in Sint Maarten are currently assessing the situation. The Red Cross volunteers in Statia that were pre-positioned are leaving the shelter as there was no need to activate these.

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

The International Federation's activities are aligned with its Global Agenda, which sets out four broad goals to meet 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.

## Contact information

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