

Press Release

Date: October 3, 2009
No.: HQ-09-120
Contact: News Desk
(202) 646-3272

FEMA UPDATE ON CONTINUED FEDERAL PREPAREDNESS AND RESPONSE EFFORTS IN THE PACIFIC

WASHINGTON – The Department of Homeland Security's Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA) is into its fifth day of response and federal support to American Samoa. At the same time, FEMA and other federal partners remain engaged in preparedness efforts throughout the Pacific.

FEMA and federal teams, through the Federal Coordinating Officer, continue to work closely with American Samoan Governor Togiola Tulafono, as well as Delegate Eni F.H. Faleomavaega, to provide response in areas of American Samoa impacted by Tuesday's tsunami. The information below represents the progress of resources and supplies into the island territory in the aftermath of the tsunami. The information is current as of 12:00 p.m. EDT.

"In addition to our efforts in support of the Governor of American Samoa, we recognize the significant impact of current disasters in other Pacific regions, including Indonesia, the Philippines and Taiwan," said FEMA Administrator Craig Fugate. "We are working closely with the Governor to meet his priorities as federal support continues to flow into American Samoa. As we continue to respond and recover in U.S. Territories, our thoughts and prayers go out to everyone in harms way. These events remind us how important preparedness and teamwork are to saving lives and ultimately rebuilding communities."

A team of more than 300 responders from FEMA, American Red Cross, the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers, the Department of Health and Human Services and other federal agencies are on the ground in American Samoa. These personnel comprise the immediate response force, including Incident Management Assessment Teams (IMAT), Disaster Medical Assistance Teams (DMAT), and Public Health Assistance Teams. Other personnel are assisting with community efforts.

The United States Coast Guard (USCG), National Guard, and United States Navy have provided critical transport of the life-saving and life-sustaining supplies and equipment to

meet the immediate needs of the survivors, including more than 26,000 meals, 14,000 liters of water, 1,800 blankets, 800 tents, more than 800 cots, and nine pallets of medical supplies and medical equipment in support of the territory's mass care operations. Several generators have been deployed, with more on the way. These generators will supply communities and critical infrastructure with power. In accordance with the governor's priority recovery efforts, debris removal planning is also underway and recovery specialists, including a housing planning team, are being identified and assembled

As residents begin to return to their homes, FEMA cautions them to be safe. FEMA cautions all persons on the island to be aware of potential hazards and advises that residents continue to follow guidance of local officials in clearing debris.

FEMA continues to coordinate with our federal partners, providing the following support to the region. Additional information on response and recovery efforts can be found below:

American Red Cross (ARC): ARC has conducted a preliminary disaster assessment and reports extensive destruction west of Leone, City of Pago Pago and the eastern most portion of the island. ARC continues to deploy volunteers on the ground in American Samoa providing food and supplies in affected areas; deploying additional equipment such as computers, cell phones and satellite phones. The Red Cross has activated their Safe and Well program to assist families with finding missing loved ones and is assisting shelter residents with registration on the website.

U.S. Coast Guard (USCG): Port assessments report no significant pollution and no obstructions to commercial traffic. The Navigation Team has completed the assessment of water navigation aids for American Samoa and the surrounding islands; all aids are intact and considered ready to support day and night operations.

U.S. Department of Health and Human Services: Disaster Medical Assistance Teams are providing medical support to survivors; a public health official has been deployed along with other support staff including public health experts; providing medical and pharmaceutical equipment and supplies.

U.S. Department of the Interior (DOI): DOI representative assisting the FEMA National Response Coordination Center (NRCC) with response and recovery planning.

U.S. Geological Survey (USGS): Analysts at the USGS National Earthquake Information Center (NEIC) are providing a range of information products to support emergency response and relief operations and will be conducting a post-tsunami investigation.

U.S. Army Corps of Engineers (USACE): USACE reports the water system on American Samoa is functioning to near normal capacity but pressure is limited in some areas. Soldiers from the 249th Prime Power Engineer Battalion are assisting with the management of the Honolulu District's Emergency Power PRT with the installation of

FEMA generators at critical prioritized life-saving and life-sustaining public facilities like shelters, sewer and water treatment plants or emergency management and response facilities.

U.S. Department of Defense (DOD): Defense Coordinating Officer assisting with IMATs.

National Guard Bureau (NGB): A fourth National Guard C-17 delivered Joint Task Force (JTF) equipment; JTF personnel augmenting the FEMA Damage Assessment Teams; Hawaii National Guard's 93rd Civil Support Team (CST) conducting medical support and HAZMAT surveys, Hawaii National Guard's CERFP (Chemical, Biological, Radiological Nuclear Explosive Enhanced Response Force Package) performing mobile medical missions and clearing debris.

Small Business Administration (SBA): Deploying assistance workers to assist in recovery efforts; SBA customer service representatives will issue disaster loan applications, explain the process and answer questions.

Internal Revenue Service (IRS): The IRS is postponing certain deadlines for taxpayers who reside or have a business in the disaster area. For details and additional information please visit www.irs.gov, use keyword American Samoa Tsunami.

Non-governmental organizations, including the American Red Cross and other voluntary and faith-based groups, are also providing assistance to the impacted region. **Financial contributions to disaster relief organizations in the form of** cash donations will allow voluntary organizations to fund response and recovery efforts quickly and provide goods and services to disaster survivors. **Information for volunteer and donation efforts can be found at:** www.fema.gov/donations or www.redcross.org/.

In addition to response efforts in American Samoa, FEMA and its partners also continue to monitor Typhoon Melor, and are prepared to respond to any potential impact on the Commonwealth of the Northern Mariana Islands. As the storm fully passes, the CNMI and FEMA will conduct damage assessments to affected areas. FEMA has pre-positioned equipment and critical supplies in Hawaii and Guam. Key federal personnel, including an Incident Management Assistance Team and other key federal responders, have been deployed to Guam for rapid transport to affected areas. Personnel are already on the ground in Saipan – the capital of the Northern Mariana Islands.

FEMA's mission is to support our citizens and first responders to ensure that as a nation we work together to build, sustain, and improve our capability to prepare for, protect against, respond to, recover from, and mitigate all hazards.

###