

8 September 2015

HIGHLIGHTS

- The National Emergency Operations Center (NEOC) has reported 13 confirmed deaths
- 360 people are staying in 7 different shelters across 5 communities.
- Event-based surveillance and verification of signals has been employed by the surveillance team with support from PAHO/WHO and CARPHA
- Most of the country lacks access to water, and there are concerns over water-borne diseases.
- Only Petite Savanne health center remains closed. The other 51 health facilities, including 3 hospitals, are operational.
- PAHO/WHO's Director arrived in Dominica on Sunday, 7 September, and visited Grand Bay shelters to assess needs and evaluate environmental health conditions.

Lack of access to water remains the biggest public health challenge. According to Dominica Water and Sewage Company Limited (DOWASCO), 100% of the national water system was affected. As of 3 September, 60% of water systems have been restored and 70% of the population are receiving potable water. After strengthened surveillance 54 cases of gastroenteritis, 8 cases of acute respiratory illness (ARI), 11 cases of undifferentiated fever and 1 case of tetanus have been reported. Communication channels within the Ministry of Health are improving in order to have an efficient and effective health response.

ACCESS TO HEALTH CARE

Currently, only Petite Savanne health center remains closed. 14 health facilities are currently without water tanks, including Belles health facility, which still does not have water, and tanks need to be replenished.

PAHO/WHO successfully organized the shipment of critical medicines from Haiti, with assistance from the government of the Dominican Republic. The medicines are scheduled to arrive on 9 September. Tetanus immune globulin is being mobilized from neighboring countries to support the stock in Dominica. PAHO/WHO is strengthening the Ministry of Health (MOH) logistics plan through training of personnel on LSS, and all reports for medical supplies are gathered in Central Medical Stores (CMS). International medical personnel arrived from the US Virgin Islands, the British Virgin Islands, St. Vincent, and France.

ENVIRONMENTAL HEALTH

Residents in Woodford Hill, Wesley and Coulibistrie are using unsafe streams as water supply, and water infrastructure and water quality remains a problem in Bellevue and Fond Cole Glasgow. Water source from all other regions meet required quality standards.

Solid waste management is another serious issue. Foodstuffs at ports are now being mainly channeled to the same location for inspection. A leaflet is being developed for dissemination at the port for ferry passengers about food safety.

Vector control activities are continuing in departments, and vector surveillance data are being collated. There is need for chemical supplies for vector control and water treatment tablets in various departments.

DOWASCO and PAHO/WHO Environmental Health are collaborating with the Red Cross and Dutch military for the provision of water by air, sea and roads to identified communities in need. There is an urgent need to assess the chemical contamination from the Petro Caribe plant, as well as Dominica Electricity barge operations.

MENTAL HEALTH

Mental health response is currently under way, and further needs have been identified. Mental health response needs to be strengthened for children, and Grand Bay shelters have requested further support in this regard. In addition, media communication messages related to mental health will be developed.

SHELTERS

Grand Bay Youth Center is housing 33 people, most of them evacuees from Petite Savanne. Shelters are reporting need for wash basins, access to water, solid waste management, water conservation practices and mental health counseling. In addition, there are security concerns at overcrowded shelters.

SURVEILLANCE

Event-based surveillance and verification of signals have been employed by the surveillance team. After detection of signal, visits to health centers and consultations with health workers are conducted to verify surveillance data and rumors. Gastroenteritis cases are the principal concern in Roseau and Portsmouth, and PAHO/WHO epidemiologists visited Portsmouth to investigate gastroenteritis cases in Colihaut and Coulibistrie.

Epidemiologists from PAHO/WHO and CARPHA are working with the surveillance team on data management and event-based surveillance. A coordination meeting will be held between surveillance and environmental health teams to enhance communication.

COORDINATION

PAHO/WHO is working with the Ministry of Health to coordinate the health response, and strengthen communication channels in order to implement an efficient and effective health response. The NEOC is relocating to Jimmit, and will begin operating at a scaled-down level. Information sharing will be strengthened between NEOC and the

Health Emergency Operations Center (HEOC), including the dissemination of reports from CDEMA and SitReps from other sectors.

Post Disaster Needs Assessment will be conducted through collaboration with international agencies. This is crucial to ensure that efforts are not duplicated and the single assessment is accepted by all agencies. PAHO/WHO's Director arrived in Dominica on Sunday, 7 September, and visited Grand Bay shelters to assess needs and evaluate environmental health conditions.

Sources: NEOC; MOH, PAHO/WHO Field Team