

FEMA continues response efforts in American Samoa, 05 Oct 2009

Source: Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA)

Date: 05 Oct 2009

Release Number: HQ-09-122

WASHINGTON, D.C. -- The Department of Homeland Security's Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA) announced today that cleanup and recovery efforts in American Samoa are making significant progress. At the same time, FEMA and other federal partners remain actively involved, bringing food, shelter, medical supplies and other assistance to meet the immediate needs of residents affected by last week's earthquake and tsunami.

"We continue to work with Governor Tulafono to support the priorities he has identified as the response in American Samoa progresses," said FEMA Administrator Craig Fugate. "Through the Federal Coordinating Officer, Kenneth Tingman, we are working closely with local leadership as well as our federal partners and non-profits, to meet the needs of survivors and begin the recovery."

FEMA Federal Coordinating Officer Kenneth Tingman and American Samoan Governor Togiola Tulafono have already flown over the affected areas to view the damage and to identify any additional areas of immediate need in parts of American Samoa impacted by Tuesday's tsunami.

"When we arrived last week, our initial efforts were to ensure that the Governor and the people of American Samoa had all the life saving materials they needed. We are now focusing our efforts, under the direction of the Governor, to support their life supporting needs, as they continue to respond and recover," said FEMA Federal Coordinating Officer Kenneth Tingman. "Our thoughts and prayers go out to the individuals and families that have been impacted by this event, and we will continue working as a team with our territory and federal partners to respond to Tuesday's tsunami."

The information below represents the progress of resources and supplies into the island territory in the aftermath of the tsunami:

Federal 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. The main priorities of the disaster operations remain focused on restoration of commercial power in the eastern district, and repairs and restoration of the region's infrastructure. Roughly 65,000 cubic yards of debris has already been identified for removal.

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 litres of water, 1,800 blankets, 800 tents, more than 800 cots, and nine pallets of medical supplies in support of the territory's mass care operations. More than 20 generators have

already been deployed to American Samoa, with several already supplying power to critical infrastructure. More generators are on their way, which will support communities and critical facilities.

FEMA and its federal partners are supporting the local government, which is distributing more than 3,500 meals a day. As FEMA and our federal partners continue to support the territory with a priority focus on life-safety activities, power restoration, and medical and shelter support, the agency is also preparing for recovery efforts. Recovery specialists, including Individual Assistance specialists and a housing planning team are being deployed.

FEMA and our federal partner, the General Services Administration, are in the process of locating and securing a facility where a Disaster Recovery Center (DRC) will be established. DRCs will connect affected residents with recovery specialists from federal, state and local agencies for personal, one-on-one assistance for those affected by the tsunami.

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:

The U.S. Coast Guard (USCG): National Guard, and United States Navy have completed critical transport of the life-saving and life-sustaining supplies and equipment to meet the immediate needs of the survivors, including meals, water, blankets, tents, cots, and medical supplies.

U.S. Department of Defense (DOD): The Department of Defense has completed 11 missions between Hawaii and American Samoa, transporting federal personnel, vehicles, communications equipment, cots, blankets and generators. The DOD also assisted with survey flights, hazmat and damage assessments.

U.S. Army Corps of Engineers (USACE): USACE reports the water system on American Samoa is functioning. USACE is coordinating the installation and use of more than 20 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 Energy (DOE): The Department of Energy is part of team working with FEMA and the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers focused on the restoration, generation, transmission and distribution of electric power. The team is working with local authorities to prioritize areas that remain without power, particularly in the eastern district.

U.S. Department of Health and Human Services (HHS): HHS has approximately 50 medical personnel deployed to American Samoa, including doctors, nurses, pharmacists, public health, and mental health professionals to support public health and medical needs. HHS also provided pharmaceutical and medical supplies.

American Red Cross (ARC): The American Red Cross has more than 70 volunteers on the ground in American Samoa providing food and supplies in affected areas. Using a warehouse on American Samoa stocked with cots, flashlights, cooking supplies and clean-up supplies, trained volunteers are bringing additional supplies including recovery kits that are awaiting transport to American Samoa.

Families that have been in contact with loved ones on American Samoa can share information about their well-being by registering them with Safe and Well at www.redcross.org, or call 1-800-RED-CROSS (1-800-733-2767). For photos and more information about American Red Cross relief efforts in American Samoa visit newsroom.redcross.org

Non-governmental organizations, including the American Red Cross 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 the needed goods and services to disaster survivors. Your financial support will help the American Red Cross respond quickly to disasters like the Pacific Islands tsunami in American Samoa and Samoa. You can donate by calling 1-800-REDCROSS (1-800-733-2767) or (1-800-257-7575 (Spanish), or visiting www.redcross.org, and donate to the American Red Cross Disaster Relief Fund.

To see a video message from the Federal Coordinating Officer on recovery efforts to date, please visit: www.youtube.com/watch?v=gr6kpEryBu4&feature=channel_page

For B-roll of generators arriving on American Samoa please visit:
www.youtube.com/watch?v=LiYUB2qzxAY&feature=channel_page

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.