

TSF deploys to the Samoa Islands

Source: Télécoms Sans Frontières (TSF)

Date: 30 Sep 2009

TSF Headquarters, September 30th, 2009 – On September 29th, a powerful underwater earthquake at 8.0 on the Richter scale in the Pacific off the Samoa islands region generated a tsunami and waves 3 metres high across Samoa Islands in the South Pacific. The tsunami swept Apia, Western Samoa, and Pago Pago, American Samoa, according to the West Coast/Alaska Tsunami Warning Center.

Following its mobilization for the Philippines and at the request of UNDAC (United Nations Disaster Assessment and Coordination), TSF deploys to the Samoa islands to initiate a telecom operation in the region. TSF will support the UNDAC team in its assessment missions, and will be able to identify and respond to every telecom issue at the heart of the crisis.

Entire villages had been wiped out in Samoa on the worst-hit south and southwest coasts where thousands of people live. Several tourist resorts and villages were devastated. Telecommunications and power were cut in many areas, and major roads were badly damaged.

According to the latest estimations, more than 120 people were killed, hundreds were injured and thousands of people were left homeless. Many more deaths are likely to be reported in the tragedy. People in Samoa were reported to be returning to the sites of their homes to inspect the damage and search for the missing.

The Pacific Tsunami Warning Centre initially issued a tsunami alert over a vast swathe of the Pacific. It lifted its alert about five hours after the first quake.

The team will remain in the zone in order to guarantee telecom solutions that benefit United Nations Disaster Assessment and Coordination.

The mission is supported by the Vodafone Foundation, the United Nations Foundation, Inmarsat, Eutelsat, Vizada, AT&T, Cable and Wireless, PCCW Global, the Communauté d'Agglomération de Pau, and the Conseil Régional d'Aquitaine.

About Télécoms Sans Frontières

Télécoms Sans Frontières: the leading humanitarian NGO specialised in emergency telecommunications

With its 24-hour monitoring centre and relying on its operational bases in Europe, Central America and Asia, Télécoms Sans Frontières (TSF) crews of IT and telecoms specialists can intervene anywhere in the world in less than 24 hours. After a sudden onset disaster or conflict, they can set up in a matter of minutes a satellite-based telecoms centre offering broadband Internet, phone and fax lines. These centres

enable emergency NGOs, the United Nations and local authorities to communicate right at the heart of a crisis. They also facilitate the coordination of aid efforts. In parallel, TSF runs humanitarian calling operation to offer support and assistance to affected civilians, giving them a link with the outside world from which they would be otherwise completely cut off.

Since its creation in 1998, TSF deployed to nearly 60 countries and assisted almost 500 relief organisations and millions of victims. In 2006, TSF became a partner of the United Nations Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs (OCHA) and the United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF). TSF is First Responder of the Emergency Telecommunications Cluster (ETC).

Télécoms Sans Frontières is also a working group member of the United Nations emergency telecoms body (WGET). TSF is a partner of the Humanitarian Aid Department of the European Commission (ECHO) and a member of the International Council of Voluntary Agencies (ICVA).