

Samaritan's Purse to help victims of Hurricane Irma

Donations needed to help devastated families

CALGARY, AB, Sept. 8, 2017 – Canadians are part of a coordinated international response to assist victims in the Hurricane Irma-ravaged Caribbean islands. Members of the Samaritan's Purse Canada disaster assistance response team will be in the Caribbean tomorrow. This morning, one of Samaritan's Purse Canada's specially equipped Disaster Relief Units departed for the U.S. as well to be in a strategic position to respond to potential Hurricane Irma victims in the U.S. Another unit based in Calgary will depart Monday, and more Canadian disaster response team members are being recruited. Canadians will travel on a Samaritan's Purse DC-8 aircraft in North Carolina, which is fully loaded with emergency supplies and is scheduled to make its second flight to the Caribbean tomorrow.

The deadly storm slammed into the Caribbean earlier this week as a Category 5 hurricane, and while it has been downgraded to a Category 4 hurricane now, it is anticipated to cause widespread and catastrophic damage in Florida and possibly states farther north as well by this weekend. Samaritan's Purse Canada is closely monitoring the disaster as it unfolds and will continue to meet urgent needs in the weeks and months ahead.

"The destruction is catastrophic, and we want to be there for people in a time of great need and distress," says David Bock, disaster response manager with Samaritan's Purse Canada. "We have four well-trained disaster assistance response team members from Vancouver, Hamilton, Calgary and Blairmore (Alberta) bound for the U.S. today, so they can board the Samaritan's Purse DC-8 in North Carolina."

Samaritan's Purse in the U.S. has deployed all of its Disaster Relief Unit tractor trailers to help with Hurricane Harvey relief in Texas, and there are Samaritan's Purse Canada volunteers heading to the U.S. to assist with that response.

Disaster Relief Units are tractor trailers outfitted with disaster recovery equipment including generators, pumps, hand tools, and safety gear for volunteers. They also serve as volunteer coordination and training centers, and are equipped with a self-contained office, communications system, and other supplies.

The Canadian-based Disaster Relief Units are stationed in Alberta, Ontario, and New Brunswick. While the New Brunswick-based unit has already departed for the U.S., the Alberta unit, which played an integral role in helping Samaritan's Purse staff and volunteers in assisting with flood and wildfire clean-up in British Columbia throughout most of the summer, is now being prepared to leave for Florida. The Ontario unit is in Windsor helping residents recover from flooding that damaged thousands of homes in late August.

Also deploying to the U.S. are crisis-trained Rapid Response Team Chaplains from Samaritan's Purse's sister organization, the Billy Graham Evangelistic Association (BGEA). The chaplains will offer valuable emotional and spiritual support to people who have lost their homes and possessions.

Charity Navigator, a non-profit U.S. organization that assesses charities, has identified Samaritan's Purse as one of the most effective disaster relief organizations helping Hurricane Harvey victims.

In recent years, Samaritan's Purse has assisted victims of a wide variety of natural disasters including flooding in New Brunswick, Quebec, Ontario, southern Alberta, and Nova Scotia, plus wildfires in Fort McMurray, AB and the B.C. interior.

Samaritan's Purse also helps victims of international disasters including the 2011 earthquake/tsunami in Japan, Typhoon Haiyan in the Philippines in 2013, the 2015 earthquake in Nepal, and Hurricane Matthew in Haiti in 2016.

Volunteers Needed: Samaritan's Purse is welcoming applications from Canadians wishing to volunteer for one-week or two-week periods in Texas during the next few months. They'll be supervised by experienced staff, and work alongside volunteers who have served with Samaritan's Purse in the past. They are also looking for volunteers to assist with flood clean-up in Windsor. Please visit SamaritansPurse.ca for more information.

Donations Needed: Canadians can donate to Samaritan's Purse disaster relief work by visiting SamaritansPurse.ca or calling 1-800-663-6500.

About Samaritan's Purse Canada

Samaritan's Purse is a Christian relief and development organization that takes its name from Jesus Christ's biblical story of the Good Samaritan. Like that Good Samaritan, who found a beaten man and helped restore him, we aid victims of war, disease, disaster, poverty, famine, and persecution. Besides disaster relief, our work includes collecting and distributing gift-filled Operation Christmas Child shoeboxes, and providing safe water, vocational skills and agricultural supplies and training to families in the developing world. Learn more at SamaritansPurse.ca

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