



PAHO monitors Hurricane Melissa and supports health preparedness in the Caribbean

Washington, D.C., 28 October 2025 (PAHO) – The Pan American Health Organization (PAHO) is closely monitoring the evolution of Hurricane Melissa, classified as a Category 5 hurricane, as it moves across the Caribbean region. The storm is already affecting Jamaica, and it is forecast that this island and Cuba will face the most severe impacts through Wednesday. Haiti, the Dominican Republic, and the Bahamas may also experience related effects.

According to the U.S. National Hurricane Center (NHC), Melissa is expected to bring extremely heavy rainfall, strong winds, storm surges, and widespread flooding, posing significant risks to public health and the continuity of essential services.

Through its Emergency Operations Center (EOC) in Washington, D.C., PAHO is maintaining continuous coordination with Ministries of Health in the countries at risk, tracking the hurricane's trajectory and potential health impacts.

PAHO is also working with regional emergency management and humanitarian partners, including the United Nations and the Caribbean disaster management agencies, to harmonize readiness and response efforts.

Readiness

As part of its readiness measures, PAHO has prepositioned emergency medical kits and supplies in Haiti. These include interagency emergency health kits, trauma kits, and cyclone response kits stored at the Central Medical Warehouse (PROMESS) in Tabarre, on the outskirts of Port-au-Prince, for rapid deployment as needed.

Additional stocks of essential medicines, medical and water, sanitation, and hygiene (WASH) supplies, and laboratory materials are maintained at the PAHO Regional Strategic Reserve in Panama. PAHO's multidisciplinary regional response

team are ready for deployment to assist with health damage and needs assessments, coordination, emergency care, re-establishing essential health services, and the prevent and control of outbreaks, among others.

In Haiti, the Ministry of Health has activated its crisis cell and regional health offices are on alert. Preliminary reports indicate localized flooding and disruptions in some health facilities, with measures underway to maintain patient care. In Jamaica, authorities have activated the national Emergency Operations Centre to coordinate the response, including hospitals and health centers. Health authorities in eastern Cuba and southern Dominican Republic remain on alert for potential flooding and service disruptions.

Potential health impact

Authorities are preparing for significant risks to public health and the functionality of health systems in affected countries. The following priorities outline key areas of concern requiring immediate attention and coordinated action:

- **Health services:** Melissa is expected to disrupt health care delivery, with potential damage to health facilities, power and water outages, and limited access—particularly in coastal and rural areas. Hospitals may face service interruptions and increased emergency caseloads.
- **Water, sanitation, and hygiene (WASH):** Damage to water and sanitation infrastructure in health facilities and shelters may increase the risk of outbreaks and disrupt the regular functioning of hospitals.
- **Disease surveillance:** Flooding and displacement heighten the risk of water- and vector-borne diseases outbreaks and respiratory infections in crowded shelters. Strengthening surveillance is key to the early detection of potential disease outbreaks.
- **Mental health and psychosocial support (MHPSS):** Displacement, loss, and prolonged stress have increased psychosocial needs. PAHO supports the integration of psychological first aid and community-based mental health care into response operations.

To mitigate these risks, rapid assessments of the health service network should be conducted to determine functionality, damage, and urgent needs to save lives in the immediate aftermath of the hurricane. Additionally, restoring and maintaining safe water, sanitation, and hygiene in health facilities and shelters will be a top priority to prevent secondary disease outbreaks.

PAHO is providing guidance to national and local authorities to reorganize service delivery to ensure timely access to emergency and essential medical care, enhance infection prevention and control, and strengthen medical waste management and water safety monitoring to ensure readiness for a rapid response if the hurricane impacts health services.

PAHO will continue to monitor the evolution of the hurricane and support countries in implementing response measures, in close coordination with governments and humanitarian partners, to maintain health services and protect communities that may be affected.

MEDIA CONTACTS

Sebastian Oliel: +1 202 316-5679

mediateam@paho.org

www.paho.org

The Pan American Health Organization (PAHO) works with the countries of the Americas to improve the health and quality of life of its population. Founded in 1902, it is the world's oldest international public health agency. It serves as the Regional Office of WHO for the Americas and is the specialized health agency of the Inter-American system (OAS).