



THE KINGDOM OF TONGA
NATIONAL EMERGENCY MANAGEMENT OFFICE
NATIONAL EMERGENCY OPERATIONS CENTRE

SITUATION REPORT

Event: Hunga Tonga Hunga Ha'apai Volcanic Eruption
Sit Rep No: 04
Date: 17 January 2022 Period: 11am Sun 16th Jan Mon 10.30am 17th Jan 2022

This situation report released by the National Emergency Management Office (NEMO) is to inform operational partners on current situation of secondary effect of the Hunga Tonga Hunga Ha'apai (HTHH) Volcanic eruption. This Situation report (Sitrep) covers the period stated above. Frequency of reports will depend on availability of new information and evolving operation.

Highlights

- The National Emergency Operations Centre was activated on Friday 14th January 2022 following a tsunami marine warning issued and Tonga Geological Services reports of increased volcanic activity.
- HTHH volcano erupted at approx 5.20pm on Sat 15 Jan 2022 followed by a tsunami warning issued which triggered a mass evacuation.
- There is no internet connection nor communication with Vava'u, Ha'apai and Ongo Niua. Power is intermittent.
- 'Eua's Emergency Operations Centre reports extensive damage to buildings, the wharf, local cemetery and coastal areas, potentially more than TC Harold's impact
- 'Eua urgently needs water and will ration current drinking supplies with the hospital as a priority for distribution.
- 'Eua has identified priority items as petrol, water, Hygiene kits, Tarpaulin and an excavator for coastal areas.
- HMAF's *Ngahau Koula* departed Tongatapu on 16th January 2022 for Ha'apai to re-establish communication and engagement.
- NEMO prepared stocks (tarpaulins, hygiene kits and water) for Ha'apai, as immediate relief items prior to assessment.
- HMAF reported that *Voeta Ngahau Siliva* was in Vava'u.
- To date, only one reported missing from 'Atata.



Background

The Hunga Tonga Hunga Ha'apai (HHTH) volcanic activity commenced on 20 December 2021 and was immediately heightened to red for aviation. Tonga Geological Services (TGS) monitored the volcanic activity providing public health advice from 20 December 2021 until 2 January 2022. Environmental and public health warnings were provided about the potential of water contamination from the ash fall and potential of acid rain in Ha'apai. This included information on potential of fish poisoning due to volcanic fluid polluting the ocean and raising awareness on the hazardous areas surrounding the islands and ensuring the public kept clear of these areas. TGS continued to monitor HHTH and noted that there was no activity from 2nd January to 11th January 2022.

On 14th January 2022 TGS reissued an alert at 7am, following increased volcanic activity as Tongatapu and 'Eua communities were impacted by the smell of sulfur.

On 14th January 2022, Tonga Met issued a Tsunami Marine warning from the National Tsunami Warning Centre at 11.12am directly to the public. The warning was cancelled for Vava'u and Ongo Niuas in the evening of Fri 14th Jan 2022 and for the rest of Tonga on Sat 15th Jan 2022 in the morning.

Current situation

- The HHTH volcanic eruption followed by the tsunami warning triggered an immediate evacuation of communities on 15th January 2022 at approx 5.20-5.30pm.
- The National Emergency Operations Centre has been activated since 14th January 2022 due to the tsunami marine warning issued.
- There have been 71 priority requests as at midnight. Of these, water has been the highest request, followed by food and requests for shelter.
- Requests recorded from Town officers has been for 1) chainsaws, 2) generators (for water pumps) and 3) water pumps.
- There were 483 calls to the NEOC on Sunday 16th January 2022.

'Eua

- 'Eua has reported areas severely and completely damaged and advised that the impact is possible worse than the impact from Tropical Cyclone Harold.
- 'Eua has identified **priority items** as:
 - petrol/ diesel, water, Hygiene kits, Tarpaulin and an excavator for coastal areas.
- 89 people are in evacuation centres.
- NEMO is currently planning and organising an immediate response for 'Eua including relief items such as water and hygiene kits. NEMO will liaise with Tonga Red Cross to provide initial immediate relief, prior to further assessments.

Tongatapu

- Water distribution by First Responders (NEMO, HMAF, Tonga Police and Tonga Fire and Emergency Services) commenced on the night of 15th January 2022 in Tongatapu, following the Hon. PM's address to the Kingdom over the radio.
- NEMO plans to distribute 2794 Litres of water today in Tongatapu, responding to requests.
- Tonga Red Cross distributed 1870 litres of water to Ha'atafu, Kanokupulu, 'Ahau, Te'ekiu, Ha'utu, Fahefa, Houma and 'Utulau on 16th January 2022.

Ha'apai

- HMAF with NEMO and other stakeholders left for Ha'apai by naval boat in the afternoon of Sunday 16th January 2022.
- NEMO sent 220 L water, 150 Kitchen kits, 150 Hygiene kits, and 3 x 74 packs of Tarpaulin to Ha'apai.
- There still has been no communication from Vava'u, Ha'apai, and Ongo Niuas, since HTHH erupted on Sat 15th January 2022.

Further updates

NEMO will provide the next SitRep at the next meeting or within 24 hours or as the situation may evolve, as determined by NEMC.