

Caribbean Hurricane Deployment Update

Dominica

Receipt of reports from Dominica are frustrated by intermittent Internet services.

November 9, 2017

Disaster Aid Response Team (DART) volunteers, Matt Gemmell and Suzie Vaill left the UK to go to Dominica. Their flight would take them to St. Lucia and then on by ferry to Dominica.

November 10, 2017

Matt and Suzie arrive safely in Dominica, contacted the local Rotary clubs, and started their reconnaissance work.

November 11, 2017

DART Leader Tore Knos arrived from Los Angeles via New York, and San Juan and met up with Matt & Suzie. The team has arranged accommodation in a hotel that is not open to the public as it was damaged by the hurricane. A first meeting with the local Rotary Club of Portsmouth to discuss their deployment. Meeting have been arranged with other NGO's and plans were made to acquire buckets to assemble the water filter systems in readiness for distribution. Although several thousand water filters have already been distributed they were mainly handed out along the main road that circles the island - the team have plans to go inland to distribute their water filters.

Tore and Matt both carried 50 Sawyer 'All in One' water filters with them as advance reports from Dominica indicated that supplies of potable water were still an issue on parts of the island. These filters can each provide up to 2,000 litres a day of filtered water. The filters will remove harmful bacteria (like salmonella), protozoa, or cysts like E. coli, Giardia, Vibrio cholerae, and Salmonella; and, of course, dirt that is in suspension in the water – all thanks to the 0.1 micron, cleanable filter media in each unit.

November 12, 2017

Acquisition of buckets and assembly of water filters has started. Several hours in the afternoon were spent with a local Rotarian to evaluate 3 houses that needed roofs.

November 13, 2017

A meeting was held with those coordinating deliveries of water to communities in the northern third of Dominica. Although the water being delivered is from a potable source there are fears that the storage tanks and piping are not 'safe' and water filters are still required.

This was followed by a meeting with President and some members of the Rotary Club of Roseau. Arrangements were made to meet again later in the week and to help distribute the 180 Sawyer filters that the club has and train recipients on how to use and clean them.

At a WASH meeting that afternoon it was revealed that although thousands of water filters have been distributed many more are still required.

November 14, 2017

40 Sawyer water filters were distributed in Wesley, and 60 in Calibishie.

In the late afternoon they attended a meeting of the Rotary Club of Portsmouth. The club is only about 4 years old and has about 24 members. Currently they are handing out food, helping us with the filters, identifying roofs that need to be repaired, and coordinating new supplies being brought in.

The club also has a project to make wire fish-pots for local fishermen to replace those lost in Hurricane Maria. These are wire cages that rest on the ocean bottom that fish can swim in to but not out of. Each fisherman usually has 10 to 20 of the pots but all were destroyed in the hurricane. This project allows the fisherman to return to fishing and could stimulate the local economy.

November 15, 2017

By 8:30 am the Team we were driving into the mountains to check one house for possible inclusion in the metal roof replacement. The house is very new and meets most of the qualifications for inclusion in a new roof. Afterwards they visited a coffee processing plant that is being set up to process coffee beans from Dominica and other members of ALBA. It is planned to be operational by February and when it is it will create many new jobs.

“The Great Plastic Bucket Hunt” continued in Roseau. After several hours spent walking around the city a supply of 180 was found and will be used to install the 180 sawyer filters mentioned previously.

In the late afternoon they attended the Rotary Club of Roseau meeting and agreed a schedule for visiting local towns.

The distances in Dominica are short but take a long time to drive due to the damaged roads and mountain driving. It rained this afternoon and evening and if it continues they will not be able to deliver filters tomorrow.

On Saturday and Sunday Suzie and Matt plan to stay in Roseau and visit villages with the Roseau Rotarians and return to Portsmouth on Sunday night.

Tore will go to Portsmouth on Saturday with a contingent of Roseau Rotarians to meet the District Governor in Portsmouth. Tore will stay in Portsmouth and work on roofs and fish pots on Sunday.

Comment: Getting anywhere can be frustratingly slow. The roads are narrow, damaged, and have narrow curves every few hundred feet. Visibility is very limited on the curves, so you must use a great deal of caution.

November 16, 2017

After sourcing more buckets and collecting water filters from the local Rotary club store the Team went to Giraudel to start distributing them. The drive was very steep and windy with extensive damage from water and trees that had been blown down. The villagers were very appreciative of the filters and showed great interest.

The woman who was caring for senior citizens had been boiling all the water that they had been using. She was excited about not having to spend her time boiling water any more. She wanted to learn all about the filter and will be using them. Several other villagers came to the demonstration and got their filters. At sunset the Team went to Fort Young for Internet access.

Comment: Roseau Rotary club members want to deliver water filters with us, but they are only available on Saturday and Sunday.

November 17, 2017

The first part of the morning was spent searching for buckets for the water filters. The team located 32 buckets which were enough for the day and then drove into the mountains to Bellevue and trained and distributed 23 filters as selected by the village administrator. They then moved on to Canefield where only 6 filters had been requested. More will probably be delivered in the future. As the sun set we drove north to Portsmouth.

November 18, 2017

The morning was spent coordinating with the village council of Paix Bouch on when to come and how many filters they needed.

Tore worked with Hans and Liz (Rotary Club of Portsmouth) to get ready for the visit by the Rotary governor and their entourage. The governor flew into Roseau and met with the representatives of the Dominica government before driving to Portsmouth for lunch and an update on accomplishments and requirements.

Matt and Suzie drove to Paix Bouch to train and distribute Sawyer water filters. Although arranged in conjunction with a member of the village council it was somewhat disorganised. Confusion existed as to who should receive filters based on vulnerability. There was also no real focal point which resulted in having to give four separate demonstrations, training sessions and distributions in different parts of the village. This meant that, although the exercise was a success, it took longer than expected to complete.

Comment: Dominica is proposing a Building Code, but no one knows what it is and how it will be implemented. Tore, who has a building and building code background offered to help but has no idea if he will ever be contacted.

November 19, 2017

Suzie and Matt met Roseau Rotary Club at their storage depot and assisted loading a truck with food essentials and toilet paper. A convoy of vehicles then travelled to Soufriere and Scott's Head at the south west corner of the island where the Caribbean Sea meets the Atlantic Ocean. Large crowds of expectant people were present to receive food and were good humoured but boisterous. Suzie and Matt demonstrated the Sawyer water filters at both locations and in total 26 water filters and buckets were distributed. The village shop at Soufriere was also issued with a Lifesaver water filter for communal use.

Tore visited a commercial building and evaluated required repairs and how to strengthen the roof to make it more resistant to hurricanes.

November 20, 2017

This is the last day the whole Team will be together. Tore left to be home in time for a family commitment. Rental car and accommodation bills were settled.

Matt and Suzie:

- Identified 2 houses that fit criteria and need new roofs in Paix Bouche and Calibishie
- Referred the Calibishie village chairperson to the Rotary club of Portsmouth for future needs
- Gave a tarpaulin to a house with no roof
- Confirmed that roof replacement started on a house in Borne.

Comment: Matt and Suzie will leave at 6.45am November 21 and travel by local minibus to Roseau to start journey home with a ferry to St Lucia. Unfortunately, the ferry is not running on November 22 and taking the November 23 ferry would be tight for time connect with the flight to UK. As the aid has been distributed they are leaving to reduce chance of missing their plane, booked for Thursday, back to UK.