

Terms of Reference

Environmental experts in response to the 2024 Hurricane season: Waste Management Specialists

UNEP/OCHA Joint Environment Unit

Background

The National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration (NOAA) Weather Service of the United States of America has predicted an above-normal hurricane activity in the Atlantic basin for this year. NOAA's outlook for the 2024 Atlantic hurricane season, spanning from June 1 to November 30, forecasts an 85% chance of an above-normal season, with a range of 17 to 25 total named storms. Of those, 8 to 13 are expected to become hurricanes (winds of 119 km/h or higher), including 4 to 7 major hurricanes (category 3, 4, or 5; with winds of 178 km/h or higher).

This increased activity is influenced by several factors, including near-record warm ocean temperatures in the Atlantic Ocean, the development of La Niña conditions in the Pacific, reduced Atlantic trade winds, and less wind shear—all of which tend to favour tropical storms formation. An example of the current above-normal conditions is Hurricane Beryl in July 2024, the second named storm this season and the first major hurricane of the year, also notable as the earliest-forming Category 5 Atlantic hurricane on record in the Caribbean. Beryl's impact highlights the exceptionally active nature of the 2024 Atlantic Hurricane season.

Following the impact of Hurricane Beryl on Grenada, St. Vincent and the Grenadines, and Jamaica, and the subsequent response by the United Nations with strong support from the European Union Civil Protection Mechanism (UCPM), the Joint Environment Unit (JEU) is activating its preparedness and response mechanisms. This includes the pre-identification of experts in technical fields typically required to respond to environmental emergencies caused by hurricanes. These experts, in collaboration with OCHA and UNEP staff, will be part of UNDAC teams, JEU standalone environmental missions, or government-led missions, depending on the requests received from Caribbean Member States. The current document highlights the requirements for **waste management specialists**.

Responsibilities/Expected Activities

- Conduct assessments related to disaster waste management and debris issues linked to the hurricane(s) and evaluate the local capacity for addressing disaster waste management issues while identifying gaps and needs for additional assistance/support/equipment.
- Provide on-site practical advice and guidance to relevant local authorities, proposing solutions to minimize environmental and health impacts of disaster waste.
- Develop a rapid disaster waste management plan, including guidance on proper management of existing waste disposal sites, logistics of waste collection services, and optimization of recycling and reuse options.
- Liaise and coordinate with other mechanisms and entities involved in disaster waste issues and communicate findings and recommendations rapidly and regularly to the UNDAC team/local authorities/the UN Resident Coordinator, and the JEU as appropriate.
- Pay particular attention to waste collection and disposal in humanitarian settings, especially concerning household waste, sanitation, drinking water, and recycling; provide advice and guidance to national and international aid organizations on disaster waste management issues if requested.
- Perform other tasks in support of the operation as required, ensuring a comprehensive and effective response to disaster waste management issues.

Qualifications and skills

- **Educational background:** degree in environmental engineering, waste management, civil engineering, or related fields, with a focus on waste management, environmental sciences, or public health.
- **Language proficiency:** fluency in English is essential. Proficiency in other languages relevant to the affected region is an asset (including Spanish, French, Portuguese).
- **Waste management expertise:** expertise in disaster waste management, including the handling, recycling, and disposal of solid and hazardous waste. Experience in developing and implementing waste management plans during emergencies is an asset.
- **Interdisciplinary Integration:** ability to integrate waste management considerations across various disciplines, especially within disaster response and recovery efforts.
- **Environmental coordination:** experience in coordinating with international and local agencies involved in disaster waste management. Knowledge of humanitarian coordination frameworks and collaboration with IASC clusters is an asset.
- **Team collaboration:** strong team skills for working in a multi-disciplinary, multi-national team in challenging field conditions. Capacity to assume leadership when necessary.
- **Training and certification:** completed relevant training courses, such as the Environment and Emergencies Training (EET), disaster waste management training, or training from standby partners.
- **IT proficiency:** proficiency in MS Windows and MS Office applications, and ability to operate standard IT and communications equipment.

Notes

- *Contact with media, including interviews, will only be undertaken if authorized by the RC and with the support of OCHA/UNEP head of public information unit.*
- *Indicating availability and interest in these terms of reference does not constitute an obligation for actual deployment. The purpose of this process is to pre-identify and assess the availability of experts with the specified qualifications and skills. This pre-identification is intended to facilitate rapid mobilization should the need arise during the hurricane season. Being listed as available does not guarantee deployment, but ensures that experts are prepared and can be swiftly contacted if a situation demands their expertise.*