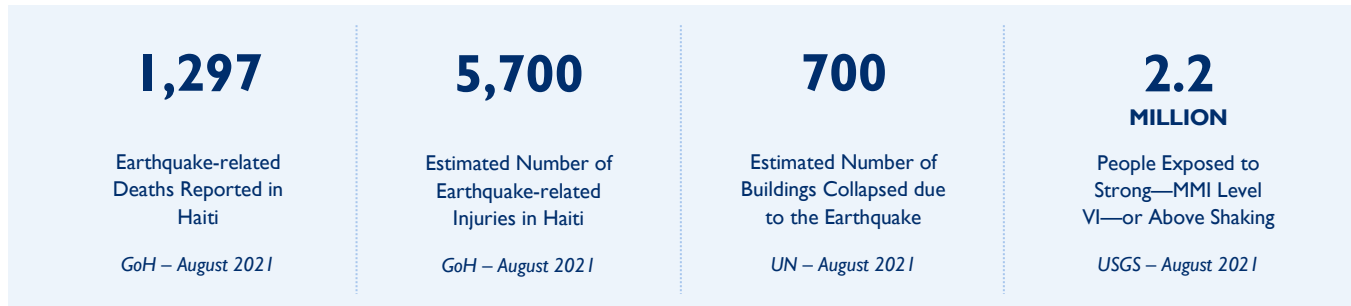


# Haiti – Earthquake

AUGUST 16, 2021

## SITUATION AT A GLANCE



- At 8:29 a.m. EDT on August 14, a magnitude 7.2 earthquake struck southwestern Haiti at a depth of 6.2 miles, followed by at least 19 tremors measuring at or above magnitude 4.0, according to the USGS.
- As of August 15, preliminary GoH reports indicate that the earthquake resulted in at least 1,297 deaths and injury to at least 5,700 people, with hundreds still missing.
- On August 14, U.S. Ambassador Michele J. Sison declared a disaster due to the effects of the earthquake. In response, USAID/BHA is providing initial support for logistics and shelter assistance and relief commodities. USAID/BHA also activated a DART, which includes USAR experts, and a Washington, D.C.,-based RMT.



## TIMELINE

### August 14, 2021

At 8:29 a.m. local time, a magnitude 7.2 earthquake strikes southwestern Haiti at a depth of 6.2 miles

### August 14, 2021

U.S. Ambassador Michele J. Sison declares a disaster; USAID/BHA activates a DART and RMT

### August 15, 2021

USAID/BHA deploys additional DART staff to Haiti, including 65 USAR personnel

### August 15, 2021

USCG deploys 2 helicopters to assist with medical evacuations

## KEY DEVELOPMENTS

### Major Earthquake Results in at Least 1,297 Deaths

At 8:29 a.m. Eastern Daylight Time (EDT) on August 14, a magnitude 7.2 earthquake struck southwestern Haiti at a depth of 6.2 miles, according to the U.S. Geological Survey (USGS). The epicenter of the earthquake was located approximately 23.2 miles southwest of Sud Department's Les Cayes town and 78 miles west of Haiti's capital city of Port-au-Prince. USGS issued a red alert for earthquake-related fatalities and estimated economic losses, indicating that high casualties and extensive damage are probable and the disaster is likely widespread. USGS has reported multiple aftershocks following the earthquake, including at least 19 tremors measuring at or above magnitude 4.0. Buildings compromised by the initial earthquake are likely more vulnerable to additional tremors, according to the UN.

As of August 15, preliminary reports from the Government of Haiti (GoH) indicate that the earthquake had resulted in at least 1,297 deaths and injury to at least 5,700 people, with hundreds still missing. The casualties are concentrated in Haiti's southern peninsula, which includes Grand'Anse, Nippes, and Sud departments. Hundreds of people had sought refuge in official GoH shelters, with thousands more likely displaced and unaccounted for, according to the UN. Impact assessments are ongoing and relief actors expect casualty figures to rise.

### Earthquake Destroys Structures and Infrastructure, Exacerbating Humanitarian Needs

Initial assessments indicate that tremors and resultant landslides caused the collapse of at least 700 buildings, such as hospitals and schools; damaged or destroyed several thousand houses; and damaged public infrastructure and roads in affected areas, according to the GoH and the UN. Infrastructure damage is challenging relief efforts, the UN notes, while damage to communications infrastructure is contributing to difficulties obtaining information from affected areas, according to a USAID Bureau for Humanitarian Assistance (USAID/BHA) partner.

The effects of the earthquake are exacerbating humanitarian needs resulting from Haiti's concurrent food security and political crises, as well as ongoing coronavirus disease (COVID-19) outbreak. Hospitals are reportedly overwhelmed with earthquake-related injuries, and the displacement of thousands of people could lead to a spike in COVID-19 cases in the coming weeks and months, further straining Haiti's health care system, the UN notes. In addition, clashes between organized criminal groups have resulted in mass displacement and disrupted essential service access for approximately 400,000 people in southern departments in recent months.

### USAID/BHA Deploys DART and USAR Experts to Haiti

On August 14, U.S. Ambassador Michele J. Sison declared a disaster due to

the effects of the earthquake in Haiti. In response, USAID/BHA is providing initial support for logistics and shelter assistance and relief commodities. In addition, USAID/BHA activated a Disaster Assistance Response Team (DART), including urban search-and-rescue (USAR) experts, and a Washington, D.C.,-based Response Management Team (RMT) to coordinate U.S. Government efforts in response to the earthquake. The DART is coordinating with local authorities, humanitarian organizations, and the U.S. Embassy in Haiti to assess damages, identify priority needs, and provide life-saving aid to people affected by the earthquake. USAID/BHA also activated 10 local surge capacity consultants to support the DART.

### **Prime Minister Henry Declares State of Emergency, as GoH and Relief Actors Mobilize Relief Operations**

On August 14, Prime Minister of Haiti Ariel Henry declared a one-month state of emergency in Haiti and activated GoH Civil Protection General Directorate (DGPC) personnel, mobilizing search-and-rescue brigades to earthquake-affected areas. The GoH has also activated an Emergency Operations Center to coordinate assessment and response activities and plans to deploy GoH Ministry of Health staff and Ministry of Public Works heavy equipment to affected sites. During the afternoon of August 14, USAID/BHA staff accompanied Prime Minister Henry and UN personnel on an aerial assessment of heavily-affected areas. Prime Minister Henry subsequently indicated that food, psychosocial support, and shelter assistance were among priority needs for affected communities, international media report. Meanwhile, personnel from non-governmental organizations (NGOs) and UN agencies—including the International Federation of Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies, Médecins Sans Frontières (MSF), Pan American Health Organization (PAHO), UN Children’s Fund (UNICEF), and UN Humanitarian Air Service, among other relief actors—have been activated or deployed to conduct needs assessments and provide immediate humanitarian assistance in coordination with the GoH. UN Disaster Assessment and Coordination (UNDAC) teams have also activated to assist with relief operations.

### **Security Conditions and Other Access Constraints Impede Relief Efforts**

Severe humanitarian access constraints in Haiti, as well as fragile political and security conditions, are hampering humanitarian response efforts and exacerbating logistics challenges in reaching earthquake-affected areas, the UN reports. Violence, road blockages, and other security concerns have rendered the southern peninsula of Haiti largely inaccessible to relief actors in recent months. However, international media report that organized criminal groups announced a cessation of activities along the main road connecting southern departments with Port-au-Prince on August 14, potentially facilitating the flow of life-saving commodities to affected populations. In addition, on August 15, a UN official called for the establishment of a humanitarian corridor linking Port-au-Prince and affected areas to facilitate the movement of critical relief supplies and personnel.

### **Tropical Depression Grace Threatens to Exacerbate Needs Among Earthquake-Affected Populations in Haiti**

As of August 16, Tropical Depression Grace was projected to make landfall over southwestern Haiti during the evening of August 16, with sustained wind speeds of up to 35 miles per hour and higher gusts, according to the National Hurricane Center (NHC). The NHC further forecasts the storm could produce 5 to 10 inches of rainfall over Haiti, with up to 15 inches in isolated areas of southern parts of Hispaniola, potentially generating flash flooding and mudslides from August 16 to 17. Earthquake-affected populations already in urgent need of assistance will likely face increased risks due to wind and rainfall in the coming days.

## KEY FIGURES



65

USAR personnel deployed to Haiti with the DART

# NATIONAL, INTERNATIONAL, AND U.S. GOVERNMENT RESPONSE

## URBAN SEARCH-AND-RESCUE

In the wake of the earthquake, the GoH requested international assistance for USAR support. An USAR team from Fairfax County Fire and Rescue Department, including 65 search-and-rescue personnel and four canines, deployed alongside DART members, arriving in Haiti on August 15. The USAR team traveled with 52,000 pounds of specialized tools and equipment, such as hydraulic concrete breaking equipment, saws, torches, and drills, along with advanced medical equipment for search-and-rescue operations.

USAID/BHA USAR teams consist of 19 functional positions, staffed by experienced emergency managers, planners, search-and-rescue specialists, hazardous materials technicians, licensed engineers and construction riggers, emergency medicine physicians and paramedics, search-and-rescue dogs with handlers, and logisticians. Structure collapse resulting from earthquake events tends to create numerous void spaces in damaged or destroyed buildings where survivors may be trapped. Thus, USAR teams perform life-saving technical activities, including specialized search-and-rescue operations involving structural collapse to rescue and recover trapped individuals.

On August 16, two U.S. Coast Guard (USCG) helicopters deployed to Haiti and began transporting DART and USAR team members to Les Cayes, where they are beginning search-and-rescue operations by conducting assessments.

In addition, a USAR team from Colombia comprising 28 personnel and two canines is also deploying to Haiti, according to international media.



5

Fairfax County Fire and Rescue Department staff deployed to assist UNDAC

## LOGISTICS SUPPORT AND RELIEF COMMODITIES

USAID/BHA is providing logistics support in heavily-affected communities in Grand'Anse, Nippes, and Sud. In addition, the DART is working with the International Organization for Migration to move commodities funded by USAID/BHA and pre-positioned for disasters in the region to those in need.

Five members of the Fairfax County Fire and Rescue Department are deploying as part of the Americas Support Team (AST) to provide technical support to UNDAC personnel, assisting with emergency management and coordination efforts. The AST is a module supported through USAID/BHA to establish On-Site Operations Coordination Center (OSOCC) facilities and assist in the implementation of coordination efforts between the UN Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs (OCHA), the local emergency management agency, and other relief actors, including donor governments and NGOs

Meanwhile, USAID has requested the unique capabilities of the Department

of Defense U.S. Southern Command (USSOUTHCOM) to support USAID's response efforts with air transport of relief staff and USAR team members within Haiti, as well as reconnaissance efforts in earthquake-affected areas. USSOUTHCOM plans to deploy several helicopters to assist relief efforts. Additionally, USSOUTHCOM is providing aerial images to support damage assessments.

On August 14, in response to a GoH request for aerial assistance, the Government of the Dominican Republic (GoDR) provided a CASA 212 aircraft and two helicopters to provide logistical support for assessments, transport GoH officials to earthquake-affected areas, and transfer injured individuals in affected areas to Port-au-Prince for treatment.



2

USCG helicopters  
deployed to assist with  
medical evacuations

## HEALTH

On August 15, the USCG deployed two helicopters with medical staff and supplies to Haiti to transfer critically injured patients from Grand-Anse's Jérémie commune to Port-au-Prince. The USCG is also assessing airports in Jérémie and Les Cayes for potential use for additional medical evacuations.

The GoDR is delivering medical supplies and non-food items to Haiti by air. In addition, the PAHO country office in Haiti activated an emergency plan, while PAHO and the UN World Health Organization (WHO) declared an emergency for Haiti and neighboring Dominican Republic for the duration of 2021. PAHO and WHO are coordinating with the GoH DGPC, local authorities and health officials, and other UN agencies.

The Red Cross and hospitals in unaffected areas are providing surge assistance, while MSF is preparing to receive patients at Port-au-Prince's Tabarre Hospital. In addition, MSF deployed a team to Jérémie town. Meanwhile, Project HOPE is deploying members of its emergency preparedness and response team to assess earthquake-related effects on health facilities and identify urgent medical needs of affected populations.



50,000

People supported through  
prepositioned USAID  
shelter commodities

## SHELTER

The DART is coordinating with relief actors in Haiti to facilitate the distribution of shelter commodities prepositioned in Haiti, including blankets, hygiene kits, kitchen kits, and shelter repair kits to support nearly 50,000 people. In addition, USAID/BHA is activating a shelter advisor to support the provision of shelter assistance.

Furthermore, Church World Service is conducting damage assessments of houses and schools constructed through its programs in recent years to determine levels of shelter need.

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## PUBLIC DONATION INFORMATION

- The most effective way people can assist relief efforts is by making cash contributions to humanitarian organizations that are conducting relief operations. A list of humanitarian organizations that are accepting cash donations for disaster responses around the world can be found at [interaction.org](https://www.interaction.org).
- USAID encourages cash donations because they allow aid professionals to procure the exact items needed (often in the affected region); reduce the burden on scarce resources (such as transportation routes, staff time, and warehouse space); can be transferred very quickly and without transportation costs; support the economy of the disaster-stricken region; and ensure culturally, dietarily, and environmentally appropriate assistance.
- More information can be found at:
  - USAID Center for International Disaster Information: [cidi.org](https://www.cidi.org)
  - Information on relief activities of the humanitarian community can be found at [reliefweb.int](https://www.reliefweb.int).

USAID/BHA bulletins appear on the USAID website at [usaid.gov/humanitarian-assistance/where-we-work](https://www.usaid.gov/humanitarian-assistance/where-we-work)