



## **CDC Assists in Public Health Response for Tsunami Recovery**

The United States Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) is mobilizing as part of the worldwide recovery effort to ease suffering caused by the Indian Ocean earthquake and the tsunami waves it triggered. The agency shares the concern for survivors and grief for lives lost felt around the world. CDC, in collaboration with many other governments, charities and businesses, is making every effort to provide assistance and expertise in support of those in the path of these disasters.

### **Initial Response Goals: Assess Needs and Coordinate Efforts**

Hundreds of CDC employees volunteered to assist in the massive response to this crisis. Preliminary steps for CDC's contribution to the relief effort, working with global partners in government, non-profit and private sectors were threefold:

1. Assess the scope of the tragedy and determine an immediate plan of action.
2. Organize staff, supplies and information to provide the greatest aid to people in need.
3. Join with multiple agencies responding worldwide to coordinate the complex response effort.

CDC employees already working in Thailand, India, and other affected areas responded immediately to assist in crisis recovery efforts. CDC programs for public health projects like polio eradication and HIV/AIDS prevention and treatment have long been operational in Asia and Africa; staff for these programs provided firsthand assessments of the destruction, injury and loss of life that were vital for planning the agency's initial response.

CDC has been asked to assist in the recovery on a wide range of topics within the agency's areas of expertise. We are providing support, either directly or through providing critical information to those on the scene, in the following areas:

- Survivor access to healthcare, safe food, clean water and shelter
- Treatment of injury and infection
- Prevention of disease and further injury
- Mental health and mass trauma recovery
- Recovery worker health and safety
- Hazardous materials exposure
- Laboratory research and assistance
- Facilities assessments (hospitals, morgues, sewage and waste removal systems)

Mental health of those directly affected by the crisis or responding as a part of the recovery is of great concern, given the unprecedented scope of the disaster. CDC and the Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration (SAMHSA) are collaborating in a monumental interagency effort to support national responders and relief workers from other agencies in their humanitarian efforts.

In Atlanta, CDC Director Dr. Julie Gerberding requested that the Director's Emergency Operations Center coordinate the agency's role with partners worldwide, including:

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- Department of Health and Human Services (DHHS)
- Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration (SAMHSA)
- Department of State
- US Agency for International Development (USAID)
- Department of Defense (DOD)
- US Pacific Command (PACOM)
- World Health Organization (WHO)
- United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF)
- Ministries of Health in the affected countries (primarily Thailand to date)
- Red Cross/Red Crescent

CDC is providing assistance to partners based on their evolving needs. The level of engagement with partners is therefore subject to change as the response continues and new issues emerge.

### **Next Steps: Deploy Mission-Critical Staff and Resources**

As of January 8, 2005, CDC is sending 28 seasoned staff members to assist with the response. 11 people have already arrived in areas most in need of assistance, while 17 more are en route. CDC team members are primarily senior scientists with demonstrated ability to cope under strenuous conditions and the experience to help make wise public health decisions. Deployments will most likely last 3-4 months, much longer than normal. Initial concerns CDC staff will address include:

- Vaccine-preventable diseases
- Childhood injuries and trauma
- Adult injury
- Diarrheal disease control
- Malaria control
- Health and nutrition
- Mental health
- Stability of physical structures
- Response coordination

CDC is making every effort to ease the stress of deployment for staff and their loved ones during this difficult time. The agency is creating special communications access for families of deployed staff.

### **CDC Expects Participation to Continue, Evolve Over Time**

"We will be involved until we are no longer needed," says Dr. Gerberding. "It is an unprecedented situation. It is very difficult to predict how it will evolve."

As the crisis unfolds CDC will continue to provide assistance to those in need. The agency stands united with the rest of the world in our commitment to helping the survivors of this catastrophic event recover and resume their normal lives.

For more information, visit [www.bt.cdc.gov/disasters/tsunamis](http://www.bt.cdc.gov/disasters/tsunamis), or call the CDC public response hotline at 888-246-2675 (English), 888-246-2857 (español), or 866-874-2646 (TTY).

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