

Caribbean Disaster News

UNDRO/PAN CARIBBEAN DISASTER PREPAREDNESS AND PREVENTION PROJECT

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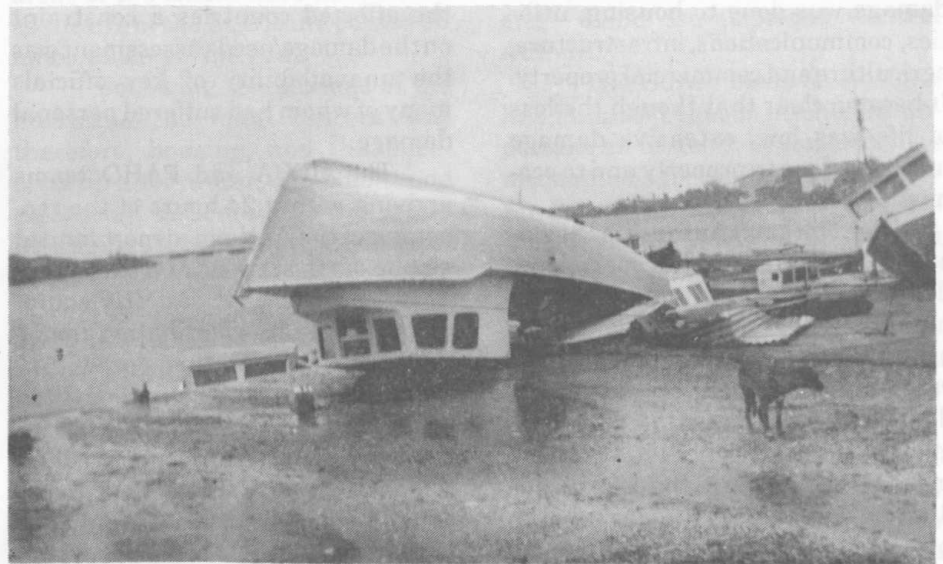
"HORRIBLE" HUGO

Hurricane Hugo affected the Leeward Islands between Saturday 16 and Monday 18 September. The hurricane is reported to have been the most powerful to have affected the Eastern Caribbean for this century with winds in excess of 150 mph as it passed through the islands.

The system seriously affected Dominica on the afternoon of Saturday 16. The eye passed over Northern Guadeloupe on the evening of Saturday 16 with hurricane force winds affecting Guadeloupe, Antigua and Montserrat during that night. Montserrat was devastated as the eye moved over the south coast of that island and the wind influenced by the rugged topography may have achieved speeds in excess of 160 mph. During Sunday 17th September and Monday 18th September, Hugo moved through the Leewards exposing Redonda, Nevis, St. Kitts, St. Barts, Statia, St. Maarten, Anguilla and the Virgin Islands to hurricane force winds before making landfall on Puerto Rico and then moving out over the Atlantic to strike the US Mainland in the vicinity of Charleston, South Carolina.

In all the affected Caribbean states, preparatory action had been taken by the governments and population. Warning measures were disseminated, shelters were opened, areas at high risk of flooding were evacuated, property was secured and in most states the National Emergency Coordinating Mechanism met to review the situation and to prepare for post impact operations.

The international resource agencies had met in Barbados to prepare a hurricane response plan several times in 1989 under the Chairmanship of the UN Resident



Representative (see page 16). As the hurricane approached the Leewards the Barbados based Agencies mobilised. Teams from USAID/OFDA arrived in Barbados and Antigua to complement the PCDPPP Staff based on Antigua.

PCDPPP maintained contact with the National Disaster Coordinators throughout the approach of the hurricane and tried to ensure that the basic precautions were followed and that thought was given to post-impact action.

The pre-positioning of UNDRO/PAHO/OFDA/Red Cross Personnel in Antigua facilitated rapid damage assessment within 36 hours after the passage of the hurricane. Identification of priority emergency needs was therefore timely.

The British Vessel HMS "Alacrity" was pre-positioned in the area and hence within 24 hours of impact it's crew landed and helped in the clearing of roads between Plymouth and Blackburn Airport. Alacrity also served as a radio link between Montserrat and the outside world.

Hurricane Hugo overturned fishing boats in St. John's Antigua. - More photographs see page 10 & 11

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