



An International Medical Corps staff member assesses the damage at Newell Maternity Center in St. Elizabeth, Jamaica.

FAST FACTS

- Hurricane Beryl, the strongest Atlantic hurricane to occur in early July, cut a devastating path through the Caribbean, Yucatan Peninsula and the United States, leaving extensive infrastructure damage and power outages in its wake.
- Impacted communities in Jamaica have limited access to clean water, sanitation and electricity. The flooding and standing water increase risk of water- and vector-borne diseases, such as dengue and leptospirosis.
- International Medical Corps is coordinating response efforts with the Jamaican Ministry of Health to procure urgent supplies and provide training and resources for impacted facilities.
- 300,000 businesses and homes in Texas are still without power, with low-income communities disproportionately affected. Such communities remain at high risk for heat-related emergencies, food and water insecurity, and exacerbations of existing health conditions. Health centers are stretched to meet the needs of their communities as they also recover from the impacts of the storm and subsequent heat wave.

Hurricane Beryl tore a devastating path through the Caribbean, Yucatan Peninsula and parts of the United States last week, establishing itself as one of the significant storms to occur this early into the Atlantic hurricane season. The storm, which caused multiple deaths, left \$6.4 million in damage to crops and infrastructure in Jamaica; many communities continue to be without adequate access to food, clean water, power and other necessities. In Texas, nearly 300,000 businesses and homes remain without power as they continue to face excessive heat and humidity.¹

In Jamaica, all parts of the islands have been affected, including hospitals and various health centers located throughout the north and the south in Clarendon Parish and Saint Elizabeth. Rocky Point Hospital in Clarendon Parish is non-operational, and several neighboring facilities are experiencing power and water disruptions. In Saint Elizabeth, many health clinics sustained severe infrastructural damage, forcing several clinics with large catchment populations to relocate services and prompting the need for additional resources to equip these temporary locations.

In Texas, power outages and extreme heat have presented life-threatening risks for many in the Houston region. On July 12, President Biden amended the Disaster Declaration for Texas to authorize federal assistance for impacted communities.² Families and individuals—including the elderly, children, those with chronic conditions or reliant on battery-powered medical devices—are particularly vulnerable in homes that lack functioning air conditioning or fans, sufficient water, refrigeration for food and medication, and power to charge medical devices.³ Food access is particularly limited among economically challenged communities, as food storage in many households spoiled due the lack of power. Many low-income communities are located in “food deserts,” where there is a lack of available grocery stores and families commonly purchase food from convenience stores and gas stations.

Healthcare workers in low-income communities report water and food insecurity, damaged home infrastructure, limited access to medications or vaccinations, increased risk of water- and vector-borne diseases, problems with chronic conditions and increased mental stress. Health facilities and staff—many still recovering from the impacts of the storm and without power themselves—are stretched as they work to meet the many needs of the community.

¹ <https://poweroutage.us/area/state/texas>

² <https://www.fema.gov/press-release/20240712/president-joseph-r-biden-jr-amends-texas-major-disaster-declaration>

³ <https://www.cnn.com/2024/07/10/weather/beryl-texas-power-outages-heat-wednesday/index.html>

Several neighborhoods that were affected by the strong derecho that swept through Houston just two months ago, on May 16, experienced additional infrastructure damage with Beryl, leaving residents to yet again salvage their belongings and deal with the damages in the midst of high temperatures. Communities have been forced to cope with the physical and mental toll that comes with enduring multiple disasters in just a few months, and they remain vulnerable to severe weather as the peak of the Atlantic hurricane season approaches in August and September.

International Medical Corps Response

In response to Hurricane Beryl, International Medical Corps deployed emergency teams to both Jamaica and Texas.

In **Jamaica**, International Medical Corps is coordinating response efforts with the Ministry of Health (MoH) and the National Healthcare Enhancement Foundation, an agency of the MoH. The team continues to conduct site visits to health facilities in Saint Elizabeth and Clarendon Parish to support rehabilitative efforts, as the health centers provide much-needed services to the community. We also are collaborating with two clinics, a maternity center and hospital in Saint Elizabeth, and the health department in Clarendon Parish.

Impacted communities lack basic necessities, including food and water, clothing, mattresses and blankets, cleaning kits, generators, cots, diapers and hygiene items, emergency lighting and tarps. Given the increased risk of water-borne and vector-borne diseases, such as dengue and leptospirosis, mosquito nets and repellent are critical needs.

Most health facilities are still functioning but lack electricity and running water. Several clinics that sustained significant infrastructure damage are relocating services while their buildings are rehabilitated. Urgent health facility needs include infrastructure repair materials, flashlights, mosquito nets and repellent, generators, mattresses, first-aid kits, personal protective equipment, ventilators, handwashing stations, blood pressure machines, thermometers and pulse oximeters. MoH and health facility staff also have expressed needs for training opportunities and support to enhance their emergency disaster plans.

We are procuring critically needed supplies and equipment to support health facilities in their rehabilitation and to support the full functioning of temporary service locations. International Medical Corps will continue to coordinate with the MoH to develop critical training plans for healthcare centers, hospitals and affected communities.

In **Texas**, our team continues to visit affected communities and meet with health facility and community health center leaders across Galveston, Houston and Sargent, where staff at one health center said that conditions are the worst they've seen in years. In Houston, International Medical Corps is coordinating response efforts with community clinics located in vulnerable and economically challenged communities that serve unhoused, immigrant and low-income residents that have endured the brunt of the impact from repeated climate-related events.

Our distributions to clinics and clinic networks have included such critical relief supplies as tarps, wound-care kits, nonperishable canned food items, headlamps and more. On July 12, the team distributed tarps to the Pitner Clinic in northwest Houston, which serves a predominantly Hispanic, low-income and immigrant population living in a large, dilapidated apartment complex, located in one of the most densely populated areas in the country—an estimated 8,000 residents live in an area less than a square mile. Many residents suffered significant damage to their homes following the May derecho and are again facing the loss and severe damage of their apartments, including missing roofs and broken windows. Tarps are essential to allowing residents to remain in their homes while they await repairs. The team also distributed tarps to the Fifth Ward Clinic, located in one of Houston's oldest, poorest and most underserved neighborhoods, which was still without power on July 12. This community remains vulnerable to disasters like Beryl, with high rates of pollution-induced problems like cancer, poor housing infrastructure, and limited funds or flood and home insurance.^{4,5}

Access to electricity has proven to be the biggest challenge for many of these communities and there is no indication as to when it will be restored. Several health centers remain without power or are operating on generators, have sustained significant infrastructure damage, lost refrigerated medications and vaccines, and are experiencing disrupted supply chains.



An International Medical Corps' staff member distributes tarps to health clinic staff at Spring Branch Hillendahl Clinic in northwest Houston.

⁴ <https://www.texasobserver.org/in-houstons-fifth-ward-the-storm-never-stops/>

⁵ <https://www.houstonhealth.org/services/pollution-control/fifth-ward-kashmere-gardens-union-pacific-railroad-site-contamination-area-cancer-cluster>

Our team has worked closely with clinic leadership to develop lists of the most urgently needed items, and is procuring items such as water, battery-operated fans, tarps, flashlights, hygiene kits, ready-to-eat food and nonperishable food, and other supplies to aid and support health centers and families in the response and recovery efforts. As additional resources are available, teams will continue to collaborate with health facilities to meet the most urgent recovery needs.

International Medical Corps in the US and Caribbean

International Medical Corps has been an emergency responder in the United States and Caribbean since 2005, when we partnered with local community clinics overwhelmed by Hurricane Katrina. In the US, International Medical Corps works with national, state and local partners in the healthcare system to address the significant challenges that face domestic healthcare services, and deploys emergency response teams in response to disasters.

Across the Caribbean and the US, International Medical Corps was a first responder during 2010's Haiti earthquake, 2012's Superstorm Sandy, 2016's Hurricane Matthew in Haiti, 2017's Hurricane Maria in Puerto Rico and Dominica, 2018's Hurricane Michael in Florida, 2019's Hurricane Dorian in the Bahamas, 2020's earthquakes in Puerto Rico, and 2022's Hurricane Ian and 2023's Hurricane Idalia in Florida, among other emergency response efforts. Over the past seven years, International Medical Corps has engaged partner networks of more than 275 hospitals, clinics and health-related facilities and NGOs across 18 states and territories, supporting more than 6 million patients and healthcare providers in the US.



Tarps cover the damaged roof of an apartment complex in Houston.