

Department for General Assembly and Conference Management

Statement by Mr. Graisse, Acting Head of DGACM, in the 5th Committee

Monday 5 November 2012

Briefing on the impact of Hurricane Sandy

Thank you, Mr Chairman, distinguished representatives,

I would like to provide some information on how Hurricane Sandy has affected some operations which are essential for the effective functioning of the General Assembly, its Main Committees, Security Council and ACABQ.

1. The Publishing Section operations, consisting of the Press operations, Document Distribution, and related offices, were completely flooded on the Monday (29 October 2012) night by flood waters from the East River.
2. As a result of emergency intervention by Department of Safety and Security (DSS) and Facilities Management Service (FMS) staff on-site, power was cut and all efforts were made to secure equipment that could be secured.
3. Preliminary assessment indicates that the flood water in the operation facilities reached about 2 feet high.
4. The situation has been evaluated and is being monitored by the Chief of Section with DSS and FMS colleagues. Their main priority is to have the electric power restored, and assess the damage. This is expected to be completed by this Wednesday.
5. About 100 staff work in the Section every day. They were not able to return to work as of today. The offices on 3B are totally destroyed. DGACM and FMS are working to provide temporary space allocations for the affected staff.
6. In addition to the press equipment, three leased digital printers are used in the operations. These digital printers produce 95-99% of all the official documentation requirements of the Organization. The three printers were damaged beyond repair by flooding of the electrical systems.
7. The vendor, "OCE North America", is providing a loaner digital printing press which will be operational by Monday, 12 November 2012. The bulk of official documents required for the meeting rooms will be produced by this equipment on a 24 hour basis by the Publishing Section staff. Digital printing of parliamentary documents will be set up on the 2nd floor of the NLB, possibly by the end of this week.

8. Other equipment in the Publishing Section, including offset printing, binding and finishing equipment will be evaluated once it is safe to do so. This equipment is fully owned by the United Nations.
9. Once the operations are cleared by DSS and FMS, it will take the Section staff about 24 hours to assess the damage, and provide a time estimate for all other operations to resume. Full cleaning and restoration of 3B will take at least two weeks.
10. In the meantime, DGACM has set-up an emergency team to print critical parliamentary documents for meeting rooms at other facilities that have not been affected, using regular office printers. For instance, the various documents for the Fifth Committee today have already been printed. We will have to reduce distribution to permanent missions to strictly one copy per mission. Bilingual countries will however continue to receive one copy in each language.