



NATIONAL DISASTER MANAGEMENT OFFICE
DEPARTMENT OF PROVINCIAL & LOCAL LEVEL GOVERNMENT

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PAPUA NEW GUINEA

KEROSINE EXPLOSION DISASTER IN MADANG – PAPUA NEW GUINEA –

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1. Introduction

This report summarises the situation of the kerosene explosion affecting innocent people in Madang Province – Papua New Guinea and the actions taken by the Provincial Disaster Office, the National Disaster Management Office and the British Petroleum Limited Company.

2. Disaster Situation

On Monday 5th February 2001 at about 1000hrs, the Madang Provincial Disaster Office received a report from the Acting Health Advisor of Madang General Hospital – Mr. Marcus Kachau regarding severe degree of burns for fourteen people resulting from kerosene explosion.

The impact of the kerosene explosions that was contaminated with other forms of fuel sources was widespread. That means that the kerosene was purchased and used by many people living in and around Madang Province. It was anticipated that more people were affected in the province than previously estimated and that victims were driven or shipped into Madang and admitted at the hospital every week.

It was stabilised due to the periodic arrivals of victims. However, on or from the 20th of February, the situation was somewhat under control due to the rapid response taken by the company with the assistance of the Provincial Authorities in carrying out awareness campaigns and massive disposal exercises on the kerosene products that were not used during and after the disaster period.

As of 1200hrs of Tuesday 6th March 2001, the following had been recorded at the Madang General Hospital.

- (1) Forty three (43) cases of kerosene burn ;
- (2) Seven (7) serious cases have been referred to Australia;
- (3) Eleven (11) victims were being treated at the Madang General Hospital; and
- (4) Five (5) confirmed dead.

3. Houses destroyed

Reports received from the Provincial Disaster Office have revealed that six (6) houses were destroyed directly by kerosene explosions concentrated in the Madang District. The statistics may increase as reports are still coming in from Districts.

Investigation teams have been sent out to do investigations into the destruction of the houses that have been confirmed to be destroyed by the explosion of the kerosene lamps.

4. Provincial Response

Upon establishment of the cause of the disaster from the affected people, the Provincial Authorities immediately directed the closure of the outlets depots until further investigations are conducted into the disaster. Morobe as well as Madang Provincial Disaster Committees have assisted with plastic containers and second hand clothing for the affected people.

The Provincial Disaster Office had worked closely with B.P. Petroleum Company retrieving as much as possible all kerosene that was purchased from all B.P. outlets from the 1st February to 10th February 2001.

5. National Response.

Relief supplies from the National Disaster Management Office storeroom in Port Moresby were delivered into Madang Province with the assistance of Australian High Commission through the Australian Defence Force (RAAF) Hercules C130 aircraft. The PNG Defence Force helicopter also assisted with the distribution of awareness materials.

A Bi – Partisan Committee was established comprising of relevant departments and agencies of the National Government of Papua New Guinea including the Members of the petroleum Companies. The purpose of establishment of the committee was to look into the investigation findings and reports and subsequently recommend to the National Government through an NEC submission for further action.

6. International Response.

The company British Petroleum Oil Limited Company has been working closely with the Provincial Disaster Office assisting the victims.

The areas BP Oil Ltd has assisted in are:

- i Funding of awareness programs including engagement of four vehicles to carry out awareness to the public not to use any kerosene purchased from BP outlets between 1st February to 10th February, logistics and manpower.
- ii . Awareness program by helicopter having covered areas between Middle Ramu, Bogia, Sumkar, Usino/Bundi, Rai Coast and Wasu totalling to four (4) days.
- iii. Awareness program by dinghies
- iv. Relief supplies
- v. Medivac of serious victims to Australia
- vi. Construction of new houses
- vii. Purchase of washing machine and fridge for Disaster Ward.
- viii. Purchasing and installation of basin at Disaster Ward for fire victims.
- ix. Purchasing of drugs and other medical requirements.
- x. Retrieving of contaminated kerosene.
- xi. Brought in extra local nursing officers to assist fire victims.
- xii. Brought in burns specialist and one nursing officer from Australia to assist Madang General Hospital staff.

7. Investigation

It was established that the root cause of the disaster was merely human error and poor safety standards at the Madang depot and outlets.

8. Conclusion

The situation is stabilising but cannot conclude that the number of victims as results from the remote areas have yet to be confirmed. BP (PNG) Oil Ltd is meeting all rehabilitation and reconstruction expenses.