

Serious Flood in Central Provinces in Viet Nam

On 01 - 03 November 1999, due to the effect of strong cold air front in combination with the activities of a tropical conversion, there were heavy-to-very heavy rains in the Central Provinces from Quang Binh to Binh Dinh. On early morning, 03 November 1999, there were still very heavy rains. Notably, in provinces from Quang Binh to Quang Tri, mean rainfall was 300-500 mm, and even over 2000 mm in some places.

Heavy rain, concentrating in a short period of time, caused flash flood in some places in mountainous areas of Quang Nam Province and Thua Thien-Hue Province, and caused large flooding on river banks from Quang Nam to Binh Dinh Provinces. Notably, there were very large floods on rivers from Quang Tri to Quang Nam Provinces. On the Huong River in Thua Thien Hue Provinces and on the Thach Han River in Quang Tri Provinces, there were historical floods. Flood levels were the biggest in 40 years. At 14:00PM on 02 November 1999, the flood water level on the Huong River at the Hue gauging station reached its peak of 5.94 m (1.06 m above the historical flood level in 1983). After falling 0.20 m, on 03 November 1999, the flood water level rose again due to continuing rain on the upstream. Flood water levels in Quang Binh, Quang Ngai, and Binh Dinh are continuing to rise. The flood situation is very complicated and there was heavy inundation on a large scale.

According to Thua Thien Hue Province's report, heavy rain, concentrating in a short period of time, caused flash floods in Xuan Loc (Phu Loc District) and Binh Dien (Huong Tra District). On the Huong River, in just 1 hour, the flood water level rose by over 1m; the whole province was under 1 - 3 m of water. The entire communication system and electric system are paralyzed.

Distinction of river flood alarm levels:

Alarm Level I Possible flood condition - River water level is high; threat to low height embankments; flooding of very low lying areas; infrastructure safe.

Alarm Level II Dangerous flood condition - Flood plane inundation expected; towns and cities still generally protected by flood defenses; high velocity River flows pose danger of bank and dyke erosion; bridge foundations at risk from scour; infrastructure generally safe.

Alarm Level III Very dangerous flood condition - All low lying areas submerged, including low lying areas in cities and towns; safety of River protection dykes in jeopardy; damage to infrastructure begins.

Alarm Level III + Emergency flood condition - General and wide spread uncontrollable flooding; dyke failure a certainty and probably uncontrollable; damage to infrastructure severe.

2. Activities in Responding to Flood:

a- At Central level:

The Central Committee for Flood and Storm Control issued Official Telegrams on Flood Control:

At 08:35 AM, Official Telegram No. 29 CD/PCLB requesting the Provincial Committees for Flood and Storm Control in Quang Binh, Quang Tri, Thua Thien Hue, Da Nang, Quang Nam, Quang Ngai, and Binh Dinh to implement large flood-prevention measures.

At 11:00 AM, Official Telegram No. 30 CD/PCLB, was sent to the Ministry of Defense, Ministry of General Staff, requesting that a helicopter be sent to help officers of the Central Committee for Flood and Storm Control Provincial Committees for Flood and Storm Control with their relief work and transporting aid commodities.

At 11:25 AM, Official Telegram No. 31 CD/ PCLB, was sent to Ministry of Fishery, Ministry of Trade requesting them to prepare life buoys and noodles in support of the Central Provinces. At 15:15 PM, Official Telegram No. 29 CD/PCLB of the Office of Central Committee for Flood and Storm Control was sent the Provincial Committees for Flood and Storm Control in Central Provinces of Quang Binh, Quang Tri, Thua Thien Hue, Da Nang, Quang Nam, Quang Ngai, and Binh Dinh requesting them to continue preparedness in response to flood.

The Central Committee for Flood and Storm Control issued Urgent Report No. 122, dated 02 November 1999, on the special flood situation in the Center to inform relevant Ministries and Branches in order to directly assist the provinces in their responses to flooding and inundation.

The Ministry of Fishery:

Prepared 200 life buoys, gathered at Bach Mai airport, and 1,500 life buoys from Ho Chi Minh City and immediately sent them to the Center. Issued Official Telegram No. 35 CD/PCLB at 12:30 AM on 02 November 1999 and Official

Telegram No. 36 CD/PCLB at 19:30 AM on 02 November 1999, and sent it to the Fishery Service and the Agriculture and Rural Development Service in provinces from Quang Binh to Binh Dinh, requesting them to prepare to respond to flooding and the need to rescue people.

The Ministry of Trade:

Prepared 1 ton of noodles, gathered at Bach Mai airport, for delivery to Thua Thien Hue Province.

b- At local levels:

Provinces are concentrating on urgently responding to floods, particularly in riverside areas and shallow areas.

3. Preliminary data on flood damages: according to provincial preliminary reports:

Quang Nam:

Number of people killed: 10

Number of houses flooded: 150,000

Paddy flooded: 1,200 ha

Binh Dinh:

Number of people killed: 4

Number of people injured: 1

Number of houses flooded: 2,027

Quang Binh:

Three trains with nearly 1,000 passengers blocked in Dong Hoi Railway Station

Number of houses flooded: 16,500

Thua Thien Hue:

Flood damage data could not be sent to Provincial Authority because the floods have caused blockage in communication and transportation. In the latest news, it was reported that possibly 2 ships of the frontier army force and more than 30 boats and ships of local people have been swept to the Thuan An estuary.

Quang Tri:

Number of people killed: 7

Number of houses flooded: 20,000 (in which 5,500 houses were heavily damaged)

Quang Ngai:

Landslide from a mountain buried 3 workers and 12 passengers while they were in a shelter. As of 2:30 AM on 03 November 1999, 3 people were found and are still alive and 12 others are still missing.

5 people were washed away, of which 2 people were found and are alive; 3 others are still missing

4. Recommendations:

The Central Committee for Flood and Storm Control would like to request that the Government Office report to the Prime Minister:

To assign the National Committee for Search and Rescue, by every method to send forces and other means urgently to Thua Thien Hue Province to rescue more than 30 boats and ships of local people washed away to the Thuan An estuary and to save people in flooded areas of Thua Thien Hue Province and in some areas of Quang Nam and Quang Tri Provinces.

To assign the Ministry of Defense to support helicopters to deliver life buoys, foods, and drinking water to people in isolated areas in accordance with the requests of Thua Thien Hue Province

To assign the Ministry of Health to provide medicines for preventing epidemic diseases in flooded areas.