

# Bahamas government focuses on rebuilding central and southern Bahamas in the aftermath of Hurricane Joaquin

*OFFICIAL BAHAMAS TOURISM  
COMMUNIQUE: Sunday, October 4, 2015 at 4  
PM EST*

NASSAU, THE BAHAMAS, October 4, 2015 /EINPresswire.com/ -- NASSAU, THE BAHAMAS – Weather conditions in The Bahamas continue to improve as Joaquin gains forward speed and moves northeast. The weather today is partly sunny, warm and breezy with the chance of a passing shower or isolated thunderstorm; mostly fair and breezy tonight. In the Northwest and Central Bahamas, winds are west to northwest at 15 to 20 knots with higher gusts. The seas are 4 to 7 feet near the shore, but up to 12 feet offshore in largely easterly swells. Boaters are advised to continue to remain in port due to swells, and swimmers should remain out of the waters due to rough surf and dangerous rip currents.

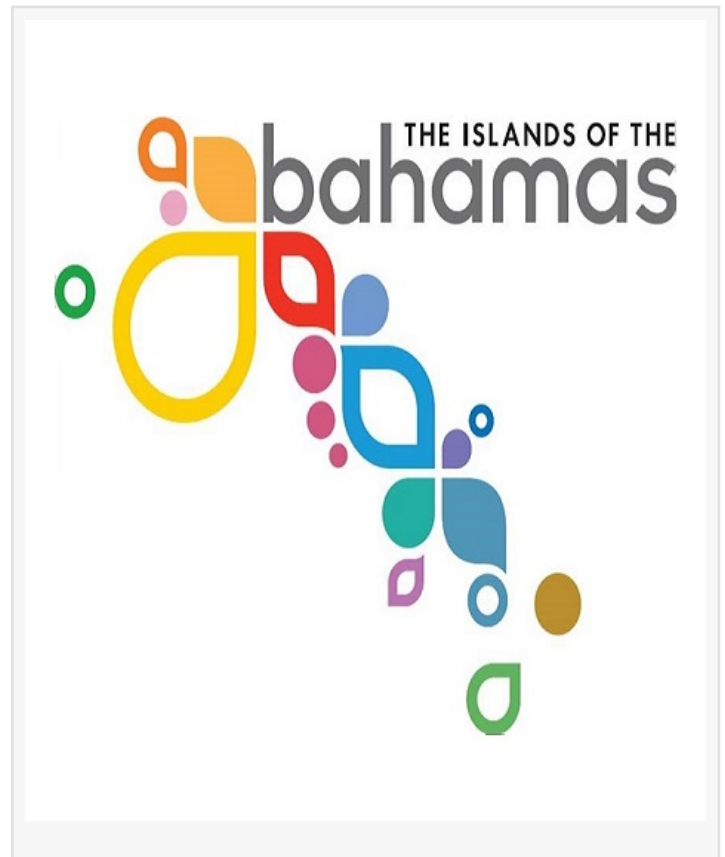
The weather in the Southeast Bahamas is also partly cloudy and breezy with the chance of a few isolated showers and thunderstorms through

tonight. Winds here are Southwest to West at 15 to 20 knots today, decreasing to 10 to 15 knots by evening. Seas here are 4 to 7 feet near the shore but up to 16 feet offshore in largely easterly swells. The warnings for small crafts and swimmers remain. Daytime high temperatures are 90°F and 32°C ; overnight lows are 77°F and 25°C. The current forecast path brings the center of Hurricane Joaquin just west of Bermuda today and is forecast to be a Category 2 Hurricane as it makes its closest approach to Bermuda.

“We are keeping the people of Bermuda in our thoughts and prayers as they prepare for what has been a devastating storm in some islands in The Bahamas,” says Joy Jibrilu, Director General of The Bahamas Ministry of Tourism. “Of course our prayers and efforts are focused very close to home as we consider those who are so deeply affected in the Central and Southern Bahamas. We are a resilient and strong people who will work strategically towards swift recovery.”

The Bahamas Ministry of Tourism is able to provide updates on the following islands:

Nassau, NP



- Business as usual in Nassau/Paradise Island.
- Lynden Pindling International Airport (LPIA) is open and operating.
- The Royal Bahamas Defense Force has reopened the Port of Nassau and all security personnel are as scheduled.

#### Grand Bahama

- It is business as usual in Grand Bahama.
- Bolearia and Grand Celebration are in Port.

#### Family Islands

- Power is off in the Southern Islands.

#### Crooked Island

- Communications down on the island.

#### Rum Cay

- The airport is under water; No communication.

#### Acklins

- Reports that Bonefish Lodge is under water.
- Roads are impassable; no electricity.

#### Long Island

- Low lying areas flooded; reports of water up to 6ft deep.
- Many homes extensively damaged.
- Roads blocked by trees and electricity poles.
- No phone service or electricity expected anytime soon.
- 85 homes and businesses reported damages.

#### San Salvador

- Power lines are down.
- Homes destroyed.
- Extensive damage to Club Med.
- All communications systems are down.

- Minor airport damages.

#### Staniel Cay, Exuma

- Intermittent rain; no severe weather reported.

#### Cat Island

- Will be out of hurricane conditions after 6pm today.

#### Eleuthera

- The island is only experiencing Tropical Storm force winds from now until tomorrow.
- Until further notice from the Ministry of Transport and the National Emergency Management Agency (NEMA), there will be no service to Long Island, San Salvador, Acklins, Crooked Island, Mayaguana and Inagua. Persons affected as a result of Hurricane Joaquin to and from these destinations can contact Bahamasair.com to make alternate travel plans.
- The Department of Civil Aviation will continue to inform the public on all developments relative to airports in The Bahamas as necessary.

#### Family Island Airport Openings

The Bahamas Department of Civil Aviation advises the public that the following Family Island airports have been inspected and are open:

- Abaco -- Marsh Harbour, Treasure Cay, Sandy Point, Moores Island .
- Andros -- San Andros, Fresh Creek, Clarence A. Bain, Congo Town.
- Berry Islands -- Great Harbour Cay.
- Bimini -- South Bimini.
- Cat Island -- Arthur's Town, New Bight.
- Eleuthera -- North Eleuthera, Governors Harbour, Rock Sound.
- Exuma -- Moss Town, Black Point, Farmers Cay.
- Inagua.
- Long Island -- Stella Maris.
- Mayaguana.
- Ragged Island -- Duncan Town.
- Rum Cay.

- San Salvador.

The Colonel Hill, Crooked Island Airport; the Deadman's Cay, Long Island Airport and Spring Point Airport in Acklins are under water and remain closed. The Department of Civil Aviation will continue to update the public on airport re-openings as soon as the airports have been deemed safe for operations.

Bahamasair has resumed service to the following islands: All Florida Gateways, Freeport, Grand Bahama, Marsh Harbour, Abaco, Eleuthera, Georgetown, Exuma, Havana, Cuba, Providenciales, Turks and Caicos Islands

### Missing Cargo Ship

The search for a missing cargo ship north of the Bahamas with a crew of 33 people including at least four Mainers resumed at dawn this morning. Three Coast Guard planes returned to an area north of The Bahamas to look for the El Faro Sunday. A Coast Guard official said no plans have been made yet to send out ships as part of the El Faro search.

As Hurricane Joaquin weakens and moves out of the area, a Coast Guard official said ships will join the search. A spokesman for TOTE Services, the owner of the El Faro, said the company is not releasing information about the crew, which includes 28 Americans. A website, [elfaroincident.com](http://elfaroincident.com), has been established for the company to provide updates on the search.

### Disaster Relief Operations

The Ministry Finance advises the public that where disaster relief operations are carried out by charitable and non-profit organizations, provisions exist under the VAT Act for exemptions and refund of VAT expenses. Charities must register online and obtain a TIN or Tax identification number from the VAT Department. They must ensure that the TIN is quoted on all of their local expense receipts.

Most relief organizations have already received a TIN. Others are encouraged to register. In most cases, the process of getting a TIN takes less than 24 hours.

All donations of relief supplies shipped from outside The Bahamas are eligible for exemptions of both the VAT and Customs duties, once advance notice and documentation is given to the Ministry of Finance, or NEMA sanctions the request.

Where charities incur direct expenses on their relief operations, whether for supplies or charter operations, they can apply to the VAT Department for refunds. Refunds, however, cannot be provided to private individuals for goods donated to charities, whether purchased or used. However, where monies are donated, the relief organizations qualify for the VAT refund, when they use these funds.

To avoid being victims of fraudulent schemes, it is strongly recommended that persons making donations to relief organizations request proof that the organization has a tax identification number.

That Bahamas Ministry of Tourism has issued a notice to industry partners advising them to allow NEMA, the appropriate Government agency, to conduct the initial damage and needs assessment in all the affected areas so that offers of assistance are appropriate. BMOT stressed that it is not recommended for private entities to travel to the affected areas at this time.

Once the reconnaissance has been done, a State of Emergency will be declared and that will then determine the next step in a well-established protocol on how to donate items and assess various

concessions. Upon completion of the needs assessment, NEMA will advise aid distribution protocols, as well as manpower needs.

Six Royal Bahamas Defense Force (RBDF) officers have been deployed to Acklins. Five RBDF officers are en route to Crooked Island. An RBDF team left for South Long Island this morning, while another team is on standby for deployment to North Long Island. A team of RBDF officers was sent to San Salvador and Rum Cay.

The Bahamas Red Cross is accepting supplies and donations at their Headquarters on John F. Kennedy Drive. Contact The Bahamas Red Cross.

Address:

John F. Kennedy Drive

P.O. Box 8331

Nassau, Bahamas

Tel: +1 (242)-323-7370, +1 (242)-328-4415

Fax: +1 (242)-323-7404

Email: [redcross@bahamas.net.bs](mailto:redcross@bahamas.net.bs)

The Bahamas Ministry Of Tourism's crisis management team continues to liaise with the National Emergency Management Agency (NEMA), Bahamas Hotel and Tourism Association (BHTA), Nassau Airport Development Company, the Port Authority and other relevant authorities.

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Bahamas Ministry of Tourism

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