

Mount Sentinel Students

10:30 a.m. – January 13, 2010

12:50 p.m. – Updated

5:30 p.m. - Updated

Contact with Cheryl Middlebrook and Doreen Reimer, Kootenay-Christian Fellowship, has given us the following information. Mrs. Middlebrook has been in Haiti places described below and has intimate knowledge of the area. Both have committed to contacting us if they have any contact from their spouses or other members of the team in Haiti:

Facts about where our students are and who they are with:

- Our students and team are in one of the safest places in Haiti: The buildings in the Lifeline Mission have been built to a higher standard than those in Haiti.
- They are with a team of 58 people on a mission and this team includes dentists, doctors and nurses.
- Our students will be very well cared for by this experienced team.
- The group began at the Haiti Arise mission but moved to Lifeline Mission which is larger and on 5 acres. A number of Haitian people were there/have come there from homes that are not safe.
- The priority now for the students will be to keep them fed: We know they were fed last night.
- The Haiti Arise mission is very well established and has 3 doctors and 2 nurses as part of the church.

Update:

- Students are back at Haiti Arise mission and have lots of food and water.
- Water purification is an issue at Lifeline Mission and plans are being made to get a helicopter to bring in diesel for water purification plant. This is underway and coming from Jamaica.
- We understand that there are now several hundred people at the Haiti Lifeline mission.
- We have received another contact through Cheryl Middlebrook from her husband Doug Middlebrook, who has provided us with the most recent up to date information (mid-afternoon)
- ***6:07 pm MST – contact from Cheryl Middlebrook re her lack of access to her husband/unable to make contact.***

Communication Problems:

- Communication will be slim as power is down.
- Both the Haiti Arise mission and the Lifeline mission have their own power source, which has enabled some contact to be maintained from Lifeline via satellite.
- It is likely that the building housing the generator at the Lifeline Mission has collapsed, which means that the generator will have to be dug out.
- Communication will be possible as long as the generators are working.

Update:

- It is anticipated that the website at Haiti arise may be up and running in 24 hours, which will facilitate direct access from students and teacher to us and vice versa.
- A Facebook has been set up and it is going to be the place where any student comments/posts will be made at Haiti Update/for group in Haiti from the West Kootenay.

Travel Problems:

- Due to the lack of infrastructure in Haiti, there is no equipment to clear roads. Roads are cleared by hand and thus will likely be impossible for 3-4 days.
- It is 35 miles to Port au Prince, where the bulk of the devastation occurred and where the airport is.
- It is unlikely that the students will be able to leave where they are for 3-4 days.

Immediate Priorities:

- We want to make contact with a member of our team, ideally Don Warthe and are using all channels we know about to do so.
- We want to provide as much support to parents, staff and students as possible and have counseling supports in place for those that wish to access these services
- We have contacted Alex Atamenenko, MP, emergency number in Ottawa, B.C. Ministry and another MP to access Canadian levels of government to help us with next steps.
- Alex Atamenenko's office is in the province of contacting Peter McKay, Minister of Defence, who has just finished a press conference.

Canadian Response to date:

- The process communicated to us will be to firstly account for unaccounted people/ensure Canadians' whereabouts are known.
- The situation on the ground will be accessed.
- Evacuation is not an immediate priority.

Update:

- Darrell Whitehead, Minister's office:
 - (a) have confirmed student safety
 - (b) are wanting to account for all Canadians: of 6000, only 700 have been accounted for.
 - (c) Focus now is on disaster situation in the city
 - (d) Initial DART team has been dispatched.
 - (e) Only military planes are landing.
 - (f) Evacuation by sea is a possibility.
 - (g) NO time lines yet.

UPDATE: 6:00 p.m. – spoke to Darrell Whitehead, Senior Advisor to Hon Lawrence Cannon:

- Have dealt with 11 000 calls from Canadians today.
- Priority for 36 hours has been to find Canadians with over 6000 there: For example, a hotel in Port au Prince has been leveled and they know there are Canadians there.

- Tomorrow, may begin process of bringing some Canadians home.
- Americans advice is to sit tight....
- I indicated that we had been receiving advice that all Canadians should go to the Embassy and that we felt our students were safe: He confirmed that they were safe and that was known federally and that they should stay where they are.
- I will contact him again tomorrow.

Update:

- Minister of Education, Public Affairs, B. C. Fire and Emergency Management Commission.
- Investigating with military and RCMP re possible evacuation and repatriation through Dominican Republic.
- To investigate security as well.

Update (5:00 p.m. Conference call with Sherri Mohoruk, MoE; Chris Duffy, Senior Advisor, Deputy Minister; Becky Denlinger, Jen McCrae and others)

- Repatriation is viewed as a priority through the nearest safe haven. Chris Duffy is the lead and has made three contacts:
 - (a) senior watch officer in Ottawa
 - (b) Department of Foreign Affairs
 - (c) Acting Association Director of Public Safety, Craig Oldum
 - (d) RCMP contact has been made and we have 2 local contact persons; have asked for security question and have been unable to get an update.

MESSAGE:

Priority is repatriation and we want to keep the radar on these children.

Final decision will be made by the Department of Foreign Affairs

Provincial officers are working through the federal leads.

Two numbers for contact:

- **1-613-995-1874 (media contact)**
- **Contact number for families.**

Contact: Patricia Dooley, Superintendent of Schools at 250-551-0248 or via email at pdooley@sd8.bc.ca