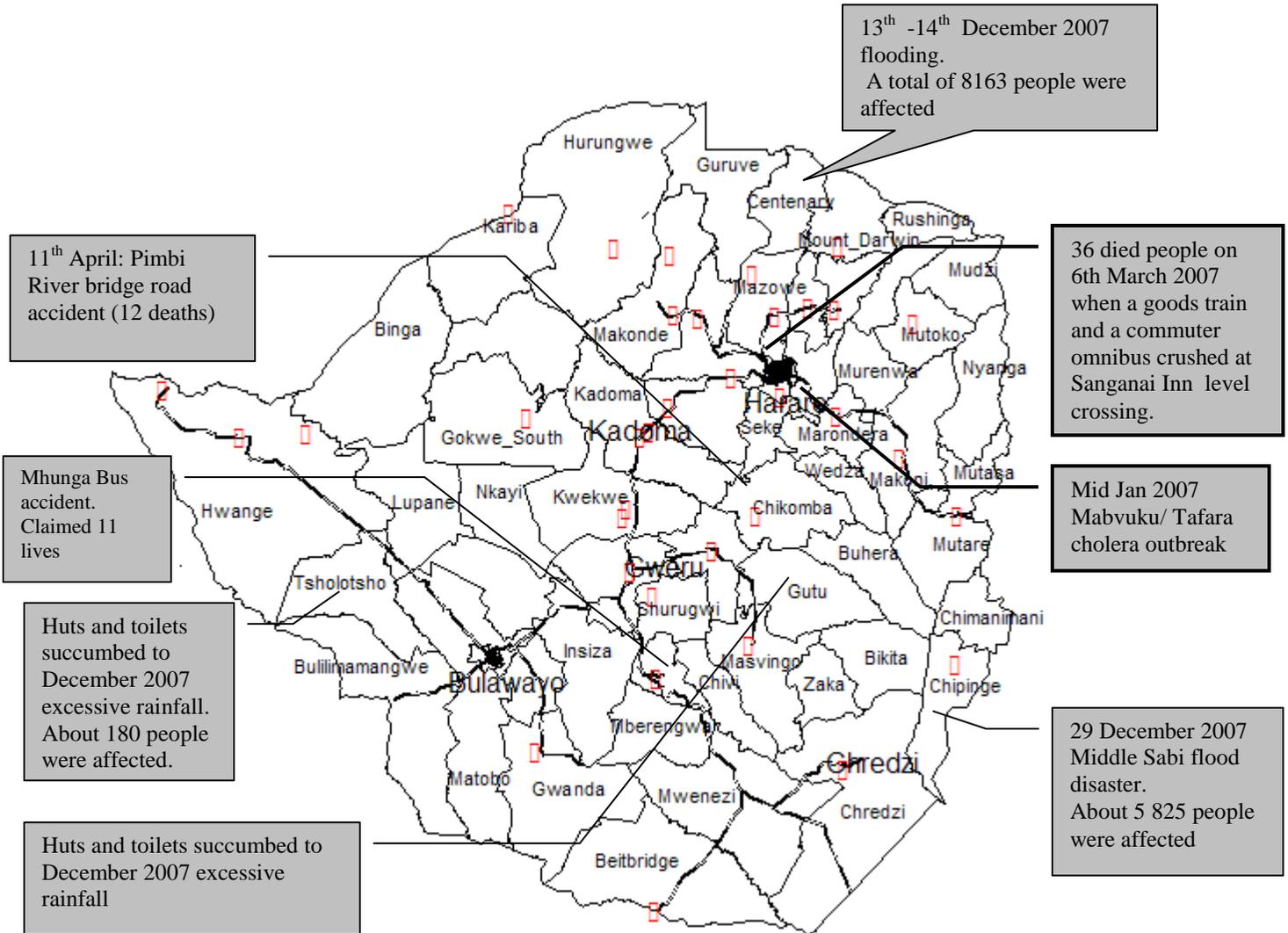


MAJOR INCIDENTS REPORT FOR 2007



Compiled by
Lameck Betera
Department of Civil Protection

Major highlights



1.0 INTRODUCTION

This report covers major incidents that were experienced and reported to the department of Civil Protection from January to December 2007. The department actively responded to some of the emergencies/ disasters. However, some other emergencies were dealt with at provincial, district and local authority level. There are other sporadic and minor emergencies that were reported during the period under review but are not covered by this report.

2.0 ROAD/RAIL TRAFFIC ACCIDENTS

2.1 Sanganai Inn Rail Crossing Accident

Thirty-six people perished on 6th March 2007 in a tragedy that involved a commuter omnibus and NRZ locomotive. The incident occurred at 0515AM near Sanganai Inn along Kirkman road when a commuter omnibus MAZDA T35 registration number AAS 5555 belonging to Makowe Bus Company ferrying commuters most of them vegetable vendors and security guards from Dzivarasekwa Extension was crushed by a Chinhoyi bound locomotive. The commuter omnibus driver ignored rules of the road by attempted to cross a level crossing without taking necessary precautionary measures. Survivors indicated that the driver and the passengers could not hear the siren of the locomotive as the car radio was on very high volume.

Of the deceased passengers 28 died on the spot and 8 others died upon admission at Parirenyatwa Group of Hospitals. Most of the accident victims who perished sustained deep head cuts and broken limbs due to the impact of the crush. Out of the 31 casualties who were admitted at the hospital, 23 survived with serious injuries. Among the passengers who survived, was one passenger who jumped off the bus as he sensed that the accident was apparent.

2.1.1 Response to the Disaster

Army personnel from 2 Presidential Guard in Dzivarasekwa Extension , City of Harare Fire and Ambulance services and the Zimbabwe Republic police were involved in rescue operations. The Fire Brigade was called at 0601hrs and their major task was to extricate some of the trapped bodies and attending to casualties. The casualties were ferried to Parienya Hospital while the dead bodies were handed over to the Zimbabwe Republic Police who delivered them in a truck to their mortuary at Parirenyatwa Hospital.



The remains of a bus which the City of Harare Fire Brigade had to cut to extricate bodies

2.1.2 Establishment of Command Post

The Directorate of Civil Protection facilitated for the establishment of a command post at Parirenyatwa Group of Hospitals. The post was manned by officers from the Zimbabwe Republic Police, Civil Protection Department, Registrar General's office. The post catered for the bereaved and the general public who wanted to know the status of their relatives. Counseling personnel from Ministry of Health and Child Welfare were also deployed at the command post,

2.1.3 Declaration of State of Disaster

The Acting President Joseph Msika declared the accident a State of Disaster in terms of the Civil Protection Act Chapter 10.06. Following the declaration, the Government, through the Department of Civil Protection provided each of the bereaved families with a standard coffin, blanket, transport to the burial place, \$100 000 cash and 100kg of maize meal. The City of Harare also provided free of charge graves for those who wished to bury their relatives in Harare. The Zimbabwe Redcross Society donated blankets to the Department of Civil Protection while other well-wishers donated in cash. Other organizations such as Christian Care donated blankets to 33 bereaved families.

A body of inquiry into the cause of the accident was instituted by National

Railways of Zimbabwe.

2.1.4 Recommendations

- NRZ was urged to cut grass alongside all their railway lines,
- Motorists were advised to take precautionary measures when approaching rail crossings,

In a related incident, a rail incident occurred on 9th August 2007 when a goods train collided with a commuter train from Mufakose just before the Chitungwiza fly over bridge opposite Rizende street. About 70 passengers were injured and one person died on the spot. The incident was a result of lack of signaling system.

About 46 casualties were received at Parirenyatwa Hospital and the rest went to Harare Central Hospital.

2.2 Pimbi River Bridge Bus Accident

The Department of Civil Protection responded to a fatal incident which occurred on 11th April 2007 at Pimbi River Bridge 95 km peg along the Harare Chivhu highway.

The incident involved a bus belonging to Capital Express which burst its front tire and crashed through the Pimbi River Bridgerails and plunged onto the river bed. On board were cross border traders form South Africa to Harare. The bus had 50 passengers on board out of which 12 passengers died. Seven passengers died on the spot and five others died after being admitted Hospitals.

Thirty one passengers were injured; some of them sustained serious head and spinal injuries. The majority of the injured were ferried by road and air to Parirenyatwa Hospital and a few were taken to Chivhu General Hospital.

2.2.1 Cause of Accident

According to the eye witness reports, the bus burst its front tire as it approached the bridge and veered off the road and landed on its roof on the river bed of Pimbi River. It was also reported that the bus was moving at a relatively safe speed when the accident occurred.

Information from City of Harare Fire and Ambulance Services Chief Fire Officer Mr Mugava indicated that the bus had too much luggage on its carrier and this might have compromised on its balance as it drove towards Pimbi River. Some of the items that were found scattered on the scene of accident included groceries and electrical gadgets such as refrigerators and stoves.

2.2.2 Response

The Zimbabwe Republic Police– Furtherstone was the first responders to attend to the scene of accident and was later joined by the Air Force of Zimbabwe from Gweru, Harare Fire and Ambulance Services and other private Ambulance

Services. The Directorate of Civil Protection also visited the scene of accident to assess the situation on the ground

2.2.3 Identification and Burial of the deceased

All the deceased except one were positively identified within the first four days after the accident. Although the accident was not declared state of disaster, the Government through the Department of Civil Protection assisted the bereaved family members with coffins, blankets and mealier-meal

2.3 Mhunga Bus Disaster: Zvishavane District

A fatal accident involving Mhunga Bus Services and a truck occurred on 29th November 2007 at 23km peg from Zvishavane along the Zvishavane- Masvingo highway. The accident occurred at around 1900hrs.

There were 86 passenger on the bus and 11 passengers died on the spot while 2 others died after admission to hospital. Sixty-two passengers were injured and of these, 4 were serious and were transferred to Bulawayo (UBH). Others with minor injuries were treated and discharged at Zvishavane District Hospital. The thirteen bodies were kept at Doves Funeral Parlor in Zvishavane before identification.

2.3.1 Response

The Zvishavane District Civil Protection committee was activated to deal with the disaster. Mhunga Bus Company contributed \$160 000 000.00 per bereaved family to cushion the burial costs.

The Department of Civil Protection was notified of the incident on 4th December 2007 almost a week after the incident and this posed problems of coordinated intervention.

2.3.2 Recommendations

- Efforts should be made to compile comprehensive reports of major incidents particularly at district level. This helps to analyse how various actors responded to the incident so as to improve on same.
- The department of Civil Protection should be informed of any major incidents that happen in the country. This helps to enhance coordinated response.

3.0 FIRE INCIDENTS

3.1 Parirenyatwa Nurses' Home

A Nurses' home at Parirenyatwa Group of Hospitals was gutted by fire on 9th July 2007 at around 0830 hrs. The Nurses' Home comprised of 120 rooms for student nurses and had parapet walls. One section of the home, consisting of both first and second floor demarcated by a parapet wall was completely gutted down by the fire and the roof collapsed. Thirteen rooms and 6 toilets on the first floor were completely damaged while 10 rooms and 2 toilets on the ground floor were also

extensively damaged. The fire was made worse by the window frames, door frames and floors which are wooden and highly flammable.

3.1.1 Cause of fire

It was reported that the fire was caused by a pressing iron that was allegedly left switched on after one student finished her ironing in one of the rooms. This all happened when students are not allowed to iron, cook or electrical heating in the Nurses' Home.

3.1.2 Response

City of Harare Fire Brigade was immediately informed and three fire tenders, one hydraulic platform and two response vehicles arrived at 0840 hrs. The fire team arrived when the whole of the 2nd floor south wing of the Home was on fire with tiles falling off. Fire fighters started putting off the fire using hose reels from the fire tenders on carried water supply. They also connected to hydrants to augment their water supply, but the hydraulic platform could not be used to put off the fire from above due to low pressure.

A roll call was made to account for the student nurses. All the 89 students were accounted for and 10 of them were admitted due to smoke inhalation.

The affected students were assisted as follows;

- Alternative accommodation was secured for the students,
- Training and counseling services for the affected students was carried out,
- A short break for the students was given for them to stabilise,
- Students were fed by the hospital while arrangements were being made for them to be self sufficient.

3.1.3 Observations and Lessons Learnt

- The alert mechanism for the incident was bureaucratic as a result response by fire services was delayed,
- The hospital should enforce its regulations of prohibiting use of electrical gadgets such as hot plats, ironing and electrical heating,
- All fire fighting internal hose reel equipment had been pulled out some with missing nozzles and water gashing everywhere on the floor ,
- On enrolment, use of gadgets and management of fire should be part of their induction
- There is need to upgrade City of Harare Fire Brigade equipment.

3.2 Pomona Dumpsite Fire

Harare metropolitan province also experienced a number of fire incidents. There was a fire outbreak at Pomona dumpsite on 29th August 2007. the dumpsite is used for solid waste disposal by land filling and services the whole of Great Harare. The fire outbreak occurred when the owner of the Pomona Quarry set fire on an adjacent piece of land which served as a hide out for illegal fuel dealers. The fire then rapidly went out of control and City of Harare Fire Brigade was

alerted.

Fire tenders were used to put out the fire, however, they were not very effective due to the magnitude of the fire. The Zimbabwe National Army and Circle Cement complemented City of Harare Fire Brigade by providing bull dozers and front end loaders respectively to ferry and deposit soils over the burning garbage .

3.2.1 Observations and lessons learnt

- The dumpsite is not properly managed as evidenced by lack of fire guards as well as non covering of the garbage with soil at each level and compacting of same,
- The landfill is currently being run without adequate plant and equipment in the form of landfill compactors, tipper trucks, front end loaders, and a dozer
- There were no hydrants closer to the dump site as a result fire tenders had to travel long distances to refill.

3.3 Odzi flat – Eastlea

The outbreak of fire at Odzi occurred on 19th September 2007 at about 13:17hrs. The fire was allegedly started by a child who was playing with a candle and matches in a bedroom in which another baby was sleeping.

3.3.1 Response

City of Harare Fire Brigade was alerted and fire team arrived at the scene at approximately 13:23hrs. Upon their arrival, the bulk of 4th floor was engulfed by fire and the roof was collapsing. They dealt with the fire using reels from their two fire tenders. They later connected to fire hydrants which is located across Samora Machel Avenue. The fire was however brought under control within one hour.



3.3.2 Observations.

- The Fire Brigade was alerted by a non resident of Odzi flats and this indicates that the residents did not attempt to call the fire brigade,
- Low pressure from fire hydrants compromised the efforts by the fire brigade to quickly put out the fire.

3.4 Other fire outbreaks

In Gwanda town, one of the leading retailers; Mc Inn was gutted by fire on 8th August 2007 around 11 pm. The Municipal Fire and Ambulance section got the alarm around 12 midnight and by the time of their arrival at the scene, the roof of the complex had already collapsed. The supermarket with all groceries, butchery and a restaurant were completely destroyed and nothing was salvaged.

The cause of the fire was not established but it was alleged that a staff member might have left some electrical gadgets on when they knocked off. There was no electricity in the town from 6am to 2100hrs on 8th August 2007. Another serious incident occurred in Masvingo where OK Supermarket was gutted down by fire and nothing was salvaged. A number of veld fires were also experienced throughout the country.

3.5 Recommendations

- Due to serious power cuts by the Zimbabwe Electricity Supply Authority, there is need for public awareness on the management of electrical gadgets,
- For veld fires, placement of fire guards should be mandatory particularly in farming areas

4.0 FLOODING INCIDENTS

4.1 Introduction

The 2007/8 season was characterized by incessant rains with most areas receiving above normal rains. As a result, the country experienced a series of floods that affected over 15,000 people since mid-December 2007. While floods are a seasonal phenomenon in flood prone areas of the country, particularly the low lying areas of the Zambezi Valley, Middle Sabi and the low veld, the 2007/8 rainy season floods came at the dawn of the season when communities were not yet prepared. Floods are usually experienced in February and March and not in December when people will be preparing for Christmas.

4.2 Impact

The first geographic area to be affected by floods was Muzarabani in Mashonaland Central province in north-eastern part of Zimbabwe, where 8 760 people were affected in mid-December 2007. Among these, about 1,260 people were temporarily displaced.

The second main area to be affected was the Middle Sabi in Chipinge district where Save River burst its banks on 29th December 2007, affecting about 5,825 people. This includes Tongogara Camp, which hosts about 2,500 refugees together with several small villages around Chibuwe Business Centre.



This is what happened when Save River burst its banks in the Middle Sabi



One of the badly affected schools in the Middle Sabi near Tongogara Refugee camp (St Mikles Primary school)



Some of the affected villagers in Masimbe Village (Middle Sabi)

In Masvingo Province, there were several reports of low level bridges that were submerged. The Zimbabwe Electricity Supply Authority lost 10 transformers due to lightning and TelOne lines were also badly affected mostly in Mwenezi, Bikita, Masvingo, Chivi and Gutu districts. This rendered difficulties in communication between the province and affected districts. There were also reports of sporadic damages to huts and toilets due to excessive moisture. The worst affected households were those who were located on water ways and wetlands. Water logging of fields was also rampant in the province and Bikita district was most affected.

In Chivi District, 6 people drowned. Out of the six people, 4 were ZESA officials who drowned after a truck carrying 13 passengers was swept away at Madzivadondo Bridge. Nine passengers were rescued.

4.3 Summary of affected areas

PROVINCE	DISTRICT	AREAS AFFECTED	POPULATION AT RISK	POPULATION AFFECTED
Mash Central	Centenary	Chadereka Dambakurima	20 000	8 163
	Guruve	Chidodo	1000	
Manicaland	Chipinge	Chibuwe Tongorara Gumira	30 000	5 825
Mat North	Tsholotsho	Sipepa	10 000	120
	Hwange	Masikili	1 000	60
Midlands	Mvuma	Holy Cross Area	10 000	1 000

4.4 Casualties

Sporadic incidents of drowning of individuals both adults and children were reported country wide. The casualties were mainly those who did not heed the advice of not attempting to cross flooded rivers. A recent drowning incident involved responders from City of Harare Fire Brigade in which 4 people died after their fire engine was washed away by a flooded river. The driver of the fire engine failed to negotiate a flooded bridge when they were coming from a rescue mission. A number of cases of marooned people were reported and all of them were timely attended to by the Air Force of Zimbabwe, Zimbabwe Republic Police (Sub Aqua Unit) and Fire Brigades.

4.5 Role played by the Gov and working partners

The Government of Zimbabwe through the Department of Civil Protection coordinated response to the floods, with the Red Cross/Crescent Movement, UN agencies and NGOs complementing and supporting Government efforts. On 7 January 2008, the Government of Zimbabwe launched an official request for assistance to the Humanitarian Coordinator in the form of resources to conduct rapid assessments in the affected areas. In response to the request, Inter-Agency members together with the Government formed teams to conduct rapid assessments in different parts of the country that were affected.

The Department of Civil Protection provided logistical support to affected provinces and districts to enable them to respond to immediate requirements by the affected communities. The Government also supported with the procurement of food during the early recovery phase of the emergency. Some families from Chadereka, Dambakurima and Chimoyo were temporarily relocated to higher ground near Muzarabani Business Centre. The families were given shelter and pieces of land for tillage.

Humanitarian agencies also came in swiftly to provide assistance in the form of temporal shelter, food, water, drugs, kitchen utensils etc. In all these various phases of response, the Civil Protection Department in the Ministry of Local Government, Public Works and Urban Development in conjunction with both provincial and district structures served as the main entry point for humanitarian actors.

4.6 Health, water and sanitation

Cases of malaria and diarrhea had doubled in several villages following the floods as some affected communities were left without safe drinking water. Both household and communal water sources inclusive of blair toilets were flooded. According to the preliminary assessment by District Development Fund, about Z\$150, 000, 000, 000 was required for the rehabilitation of water points damaged by floods.

4.7 Agriculture

Cropping were adversely affected in that the soils lost nutrients due to leaching and in some instances the crops were swept away by heavy and incessant rains . Water logging of fields and the subsequent leaching of soil nutrients was not only confined to areas that were seriously affected by floods but this was experienced throughout most parts of the country. For example, by mid-January, an estimated 3,000 ha of maize, 6,000 of cotton and 3,000 ha of sorghum had been damaged by floods in Muzarabani only. The crop and livestock assessment report for 2007/8 confirms that excessive rains caused significant damage to crops due to leaching and water logging.

4.8 Infrastructure

The floods have also resulted in serious damages to infrastructure such as schools, roads, power and telecommunication lines. For example, rapid assessments

conducted in January found that at least 5 schools in Muzarabani and 5 schools in Chipinge had been damaged by the floods. District Development Fund compiled a report on damages caused to roads and water related infrastructure. The estimated cost of rehabilitation of roads alone is in the region of Z\$9.7 trillion.

4.9 Recommendations

- The Government should pursue for possible long term plan to resettle some of the vulnerable communities on higher ground,
- It was realized that some villagers were located on wet lands or water ways following the resettlement programme. The Government should consider relocating such villagers to higher ground before the onset of the next rainy season as the affected households will continue to loose their household property and infrastructure.
- There is need to revisit or develop flood maps for all the flood prone areas of the country.
- Public awareness campaigns on hazards associated with the rainfall seasons should be intensified.

5.0 CHOLERA OUT BREAK IN MABVUKU / TAFARA

An outbreak of cholera occurred in Mabvuku / Tafara around mid January 2007. The out break was noticed when a 12 year old boy who used to clean trucks for international truckers who transport cement to various destinations in the region fell sick. The boy was diagnosed of cholera and detained at Beatrice Infectious Disease Hospital. A few days later, 16 other cases were suspected and out of these 8 tested positive. The bacterium was identified as *ogava* which originated beyond our borders. The 8 were also detained at Beatrice Infectious Disease Hospital and were later released after treatment. The outbreak areas were Mabvuku / Tafara, Donbrook area and Kamombe village in Mashonaland East province.

By the time of the outbreak, Mabvuku/ Tafara residents were experiencing serious water shortages to an extent that they were drinking water from unprotected shallow wells.

5.1 Action taken

Mashonaland East Province Health team was deployed to conduct tracing and screening in the affected areas. The team also conducted water sampling and supplied chloride of lime to decontaminate the water. An ambulance was stationed at Mabvuku Poly Clinic to attend to cholera cases only.

Council officials also conducted health education and pamphlets were distributed. A minibus with a loud hailer was also dispatched into the affected areas to conduct awareness campaigns.

The movement of food staffs from Mabvuku/ Tafara into town was monitored as well as from Kariba. At the same time road blocks were set up along Acturus, Mutare and Lomagundi roads.

Zimbabwe National Water Authority was requested to increase water supplies in Mabvuku / Tafara as well as Ruwa. ZINWA was also advised to direct its resources for repairing blocked sewer pipes in these areas.

6.0 CONCLUSION

It has been realized that major incidents that emanate from public transportation continue to take an upward trend. The Department of Civil Protection in collaboration with other relevant stakeholders should consider redoubling their efforts in conducting public awareness campaigns to avert road and rail traffic accident. This should be complemented by the refurbishment of our national highways by road authorities as most roads are in bad state.

The period under review has seen a remarkable decrease in incidents associated with crossing of flooded rivers either by pedestrians or motorists. It seems people have taken heed of vigorous awareness campaigns by the Civil Protection Organization on hazards associated with the rainy season.