



# Operation Wallacea

Conservation research through academic partnerships

Medical and evacuation procedures for  
Cuba 2011

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# 1. Introduction

## Medical screening

As with all expeditions careful planning is essential to ensure that all individuals enjoy a safe successful trip. Some members of the expedition team (including volunteers and staff) may have significant pre-existing health problems or disabilities, which in the field, could potentially lead to problems. All participants are required to complete a PADI medical questionnaire which means that a GP is required to sign the declaration on the reverse of the form if they have answered yes to any of the questions. The forms are returned to the administrator at the UK or Canadian office. These medical forms are then checked by the Operation Wallacea appointed Expedition Medic to check for any conditions that may cause problems on the expedition and to suggest additions to the medical kits in light of any pre-existing health problems highlighted.

Operation Wallacea has purchased medical and evacuation insurance cover for all volunteers and staff to a value of £1 million per person. However, in Cuba medical evacuation, ambulance and hospital facilities are free.

## Roles in the event of an emergency

Carefully planned evacuation protocols are in place in all of the sites in Cuba. All staff will have training on the evacuation procedures and protocols.

Once a major incident leading to an evacuation is identified the Venture Leader (Dr Jorge Angulo Valdes) will take overall control and will decide the level of emergency evacuation required for the patient. These are classified as either **Medium Priority** or **Emergency**. The boat based evacuations and co-ordination with the hospital and ambulance service is all organised via the Marina Manager. Before the start of the Opwall expeditions the Marina will have informed the hospital at Nueva Gerona of the groups visiting and the activities that will be undertaken.

### *Medium Priority*

Cases in which the patient is in no immediate danger but the onsite facilities are unable to cope were their condition to deteriorate. An example of this would be dehydration due to sickness. This requires the patient to be moved as quickly as possible without the need to hire special vehicles or boats to the nearest appropriate suitable facilities normally in Nueva Gerona.

### *Emergency Priority*

Cases where the patients health is at risk if immediate action is not taken. An example of this is a broken bone or decompression sickness. This requires transportation, via specially arranged boats and ambulances to medical facilities available in Nueva Gerona.

In the case of an Evacuation, the Site Manager will be responsible for contacting the insurance company.

## **2. Medical facilities in country**

### **Facilities on the Isle of Youth**

Heroes del Baire Hospital, Neuva Gerona

Address: Calle 39A, Esquina 41, Nueva Gerona, Isla de Juventud

Telephone: +53 46 323012 (Reception)

+53 46 326375 (Director)

Facilities include operating theatres, X-ray, laboratories and a 24-hour accident and emergency unit.

In addition there is a recompression chamber which is open 24 hours a day with trained staff available at the hospital.

Ambulance service (SIUM) +53 46 321230 or +53 46 322366

### **Facilities in Havana**

Cira Garcia Hospital

Address: Ave. 41 No. 4101, Miramar, Ciudad Habana

Telephone: 07 204-811

This hospital is dedicated to serving foreign nationals and is close to the marine research centre. Facilities include operating theatres, X-ray, MRI and CT scans, laboratories, a diagnostic centre etc. It also has an intensive care unit, 24-hour level accident and emergency unit.

The recompression chamber is situated in the Naval Hospital

Address: La Habana Hyperbaric Medical Centre, Hospital Naval 'Dr. Luis Diaz Soto', Havana del Este Telephone: + 537 97 3266

## **3. Medical cover at each site**

There are 3 research sites that are being used in the 2011 season: the beach in Punta Frances, research ships on the Punta Frances reefs and a research ship and boats in the manatee monitoring zone. Most of the students will be staying overnight at the Colony Hotel although some will be staying on the Felipe Poey.

There is a well stocked medical clinic at the Colony Hotel which is manned 24 hours a day by nurses. The captain of the Felipe Poey research ship has an IMO Emergency First Aid qualification and the ship has it's own First Aid kit. The other research ships

used similarly have qualified First Aid staff on board and First Aid kits. There is a First Aid kit at the ranger station and the staff there have been trained in First Aid.

The First Aid kits are designed to stabilize a casualty for transfer to more extensive medical facilities where needed either at the hotel or in the hospital in Nueva Gerona.

## **Evacuation from Punta Frances and Colony Bay**

### *Medium Priority Evacuations*

These are all organised by the patient being returned to the marina on one of the returning boats from Punta Frances or the manatee monitoring zone and then taken by taxi to the Colony Hotel clinic or to the hospital in Nueva Gerona.

### *High Priority or Emergency Evacuations*

Once a High Priority or Emergency Evacuation is called then the marine will despatch a speedboat to intercept the research boat which will be making its' way back to the marina. The marina manager also calls SIUM – the ambulance service to ensure there is an ambulance waiting at the marina for when the speedboat returns and the patient travels by ambulance to the hospital in Nueva Gerona (30 minutes).

Incidents close to the ranger station, on the Punta Frances reefs or in the manatee monitoring zone could all be back at the marina in 1 hour (total time to hospital 1 hour 30 minutes).

Communication is key to ensuring rapid evacuations. The teams at Punta Frances forests have walkie talkies that communicate back to the ranger station. The ranger station and all the research boats have VHF radios that communicate back to the marina. The marina has land line and mobile phone reception whilst the hotel has mobile phone, land line and a very slow email system.

## **4. Reporting and logging**

During evacuations it is crucial that a log is kept at the Colony Hotel by the Cuba Country Manager detailing times, personnel involved and all relevant details of each step of the evacuation process.

A full safety assessment must be carried out after all evacuations and if a similar incident is likely all activities must be stopped until the situation has been rectified.

The Cuba Country Manager will collate the reports of all medical treatment and evacuations and will submit the final report to the UK office. The Cuba Project

Manager will also submit the costs and report to the insurance company for reimbursement of costs.

## 5. Mass evacuations and disaster management

The most likely scenario is warning of an impending hurricane. Hurricanes can occur in Cuba at any time from June to November but are most likely in October followed by September which are both months outside the Opwall survey season. However, it is possible that a hurricane will occur. Cuba has an excellent warning system with about a week's advance notice of any hurricanes heading for Cuba with 6 hourly updates given on TV and radio broadcasts. This information phase is succeeded by a Warning Phase if the hurricane is headed for Cuba. The Cuban authorities then organise evacuation of all people in the area likely to be affected to hurricane shelters. For the Colony Bay area the people and guests are all evacuated to a hurricane shelter in the centre of the island. Food is provided by the Civil Defence Service for the duration of the event. It is this high level of organisation that has virtually prevented any deaths occurring from hurricanes in Cuba despite there being numerous hurricanes over the last few years.

## 6. List of contact numbers

<i>Name</i>	<i>Number</i>
Jorge Angulo Valdes	+53 52 418913
Colony Hotel	+53 46 398181
Marina	+53 46 398181 ex 166 and 167
CIM –Reception	+53 7 2030617
CIM - Administration	+53 7 2093156
CIM - Director	+53 7 2025223