

UPU Emergency and Solidarity Fund response report – supporting Correos de Chile following the 2024 floods

From 10 to 17 June 2024, central and southern Chile were struck by record-breaking rainfall, the result of a Category 5 atmospheric river – an event without precedent in the country. The extreme hydrometeorological conditions triggered widespread flooding, landslides and destruction across several regions, including BioBio, Maule, Ñuble, Valparaíso and Santiago. More than 2,000 homes were damaged, over 4,000 people were displaced, and approximately 60,000 households lost electricity. In BioBio, towns such as Curanilahue were almost entirely submerged. The Chilean government declared a state of catastrophe in response to the scale of the emergency.

Correos de Chile faced significant disruption. Six key postal facilities across multiple regions – including the postal technology centre; the courier, express and parcel centre; and branches in San Felipe, Los Andes, Linares and Gran Central – were impacted. Flooding and high winds caused infrastructure damage such as collapsed roofs, electrical failures, blocked access routes, and loss of operational capacity. Five postal employees were injured and five lost their homes. Postal services were interrupted owing to flooding, network outages, blocked roads and technology breakdowns, affecting mail delivery and processing operations across the country.

UPU Emergency and Solidarity Fund responds

In the aftermath of the disaster, the UPU Emergency and Solidarity Fund (ESF), through its disaster risk management (DRM) team, coordinated closely with Correos de Chile to assess the impact and identify the most urgent recovery needs. Recognizing the scale of operational disruption and infrastructure vulnerability, the DRM team and Correos de Chile jointly identified solutions to help restore core services while enhancing emergency readiness.

A critical recovery item was approved: a **modular emergency operations tent**, 30 x 20 x 6 metres in size, equipped with essential electrical infrastructure to serve as a temporary, high-capacity postal operations hub. This solution was designed to allow Correos de Chile to rapidly resume mail handling and service continuity in the event of extended infrastructure failure.

Global solidarity in action

The UPU provided support through its regular budget, enabling the provision of the modular emergency tent and internal equipment to substitute for damaged critical infrastructure. This rapid-response measure aligns with the UPU's efforts to strengthen the resilience of postal networks in the face of climate-related disasters.

Conclusion

The June 2024 floods presented an extraordinary challenge for Chile and its national postal operator. Thanks to the swift action of the ESF, Correos de Chile is better positioned to recover operational capacity and build long-term resilience. This case highlights the importance of preparedness, coordination and global support in protecting the integrity of postal services in

times of crisis. Chile's experience reinforces the UPU's commitment to ensuring that no postal operator faces a disaster alone.