

**PRESS RELEASE**  
**BY**  
**THE PROGRESSIVE LIBERAL PARTY**  
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**TORNADOES AND LOSS OF LIVES IN GRAND BAHAMA**

The Progressive Liberal Party extends its profound condolences to the families of those who lost their lives and those who were injured at the Grand Bahama Container Port following tornadoes which touched down on the island of Grand Bahama today. May God grant them the strength to cope with this tragic loss and pain at this critical time in their lives.

Reports out of Grand Bahama indicate that there were no warnings of the tornadoes thus not giving these persons the opportunity to take the necessary precautions which may have saved lives and minimized the damage caused. The tornadoes also reportedly caused damages to several buildings and homes on Grand Bahama.

The public would recall that it was the Member of Parliament for West End and Bimini, Hon. Obie Wilchcombe, who alerted all concerned that Hutchinson Whampoa, and its affiliates, closed its Met Office on 31 December 2009 and sent the staff home. The public would also recall that shortly thereafter, the **Hon. Earl Deveaux, Minister of the Environment, promised Grand Bahama that a new Met Office would be opened.**

We were further advised that while the Met Office was opened, a faxed weather forecast was provided each morning to the Grand Bahama Container Port so that the company would know whether to strap down their cranes and other equipment or to allow their employees to work as usual. Clearly, **Minister Earl Deveaux did not live up to another FNM promise.**

Serious questions must now be asked as a result of the tornadoes:

1. **Why did the Government failed to establish a Met Office in Grand Bahama immediately following the closure by Hutchinson Whampoa of its operations?**
2. **Why did Hutchinson Whampoa not insist on the Government taking over its Met office to ensure the well being and safety of the people of Grand Bahama?**
3. **How is Hutchinson Whampoa, the operators of Freeport International Airport, not able to operate without the services of a fully functioning**

**Met Office and is it not ironic that an affiliate of the airport company operates the Grand Bahama Container Port?**

- 4. Did the absence of a current weather report result in the employees of the Container Port being forced to work under uncertain weather conditions?**
- 5. Will the Government give an immediate undertaking to activate a fully operational Met Office on the island of Grand Bahama in the interest of the residents of that island and public safety?**

We have also been advised that as a result of damages to the cranes at the Container Port, the necessary replacement and repairs would take almost a year, which will impact the level of employment at that facility, thus exacerbating the already depressed economic condition in Grand Bahama.