



ALERT No. 1 Earthquake in Chile

February 27, 2010

AmericasRelief Team is monitoring this event

AmericasRelief Team's Emergency Center Report

The AmericasRelief Team's Emergency Center has not been activated; the Center is staffed to help coordinate the shipping of relief aid to victims of the event. However, we anticipate that air relief flights, ocean relief space and co-loading opportunities will develop. We will notify our colleagues, friends and partners of space-available opportunities as this emergency develops.

February 27, 2010

8.8-Magnitude Earthquake Hits Central Chile

By THE ASSOCIATED PRESS

Filed at 2:42 p.m. ET

TALCA, Chile (AP) -- One of the strongest earthquakes ever recorded struck Chile on Saturday, toppling homes, collapsing bridges and plunging trucks into the fractured earth. A tsunami threatened every nation around the Pacific Ocean -- roughly a quarter of the globe.

Chileans near the epicenter were tossed about by the magnitude-8.8 quake as if shaken by a giant. At least 147 people were killed, according to Carmen Fernandez, director of the National Emergency Agency.

The quake shook buildings in Argentina's capital of Buenos Aires, and was felt as far away as Sao Paulo in Brazil -- 1,800 miles (2,900 kilometers) to the east. About 13 million people live in the area where shaking was strong to severe, according to the U.S. Geological Survey.

In Talca, just 65 miles (105 kilometers) from the epicenter, furniture toppled as the earth shook for more than a minute in something akin to major airplane turbulence. The historic center of town largely collapsed, but most of the

buildings of adobe mud and straw were businesses that were not inhabited during the 3:34 a.m. (1:34 a.m. EST, 0634 GMT) quake.

Neighbors pulled at least five people from the rubble while emergency workers, themselves disoriented, asked for information from reporters.

Collapsed roads and bridges complicated north-south travel in the narrow Andean nation. Electricity, water and phone lines were cut to many areas -- meaning there was no word of death or damage from many outlying areas.

In the Chilean capital of Santiago, 200 miles (325 kilometers) northeast of the epicenter, a car dangled from a collapsed overpass, the national Fine Arts Museum was badly damaged and an apartment building's two-story parking lot pancaked, smashing about 50 cars whose alarms rang incessantly.

The jolt set off a tsunami that swamped a village on an island off Chile, then raced across the Pacific, setting off alarm sirens in Hawaii, Polynesia and Tonga. Tahitian officials banned all traffic on roads less than 1,600 feet (500 meters) from the sea and people in several low-lying island nations were urged to find higher ground.

The first waves were expected to hit Hawaii after 11 a.m. (4 p.m. EST; 2100 GMT) and measure roughly 8 feet (2.5 meters) at Hilo. Officials evacuated people and boats near the water and closed shore-side Hilo International Airport.

Experts said tsunami waves could hit Asian, Australian and New Zealand shores as well as the U.S. West Coast and Alaska. In all, 53 nations and territories were subject to tsunami warnings.

Waves 6 feet (1.8 meter) above normal hit Talcahuano near Concepcion 23 minutes after the quake, then inundated the village of San Juan Bautista on Robinson Crusoe Island, 410 miles (660 kilometers) off the Chilean coast. At least three people were missing on the island, said Ivan de la Maza, superintendent of Chile's principal port zone.

"There was a big wave that covered half of the village," said de la Maza, who is responsible for the island's port as well.

A helicopter and a [Navy](#) frigate were enroute to the island to assist in the search, he said.

President [Michelle Bachelet](#) declared a "state of catastrophe" in central Chile but said the government has not asked for assistance from other countries. "The system is functioning. People should remain calm. We're doing everything we can with all the forces we have," she said.

Powerful aftershocks rattled Chile's coast -- 41 of them magnitude 5 or greater -- in the 10 hours after the quake. Six were sizable quakes in their own right, magnitude 6 or greater.

In Santiago, modern buildings are built to withstand earthquakes, but many older ones were heavily damaged, including the Nuestra Senora de la Providencia church, whose bell tower collapsed. A bridge just outside the capital

also collapsed, and at least one car flipped upside down. Several hospitals were evacuated due to earthquake damage, Bachelet said.

Santiago's airport will remain closed for at least 24 hours after the passenger terminal suffered major damage, airport director Eduardo del Canto told Chilean television. TV images showed smashed windows, partially collapsed ceilings and pedestrian walkways destroyed.

Santiago's subway was shut as well and hundreds of buses were trapped at a terminal by a damaged bridge, Transportation and Telecommunications Minister said. He urged Chileans to make phone calls or travel only when absolutely necessary.

In Concepcion, Chile's second-largest city and only 70 miles (115 kilometers) from the epicenter, nurses and residents pushed the injured through the streets on stretchers. Others walked around in a daze wrapped in blankets, some carrying infants in their arms. A 15-story building collapsed, leaving only a few floors intact.

"I was on the 8th floor and all of a sudden I was down here," said Fernando Abarzua, marveling that he escaped with no major injuries. He said a relative was still trapped in the rubble six hours after the quake, "but he keeps shouting, saying he's OK."

Marco Vidal, a program director for Grand Circle Travel who was traveling with a group of 34 Americans, was on the 19th floor of the Crown Plaza Santiago hotel when the quake struck.

"All the things start to fall. The lamps, everything, was going on the floor," he said. "I felt terrified."

Cynthia Iocono, from Linwood, Pennsylvania, said she first thought the quake was a train.

"But then I thought, 'Oh, there's no train here.' And then the lamps flew off the dresser and my TV flew off onto the floor and crashed."

The quake struck after concert-goers had left South America's leading music festival in the coastal city of Vina del Mar, where organizers canceled performances on Saturday, the final night of the festival. But it caught partiers leaving a disco.

"It was very bad. People were screaming. Some people were running, others appeared paralyzed. I was one of them," Julio Alvarez told Radio Cooperativa.

The largest earthquake ever recorded struck the same area of Chile on May 22, 1960. The magnitude-9.5 quake killed 1,655 people and left 2 million homeless. The tsunami that it caused killed people in Hawaii, Japan and the Philippines and caused damage to the west coast of the United States.

Saturday's quake matched a 1906 temblor off the Ecuadorean coast as the seventh-strongest ever recorded in the world.

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AmericasRelief Team

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AmericasRelief Team reacts to immediate crisis, provides ongoing logistics assistance, and conducts plans for future events in the region which will require effective coordination of humanitarian relief.

For

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