

INFORMATION BULLETIN



International Federation of Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies
Fédération internationale des Sociétés de la Croix-Rouge et du Croissant-Rouge
Federación Internacional de Sociedades de la Cruz Roja y de la Media Luna Roja
الاتحاد الدولي لجمعيات الصليب الأحمر والهلال الأحمر

26 September 2003

JAPAN: HOKKAIDO

EARTHQUAKE

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This Information Bulletin is for information only. The Federation is not seeking any funding or other assistance from donors for this operation at this time.

The Situation

On 26 Sept. 2003, at 04:50 local time an earthquake with a magnitude of 8.0 on the Richter Scale struck off the coast of Japan's Hokkaido Prefecture. The earthquake was followed shortly thereafter at 6:08 local time by a powerful aftershock measuring 7.0 affecting the same area. Ten thousand families, including residents of some of the coastal areas were alerted to evacuate. By noon, that day, there were a reported 278 injured. Most of the injuries were not serious and there are no deaths reported so far. This was the first earthquake to exceed a magnitude of 8.0 since the one which hit the east coast of Hokkaido on 4 October 1994.

The worst affected area is Hokkaido Prefecture with electricity and water supplies cut off in some cities and towns in Hokkaido. Following the initial shock, major highways in the area were closed and all rail services were cancelled for safety purposes and most of the services were restored by midday.

The quakes caused a power outage leaving 16,000 families without electricity due to the automatic safety shutdown of a thermal power station. Most of the service however was restored by noon and the operation of Hokkaido Electric's Tomari nuclear power station remains unaffected. The Idemitsu Kosan Co oil storage facility caught fire in Tomakomai, a coastal city in southern Hokkaido and the ceiling of the control tower of Kushiro airport collapsed. No injuries were reported, but all flights were cancelled at this airport and service has not been restored.

The meteorological agency initially issued a tsunami warning for the coastal areas in eastern and central Hokkaido, and a tsunami alert for the coastal areas in western Hokkaido as well as the northern Japanese prefectures of Aomori, Iwate, Miyagi and Fukushima. All tsunami warning was degraded to alert level later, as the potential for possible tsunamis has decreased.

The government of the Hokkaido prefecture has established a disaster relief headquarters in response to the earthquake.

Red Cross/Red Crescent Action

Immediately after the first earthquake struck, six staff from the Japanese Red Cross Society's (JRCS) Hokkaido Prefecture Chapter in Sapporo City rapidly commenced co-ordination activities to provide necessary relief. The JRCS Hokkaido Chapter's Relief team is on stand-by for deployment should the situation call for it. So far, no major damage has been reported from JRCS facilities in Hokkaido and other affected areas (local chapter, hospital, blood centre etc.) The chapter continues to stay in contact with Red Cross hospitals, Blood Centres and representatives from the local government in the affected areas in order to keep current as to how the situation is evolving.

Three staff members from JRCS Headquarters' Domestic Disaster Management Division are monitoring the situation from Tokyo, and are in close contact with the Society's Chapters in the affected areas and the Japanese Government.

For a full description of the National Society profile, see **www.ifrc.org**

For further details please contact :

- The **Japanese Red Cross** in Tokyo; Mr. Naoki Shiratsuchi, International Relations Department, **Phone** +81-3 -3437-7089; **Fax** +81-3-3435-8509; **email** shiratsuchi@jrc.or.jp
- East Asia Regional Delegation: Mr. Alistair Henley (HoRD), email;ifrcen01@ifrc.org; phone +86 1350 1205 972, fax+86-10-6532-7166
- Federation Geneva: Mr. Satoshi Sugai, Desk Officer, email;satoshi.sugai@ifrc.org; phone +41 22 730 4237; fax+41 22 733 0395

All International Federation Operations seek to adhere to the Code of Conduct and are committed to the Humanitarian Charter and Minimum Standards in Disaster Response (SPHERE Project) in delivering assistance to the most vulnerable.

For support to or for further information concerning Federation operations in this or other countries, please access the Federation website at **<http://www.ifrc.org>**.

For longer-term programmes, please refer to the Federation's Annual Appeal.