

MINOR EMERGENCY



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

CHILE: EARTHQUAKE

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The Federation's mission is to improve the lives of vulnerable people by mobilizing the power of humanity. It is the world's largest humanitarian organization and its millions of volunteers are active in over 181 countries.

In Brief

CHF 30,000 HAVE BEEN ALLOCATED FROM THE FEDERATION'S DISASTER RELIEF EMERGENCY FUND (DREF) TO RESPOND TO THIS OPERATION.

UN earmarked funds to repay DREF are encouraged.

For information specifically related to this operation please contact:

- In Chile: Patricio Lagos Vargas, National Relief Director, Chilean Red Cross; Phone (562) 7771448 - 7771216 -; email comunicaciones@cruzroja.cl
- In Panama, Nelson Castaño, Head of Pan American Disaster Response Unit; email ifrcpa07@ifrc.org, phone (507) 316-1001, fax (507) 316-1082
- In Geneva: Olaug Bergseth, Federation Regional Officer, Americas Department, Geneva; email olaug.bergseth@ifrc.org, phone (41 22) 730-4535, fax (41 22) 733-0392

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For longer-term programmes in this or other countries or regions, please refer to the Federation's Annual Appeal. For support to or for further information concerning Federation programmes or operations in this or other countries, or for national society profiles, please also access the Federation's website at <http://www.ifrc.org>

The situation

A major earthquake occurred at 22:44 hours, local time, on Monday, 13 June 2005 with a magnitude of 7.9 on the Richter Scale in Tarapacá, northern Chile, in an area of mountains and desert inhabited by indigenous populations. The earthquake killed five people as buildings collapsed and a further six people whose vehicle was struck by a boulder near Iquique. The earthquake has affected over six thousand people and injured some 200; 1,400 houses were damaged, of which 544 were completely destroyed and the quake left numerous isolated towns without power and telephone services and with roads damaged, according to a report from the National Emergency Office of Chile (ONEMI).

The epicentre was located 115 km east-northeast of the city of Iquique (population. 238,000), some 1,515 km north of the capital, Santiago. The earthquake lasted approximately 50 seconds and tremors were felt in Calama, Tocopilla, Arica, Chanaral, El Salvador, Antofagasta, Caldera and Copiapo throughout northern Chile and as far away as the capital, Santiago, in Ilo, Moquegua, Tacna and Arequipa in Peru, in La Paz, Bolivia and Brasilia, Brazil. The most affected populations are Alto Hospicio, Pozo Almonte, Huara, Iquique, Camarones, Camiña, Pica and Colchane.

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Chile's government declared the coastal province of Iquique and the community of Camarones in the province of Arica a disaster zone on Thursday, 16 June, following the two day visit of President Lagos to the affected region. Water supplies were cut off, mainly as a result of power outages, affecting particularly the rural areas of the Province of Iquique and a significant part of the city of Iquique. It is expected that water services will be repaired quickly with the resumption of the power supply; since Monday water tankers provided by the municipal authorities, the army and the navy have been distributing water to those in need. Health centres were not damaged and have treated approximately 200 people who were wounded during the earthquake. The Ministry of Social Planning is currently finalizing an assessment of the damage incurred in order to put forward a rehabilitation plan.

Red Cross action taken so far

The regional branches of Tarapacá and Antofagasta, as well as the local Iquique and Pozo Almonte branches of the National Society are actively involved in the response effort. The Chilean Red Cross relief team has been helping in the evacuation of buildings that are severely damaged. In addition, Red Cross volunteers, including volunteer nurses, have been assisting in the distribution of humanitarian assistance and providing first aid, as well as ensuring support to hospitals and health centres in Iquique.

The Chilean Red Cross launched a campaign in Santiago de Chile at the end of last week, requesting non-perishable food, blankets, clothes and hygiene items as these have been identified to be priority needs for those affected by the earthquake. Two free toll lines and a bank account have been opened to accept donations. However, to date, the campaign has not been as successful as initially anticipated.

Following assessments, the Chilean Red Cross has confirmed that the most serious problem is that of rehabilitation, given the significant destruction of housing. It is also feared that respiratory infections may break out as a result of the lack of appropriate shelter and the low temperatures at night.

Today, 21 June, a member of OXFAM will join the National Society in Iquique in order to continue the assessment of needs and to identify possibilities for cooperation in accordance with the plan of action to respond to the disaster which is being drawn up by the Chilean Red Cross. In addition to the logistics expert who is traveling to Iquique today, OXFAM has agreed to put at the disposal of the National Society public health and water and sanitation specialists, should they be required.

The needs

The provision of food, clothes and blankets, as well as the rehabilitation of infrastructure have been seen identified as priorities by the government. In addition, irrigation systems have been destroyed which will create serious difficulties given that most of the affected populations are subsistence farmers.

CHF 30,000 has been allocated from the Federation's Disaster Relief Emergency Fund in order to cover operational costs incurred by the National Society.

Coordination

The Chilean Red Cross is working with the Pan American Disaster Response Unit and the Lima Regional Delegation and is also liaising with OCHA. In addition, the National Society is working in close coordination with the National Emergency Office and the Chilean Security system in accordance with the established framework agreement. More than twenty volunteers in relief and health from the Red Cross regional Iquique branch have been working together with the "carabineros" and the fire fighting team in the region. Moreover, the National Society is ensuring close coordination with the media, particularly in order to promote the campaign for humanitarian assistance to support those affected by the earthquake. OXFAM is assisting the Chilean Red Cross through the mobilization of staff who are experts in logistics, public health and water and sanitation who will work jointly with members of the National Society.



Map Courtesy of ReliefWeb

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