

CHILE EARTHQUAKE

WELFARE SERVICES EMERGENCY RESPONSE

Monday, March 22, 2010



Chile – Earthquake – Update

- Electricity is being restored, but the power grid remains fragile. Repairs will require six months.
- The potable water supply is being gradually reestablished in larger cities, but shortages still exist
- Roads to most of the affected areas are open and passable with substantial detours and delays
- Cell phone coverage has greatly improved with over 95% of the infrastructure in operation
- The government has reported that more than 500,000 homes have been destroyed.

STATUS OF MEMBERS AND MISSIONARIES

- All missionaries are safe and have adequate food, water, and shelter
- 7 Church members have been confirmed dead, and one is still reported as missing
- 2,096 members (453 families) are unable to return to their homes. Reportedly, 80–85% of the people rendered homeless are staying with family members.
- About 450 members are using 25 chapels as living quarters
- Members currently living in church meetinghouses will be able to find alternate places to live as tents and tarps are distributed

CHURCH RESPONSE

- Daily shipments of food and other supplies are being sent to stakes and districts in the affected area
- Food and supplies have been sent to the island of Juan Fernández to support branch members. The shipment included sacrament cups, manuals, hymnbooks, and administrative materials to allow the branch to operate after the total destruction of the Church-owned house used for meetings.
- The Area Presidency met with Rodrigo Hinzpeter, Chile's new interior minister, and with Cristobal Lira, the general coordinator of donations, to formally donate a shipment of tents tarps, blankets, water purification bottles, and diapers from the Church to the Chilean government. The previous government specifically requested these items. Many questions were asked about how the Church is organized and how we can respond so quickly during times of emergency. The ministers expressed a desire to have more contact with the Church in the future.
- The air shipment mentioned above was delivered from Church headquarters on Monday, March 15. The materials were offloaded and then separated by Chilean military personnel, Church employees, and young single adult volunteers. The Church kept 30% of the materials for delivery to Church members and donated the rest to the government for emergency response. The air force colonel who was present expressed gratitude for these much-needed materials and ordered that they be delivered by air shipment immediately to the refugees in the affected earthquake zone.
- The Area Presidency has visited all of the stakes and districts affected by the earthquake. Meetings were held with stake presidents, bishops, and missionaries to hear of needs and to give encouragement. The Area Presidency was impressed with the deep gratitude expressed by the leaders and members, and by the effective and faithful response by local leaders under difficult conditions.

STORIES FROM THE CHILE AREA

One of the great stories that should be told in the aftermath of the February 27 earthquake is how members across Chile demonstrated a remarkable spirit of love and service. The Relief Society sisters in many stakes produced thousands of blankets. So far 3,200 locally produced blankets have been delivered to members of the Church in the affected areas. Many more blankets are packed and ready for distribution. The sisters began work immediately after receiving word from the Area Presidency that the blankets would be necessary with colder, wetter weather approaching. By the second day after receiving word from the Area Presidency, all blanket material from every fabric store in Santiago had been purchased and placed in production.



Relief Society sisters were not the only members involved in the relief effort. Young single adults from the institutes of religion were very anxious to help their countrymen in their hour of need. They wanted a work to perform. They were assigned to collect, sort, and package clothing and nonperishable food that was pouring in from many Church units in Chile. The Area Presidency also assigned them the task of assembling 10,000 hygiene kits for use by members and nonmembers of the Church. They were quick to respond to the assignment. Hundreds of institute students wearing their “Helping Hands” vests joyfully organized to perform the assigned work and prepare the materials for distribution to those in need.



Upon hearing about the severe difficulties of so many people near the epicenter of the earthquake and the coastal area affected by the tsunami waves, the Young Men and Young Women in the city of Chill n asked their bishop to meet with them and give them work to do to relieve the suffering of their countrymen. The bishop agreed to do so and set up a meeting time but did not have a plan for what they could possibly do. They met at the church meetinghouse and there prayed together. Almost immediately after the prayer trucks began arriving from Santiago with the first loads of relief food and materials. This meetinghouse was used to stage all shipments from Santiago into the city of Concepci n. The youth were very involved over many days with unloading trucks and repacking relief goods into smaller trucks that would be used for the trip to Concepci n. Smaller trucks were necessary to drive on damaged roads and to present a lower profile, avoiding the roving gangs that were robbing and committing acts of violence in Concepci n.

A visit was made by a Seventy on Sunday, March 14 to the Paniahue Branch of the Santa Cruz District, where many Church members have suffered severe damage to their homes. A meeting was held in which gratitude was expressed for the blessings and goodness of the Lord. Their testimonies were touching in the face of personal hardships. After visiting with the leaders and individual families the visiting Seventy was invited to the kitchen in the chapel where the sisters had prepared a breakfast. They carried the food door to door through the entire neighborhood of humble homes offering breakfast to all of the children and anyone else who was hungry. Gratitude was evident on the faces of many who had insufficient food in their home. These good members have been performing this simple act of love and kindness every day since the earthquake hit. It is gratifying to see the Saints put aside their own personal challenges and attend to the welfare of those who are less fortunate.

