



**ELCA Disaster Response**  
**Evangelical Lutheran Church in America**  
God's work. Our hands.

## **JAPAN EARTHQUAKE & TSUNAMI**

# **SITUATION REPORT #1**

**March 18, 2011**

### **I. SUMMARY**

- Death Toll rises to 7,000, exceeding the 1995 Kobe earthquake
- Fuel shortages hampering distribution of much needed relief aid
- ELCA commits an initial \$240,000 to companions JELC, LWF and CWS
- Distribution of essential food and water supplies begins
- Visit <http://blogs.elca.org/disasterresponse/category/japan> for more information

### **II. SITUATION**

On March 11, one of the largest earthquakes in history with a magnitude of 9.0 struck Japan near the town of Sendai. The earthquake triggered 30-foot tsunami waves, devastating Japan's coastal areas, and sent tsunami warnings across the Pacific Ocean. The initial earthquake has been followed by more than 100 aftershocks. As of March 18, Japan's National Police Agency has confirmed 7,000 dead, overtaking the official number of dead in the 1995 Kobe earthquake. This number will rise as search and rescue efforts continue for the 10,000 people who are still missing.

While access to food, water, electricity and fuel are the most pressing needs of communities affected, local officials are also assessing the impact to new technology such as nuclear power plants, transportation and communication networks. A continued focus is on the Fukushima Daiichi nuclear plant, located in the most heavily hit area and the fear that damage sustained by the plant may lead to nuclear fallout.

According to the March 18 UNOCHA report on the situation in Japan, the number of people in evacuation centers has decreased to about 390,000 people from 430,000 reported yesterday. The media is reporting that Japanese authorities are battling to get desperately needed aid to the people in the evacuation centers. The conditions in the evacuation centers appear to be worsening due to the lack of food, water and medicine, medical staff and heating. Of particular concern are the elderly. A quarter of Japan's population is over 65 and already there are reports that 29 elderly people have died in evacuation centers as a result of being moved and the lack of medical supplies. Currently 373,748 households, almost one million people, are without power compared to yesterday when the number was 451,786 households. However, access to water continues to be a problem for 1.8 million households (4.4 million people) across 12 prefectures.

Logistics is proving to be the biggest challenge at this stage of the emergency. The Japanese authorities have mobilized a large amount of aid, including two large planes of blankets from neighboring countries, but are unable to get it to the people quickly enough. This is mostly a result of the fuel shortages due to a breakdown of six out of nine oil factories in Kanto and Tohoku areas, and a lack of transport vehicles. In the three worst-affected prefectures, Miyagi, Iwate, Fukushima, only 4.7 percent of fuel station supplies are for non-emergency vehicles. 700 additional large tankers are being mobilized in order to deliver fuel to petrol stations in the affected areas.

The Japan Evangelical Lutheran Church (JELC) has reported minimal damage to its churches in Tokyo and those near the epicenter, particularly Sendai Lutheran Church. The President and General Secretary of JELC were in Malaysia attending a Lutheran World Federation leadership conference at the time of the earthquake. The JELC's two churches located in Sendai, Sendai Lutheran Church and Tsuruguya Lutheran Church, have located most of their members. The ELCA, through its Global Mission unit, currently has 22 missionaries serving in schools and parishes of the JELC; all have been found to be safe and the ELCA is taking precautionary measures to ensure continued safety during the nuclear crisis.

### III. COORDINATED RESPONSE

The ELCA has an expansive network of global companions through which it engages in relief and rehabilitation following major international disasters. Our church's ongoing relationships – both Lutheran and ecumenical – enable us to engage swiftly and effectively with communities in need, as they recover from disasters like the earthquake and tsunami in Japan. To respond to the disaster in Japan, we are working very closely with the Japan Evangelical Lutheran Church, the Lutheran World Federation, and Church World Service in providing direct assistance to survivors of this disaster – and we'll continue to walk with them as they rebuild their lives.

On March 18, the ELCA made an initial commitment of \$240,000 to our companion's relief efforts:

- The ELCA is blessed with a deep and enduring relationship with the Japan Evangelical Lutheran Church that goes back more than a century. This relationship continues to be expressed in a strong companion synod relationship with the South Carolina Synod and ELCA's current placement of 22 missionaries in Japan. The ELCA is making available an initial \$100,000 to assist the JELC in these initial days following the earthquake/tsunami. Already, the doors of the church are open, providing food and shelter to those seeking hope amidst chaos; a supply of 5,000kg rice and 10,000 instant noodle meals and canned goods have been mobilized for delivery to the region. The JELC will be working with other Christian churches (especially Roman Catholic and Episcopalian) plus partner organizations (like Second Harvest) in areas where there are JELC congregations. Given the historical relationship with the ELCA, the JELC is suggesting to other organizations that assistance from US Lutherans be channeled through the ELCA.
- The ELCA is a member of the Lutheran World Federation, which will be coordinating the response of our global Lutheran communion. The ELCA has made an early pledge of \$40,000

to enable the LWF to offer the communion's support – including a disaster response expert from India, who has had recent experience dealing with a tsunami – to assist the JELC in planning its response for the months and likely years ahead. This individual will be on the ground in Japan next week.

- The ELCA is a member of Church World Service, which is working with the Japan Platform, a consortium of 32 Japanese non-profits, to provide a coordinated response to the basic needs of those currently living at evacuation sites. An initial \$100,000 will go to CWS from ELCA Disaster Response, towards an immediate response to 5,000 households, about 25,000 individuals, now living at 100 evacuation sites in the northeastern area of Japan – the prefectures of Miyagi, Fukushima, Iwate, Ibaragi and Tochigi. CWS will focus on evacuation sites where basic needs of food, water, sanitation, electricity and fuel are not being met. Response will include ready-to-eat food to meet calorie requirements of those living in evacuation sites. In addition, the response team will distribute sanitation kits, including napkins and soap to fill significant sanitation and hygiene "gaps." Water consumption requirements at evacuation sites will be addressed, and one potential substitute for water could include prepared green tea. Blankets, accessed from sources within the region, are being prioritized to help protect people from the cold, which is becoming an increasingly dire problem as fuel and gas supplies are running out. In order to maintain radio contact at evacuation sites, batteries will be supplied to support victims receiving vital news on nuclear and radiation related developments, information collection and communications. Gas and fuel supplies will also be provided to evacuation sites.

Additionally, the ELCA is taking precautionary measures to ensure the safety and security of missionaries serving in Japan, particularly Tokyo. The eight missionaries in Tokyo have been requested to move to the western region of Japan for their personal safety as the nuclear crisis continues to unfold.

## IV. FUNDRAISING

Those who give to shared mission support and ELCA World Hunger are already helping to fund the ongoing work in Japan and the deployment of mission personnel through ELCA Global Mission. Special needs and opportunities have arisen in response to the current crisis. The ELCA invites gifts to ELCA Disaster Response in order to continue its work in Japan.

You may provide support in the following ways:

- Give by phone at: 800-638-3522
- Donate online at: [www.elca.org/japanearthquake](http://www.elca.org/japanearthquake)
- Send checks to:  
ELCA Disaster Response  
39330 Treasury Center  
Chicago, IL 60694  
Memo: *Pacific Earthquake and Tsunami*

## V. COMMUNICATION

The week of March 14, included many communication updates about the situation in Japan found at [www.elca.org/disaster](http://www.elca.org/disaster) and elsewhere. These communications include:

- An ELCA Disaster Response e-Alert
- An updated bulletin insert
- Worship resources for this disaster
- Featured content from our companions in Japan on the ELCA Disaster Response blog found at: <http://blogs.elca.org/disasterresponse/category/japan>

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