



I. SUMMARY

- New information provides clearer picture on scale of disaster
- More than 27,500 people have been confirmed dead or remain unaccounted for
- Distribution of food and non-food relief materials continue
- ELCA's companions work cooperatively to ensure effective response
- Visit <http://blogs.elca.org/disasterresponse> for more information

II. SITUATION

Three weeks after the March 11 earthquake and tsunami we now have a much clearer picture on the impact this disaster has had on human life and infrastructure in Japan. Yokohama National University and University of Tokyo have released research results on the tsunamis that indicate the size of the tsunami was as high as 29.6 meters (~100 feet) in Ofunato City, Iwate, exceeding the previously reported record of 20 meters. Seven tsunami waves were recorded over a six hour period after the earthquake, the first and the largest 26 minutes after the earthquake. Japan's Geospatial Information Authority estimates that at least 443 square kilometers (equivalent of 53,000 football fields or five times the size of Manhattan Island) of coastline was covered by seawater. In Fukushima and Miyagi, about 68 miles of coastline was submerged and the water reached as far inland as three miles. Seawater still has not receded in about 70% of the flooded areas.

KEY FACTS

- 4th strongest earthquake worldwide since 1900
- Tsunami up to 30 meters (~100 feet) high covered 167,000 square miles of land
- 492,000 people were evacuated
- 11,600 dead and 16,450 missing to date
- 20 International Search & Rescue teams from 15 countries responded
- 17,000 homes and buildings destroyed
- 138,000 damaged
- More than 119,000 emergency service personnel responded within 8 days
- Estimated damages of \$309 billion

From UN OCHA Sitrep

While there have been significant improvements in electricity, gas and water supply, the worst affected areas still lack consistent service; sewage systems in the affected area are still not functioning. Key infrastructure such as highways, ports and airports have been almost completely restored; however, many smaller roads are still impossible to travel, cutting-off areas from receiving assistance by road. On April 1, Japan's Self Defense Force and the US military launched a three-day joint operation to recover

the bodies of people still unaccounted for in the coastal areas of Miyagi, Iwate and Fukushima. The operation does not include the 20 kilometer (~12 mile) exclusion zone around the Fukushima Nuclear Power Plant where it is believed there could be a significant number of bodies. A total of 18,000 Self Defense Force personnel and 7,000 US military personnel will participate in this search on land, at sea and from the air. Diving units from the Japan Coast Guard will also be deployed to search in rivers and flooded areas. Recovering the bodies of the missing is seen as an important step in helping the country to move on and heal.

A significant amount of focus still remains on assisting those at evacuation points. According to the April 1 UN OCHA situation report, there are currently 170,500 displaced people living in 2,230 evacuation centers in 17 prefectures. The number of people in evacuation centers is decreasing slightly whereas the number of evacuation centers has increased by 200 in the last two days. Improving the living conditions at the shelters in the most heavily affected areas is a significant priority to decrease accounts of cold and hygiene-related illnesses. According to Church World Service, around 345 schools are being used as registered evacuation sites. School is due to start at the beginning of April but with so many of the schools affected, including teachers dead or missing, it remains uncertain when classes will again begin. This potential delay in the children's education may also affect their return to the sense of normalcy that school provides. Efforts are being made to host some primary and secondary school children from affected prefectures in unaffected areas, but this relocation (and potential separation from their families) may have additional psychological effects on these children.

More than 70,000 people living within the exclusion zone around the Fukushima Daiichi Nuclear Power Plant remain in temporary shelters since being evacuated immediately after the earthquake. The Government states this evacuation will be most likely be long-term. In a related report the International Agency for Atomic Energy announced on 30 March that it found high levels of radioactivity exceeding IAEA's operational criteria for evacuation in soil sampled from a village about 40 kilometers (25 miles) northwest of the Fukushima Nuclear Power Plant. The IAEA has advised the Government of Japan to carefully assess the situation.

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 closely with the Japan Evangelical Lutheran Church (JELC), the Lutheran World Federation (LWF), and Church World Service (CWS) in providing direct assistance to survivors of this disaster – and we'll continue to walk with them as they rebuild their lives.

Immediately after the devastation JELC initiated a response and invited other Lutheran Churches to join the efforts: Japan Lutheran Church (NRK), Kinki Evangelical Lutheran Church (KELC) and West Japan Evangelical Lutheran Church (WJELC). This Lutheran cooperation is known as the Japan Lutheran

Emergency Relief (JLER). Immediately, the taskforce heading JLER developed clear roles and responsibilities for members to minimize duplication of relief efforts. The accompaniment of the LWF (Geneva and the deployment of an emergency response advisor), and the ELCA has added strength to the taskforce of JLER in areas of coordination and the facilitation of assessment and planning..

An initial shipment of relief supplies was dispatched from Tokyo on March 25 together with an advance assessment team of four persons. Their tasks included:

- Expressing solidarity with two JELC congregations in Sendai, through worship and meetings.
- Meeting with ecumenical partners (Catholic, Episcopal, etc).
- Consulting with local government and social welfare council authorities at the prefecture level.
- Visiting affected areas.

On March 28, a second shipment of relief supplies in three 4-ton trucks was sent from Tokyo containing:

1. Rice, instant soup, bananas, Miso (Japanese bean paste soup)
 - Transported to Ishinomaki City, Miyagi Prefecture, to the city's sports park.
 - Distribution responsibility: JELC
2. Rice, instant soup, banana and, Miso
 - Transported to Hanamokai City in Iwate Prefecture
 - Distribution responsibility: CCP (Campaign for Children from Palestine)
3. Rice, instant soup, bananas, Miso and water
 - Transported to Natori City, Miyagi Prefecture, to the emergency response headquarters
 - Distribution responsibility: ICA (Institute of Cultural Affairs)

In addition to the above purchased items, in-kind gifts (many of the same kinds of items - rice, Miso, crackers, instant noodles/soup) from Lutheran congregations and individuals were included in each truck.

Coordination is vitally important in any disaster, and attempts to come together at various levels have been happening in order to assess the situation, coordinate response activities among agencies, and develop strategies for response that adequately meet the needs of the affected communities. JLER has been actively engaging other faith-based and non-governmental actors to coordinate these efforts. Conversation has also taken place on the ground between JLER and CWS's local partner, the Japan Platform, to identify opportunities for cooperation.

The JLER will continue to provide weekly shipments of relief supplies to the affected area for a three-month crisis phase of their response. The JLER taskforce will be preparing a recovery strategy for possibly an additional six-month period following the crisis response to respond to gaps in the national strategy for response to the earthquake and tsunami.

IV. FUNDRAISING

As of March 25, ELCA Disaster Response has received gifts totaling more than \$750,000 for Japan Earthquake and Pacific Tsunami relief. 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. 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
- Send checks to:
ELCA Disaster Response
39330 Treasury Center
Chicago, IL 60694
Memo: *Pacific Earthquake and Tsunami*

V. COMMUNICATION

The week of March 28, included many communication updates about the situation in Japan found at www.elca.org/disaster and elsewhere. These include:

- 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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