

Southern Baptists assessing needs in wake of 8.8 Chile quake

By IMB staff

Southern Baptists are moving quickly to assess relief needs in the aftermath of an 8.8-magnitude earthquake that struck Chile at 3:34 a.m. Saturday, killing at least 82 people, collapsing buildings and setting off a tsunami.

Disaster relief specialists from South Carolina and California are on standby to respond, said Jim Brown, director of the U.S. office for the International Mission Board's primary partner in disaster relief, Baptist Global Response. A decision about what initial response is needed will be made within the next 12 hours.

The epicenter was located just 70 miles from Concepcion, a city of more than 200,000 people, the U.S. Geological Survey reported. A tsunami wave struck the Robinson Crusoe Islands, 410 miles off the Chilean coast and tsunami warnings have been issued for Hawaii, Australia, New Zealand and Asia. Chile's president, Michele Bachelet, declared a "state of catastrophe" in three central regions of the country. Several hospitals were evacuated and communications with Concepcion were knocked out.

In the capital city of Santiago, which is about 200 miles from the earthquake, IMB field personnel reported in a 5:00 a.m. e-mail that they had experienced "very scary shaking" and that electrical, telephone and water services were cut off.

IMB and BGR leadership began consulting immediately during the early morning hours after the earthquake, said Scott Holste, associate vice president for the IMB's Office of Global Strategy.

"We are evaluating damage reports as they come in and preparing initial response plans, if it is determined that a significant response is needed," Holste said. "Southern Baptists have ministry partners in Chile who will be able to help respond immediately with basic necessities."

"We know that immediate needs usually include things like food, water, shelter and medical needs," Brown said. "We have emergency response funds available to help with the crisis response. Southern Baptists always respond quickly when a disaster like this strikes. They pray and give from the heart. We're glad to know so many people who care are ready to spring into action to help people in need."

Word has been received from IMB leaders in Chile that all field personnel have been accounted for and are safe; information about the impact on the Chilean Baptist community is being sought. IMB will be monitoring developments and will issue further announcements about needs and response as more information becomes available.

Updates

- www.imb.org
- [Twitter](#) -- Use #QuakeResponse

How you can help

Pray -- Prayer is urgently needed for thousands of people in Chile whose lives have been upturned by a massive earthquake that struck in the early morning hours of Feb. 27, says an International Mission Board strategist closely tied to the area.

“We want to ask Christians everywhere to lift up people in need after this huge disaster,” said Terry Lassiter, strategist for the American Peoples affinity group. “We thank the Lord that all of our missionaries are well but there has been a very significant loss of life that is going to affect both our church community and the non-Christian community in Chile.” [Read more.](#)

For future prayer requests, also visit [CompassionNet](#).

Donate -- Donations may be directed to the Disaster Response Fund at www.gobgr.org.