

Information bulletin



International Federation
of Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies

Japan: Earthquake and tsunami

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This bulletin is being issued for information only, and reflects the current situation and details available at this time. The Japanese Red Cross Society (JRCS) has mobilized its staff and resources nation-wide and domestic donations are being received to assist affected communities. JRCS continues to warmly welcome cash contributions from Red Cross Red Crescent national societies in the spirit of solidarity after this devastating earthquake/tsunami.

Summary:

17 days after the catastrophic earthquake and tsunami devastated swathes of their country, the Japanese people continue to demonstrate their self-reliance and self help to a remarkable degree.

Japanese Red Cross Society (JRCS) staff and volunteers are providing support to many vulnerable communities across the three worst affected prefectures of Iwate, Miyagi, and Fukushima.

Emergency relief, medical services and psychosocial support form the core of this support.

JRCS is now planning how to strengthen its already impressive relief response transitioning into supporting the wider early recovery effort.



More than 50 medical teams from the Japanese Red Cross Society are still providing basic health care to survivors of the earthquake and tsunami. Here, staff visit an evacuation centre in Yamada, Iwate prefecture. Photo: Kathy Mueller/ IFRC.

[<click here for map of the affected areas; or here for detailed contact information>](#)

The situation

As of 27 March 2011, the official death toll from the disaster stands at 10,804, with 2,776 people reported injured. A total of 16,244 people are registered as missing, while 242,881 people are displaced and/or evacuated. The displaced individuals and families are sheltered in 2,038 evacuation centres in Tohoku and Kanto regions, mostly in schools and other public buildings.

18,649 houses are reported to be destroyed and another 116,835 houses damaged. A total of 26,646 people have thus far been rescued.

Evacuees are enduring bitterly cold weather with several falls of sleet and snow. These conditions are also hampering emergency relief efforts. Priority needs are fuel, prefabricated houses, sanitation materials, clothing, medicines and household appliances. Fuel (for heating and transport) in particular, is reported as the pressing

issue. A JRCS/IFRC team just back from the affected area report about half of the petrol stations closed and of the half that were open, many were serving only emergency and other priority vehicles (including JRCS vehicles). North of Sendai, those petrol stations open had long queues. Elsewhere though, fuel is reported to be reaching some areas, with some being brought in via train.

At night, affected areas are blanketed in darkness because of power cuts. In the day time significant progress can be seen in terms of clearing roads of debris but beyond the access routes affected areas are a scene of twisted metal – more akin to a junkyard – than the thriving communities of 17 days ago. The smell of smoke still hangs in the air.

The JRCS/IFRC team commented on the tremendous dignity of the affected communities. However, one medical personnel commented that this stoicism may hide a deeper shock that is being suppressed. A lot of survivor guilt has been observed by trained personnel. People were quick to share smiles with each other and they tend not to show one's own grief and suffering easily at this stage.



One woman takes an up-close look at the damage in her town of Kiri Kiri, in Iwate Prefecture in northeastern Japan. Photo: Kathy Mueller/IFRC.

The enormity of the scale of the task to rebuild whole communities in several areas is daunting.

At one evacuation centre boxes of donations arrived; orderly queues formed and residents returned items that were not really needed or entirely appropriate. There was no panic-induced hoarding.

For three days after the disaster, Ishinomaki Red Cross hospital (just north of Sendai in Miyagi prefecture) ran entirely off generator power. The Red Cross hospital at Morioka (Iwate prefecture in the far north) has only recently had its main power restored, having to rely on generators for several days. People requiring urgent operations at Ishinomaki hospital are being transported north by helicopter to other hospitals.

Red Cross personnel spoken to at the above hospitals have received no medical enquiries in terms of the threat of radiation. In discussions, affected people were solely focused on the issue of rebuilding their lives and livelihoods and did not mention the situation at the Fukushima Daiichi nuclear plant.

The evacuation centres visited are receiving adequate food (three meals per day) and water. When initially asked people said they did not need anything and were concerned with support being provided to their fellow evacuees. Digging a little deeper, people indicated additional support would be good in relation to the lack of heating as well as personal items - such as under shirts and underwear - to make their time more comfortable.

In the centres the team mainly met with elderly. However, there was information that the younger adults were returning to work or to their homes during the day.

Psychosocial support is becoming an increasing need; many people are still in a state of shock, with some expecting to see their missing family members walk through the door. While there is wide evidence of need, people are very resolved and focusing on getting through the current situation. This will become a key component in supporting the recovery of the affected populations.

To date, 129 landslides have occurred and four dykes are reported collapsed. Damage to roads, bridges and railroads are reported in 2,127 places. Main highways are mostly now reopened. Airports in the affected areas have reopened except for Sendai, which is used only for aid flights.

Power cuts continue to affect 200,000 households; gas supplies are off in 359,079 households; while water supplies are cut in at least 652,254 households across ten prefectures. Gas shortages are causing problems in terms of both heating and transports/logistics.

The government has scaled up their relief effort as residual needs persist. 106,000 personnel from the Self Defence Force, 8,481 from the police force, and 4,600 teams (19,000 people) from the Fire and Disaster

Management Agency have been deployed. The government have also deployed 23 psychosocial support teams.

Construction of prefabricated houses with water and electricity supply has started. It is planned to build more than 30,000 units in two months. At the same time, evacuation arrangements for affected households - that is to let them stay in a vacant room of public apartments as emergency shelter - has been made among local governments all around the country.

Red Cross Red Crescent action

Strategic thinking

JRCS continues to perform admirably in its mandated role as auxiliary to the government during disasters, that is: providing medical relief and psychosocial support; distributing relief supplies; ongoing provision of full blood services; and the collection of voluntary donations.

Discussions – both within the National Society and with various authorities – are ongoing and set to intensify around building on this excellent performance over the first 17 days of the operation. This will reflect on consolidating existing performance as well as possible future areas of focus.

Along with a current relief plan for the earthquake- and tsunami-affected population, a mid-term recovery plan is being discussed. This plan – along with discussions around the direction and content of the approach in early recovery – will form the basis for the use of internationally raised funds. The coming two weeks should see gathering momentum and dialogue in addressing the residual emergency needs and ongoing early recovery.

In terms of the recovery phase the focus is shifting towards providing household commodities for those families that will be housed in prefabricated houses. The other area of discussion is on investment in community recovery, linking in with the overall plan set by the authorities.

A senior JRCS team returned from the field after a series of high level discussions with the secretaries-general of prefecture chapters (ie. Miyagi, Fukushima and Iwate) as well prefecture governors. The meetings focused on coordination of recovery plans. A meeting with the three prefecture chapter secretaries-generals in Tokyo scheduled shortly should see progress on joint recovery planning. A management counterpart link has been established between the JRCS prefecture secretaries-general and the prefecture authorities' head of medical and social welfare. One JRCS headquarters representative remains in each prefecture branch in a liaison role.

Domestically, JRCS has received donations of approximately USD400 million (CHF 367.8 million) domestically to date. This is double the amount collected in the first two weeks after the Kobe earthquake in 1995. It is projected that the JRCS will receive over USD 1 billion (CHF 919.6 million) domestically.

A teleconference of fundraisers brought together JRCS, IFRC and 17 partner national society representatives. The JRCS appreciated partner national societies continued efforts in collecting funds as the needs are extensive, particularly in relation to the future recovery efforts.

Meanwhile, the JRCS president who is also president of IFRC received the European Union (EU) commissioner for humanitarian aid on 25 March. The EU commissioner expressed her condolences to the people of Japan and the solidarity of the EU at this time.

Operational update

JRCS has deployed 397 medical missions involving more than 2,400 staff. The National Society has distributed more than 125,000 blankets, 25,000 emergency relief packs (including radios, torches and emergency health advice), and 11,000 sleeping kits.

Medical teams have been conducting rapid assessments in the affected areas as well as providing first aid, medical and psychosocial support services in government-established evacuation centres. The JRCS teams have a significant role in supporting the local health facilities as they have mobile clinics serving more remote and hard-to-reach areas. For patients severely injured, the JRCS domestic emergency response unit (DERU) also assisted in their evacuation by helicopters to referral hospitals. Medical teams and Red Cross hospitals in affected areas are also treating patients.

In addition to the physical impact of the disasters to the affected population, JRCS recognises that the multiple disasters have a strong psychological impact especially among children. JRCS has assigned a trained psychosocial support (PSP) provider in almost all deployed medical teams. The national society has 2,369 nurses who are trained and ready to provide PSP services. In addition, some PSP teams were deployed to

conduct assessments in the affected areas, as well as to provide support. PSP teams are also supporting medical teams in conducting health checks, such as taking blood pressure readings of people in evacuation centres. There is some concern over a lack of medicine for the treatment of various chronic conditions, including diabetes and hypertension.

In the immediate aftermath of the disaster, JRCS dispatched relief items from pre-positioned stocks to reach the most vulnerable people in various evacuation centres. Relief dispatched or on the way as of 27 March includes:

	Blankets	Emergency relief kit	Sleeping kit
Miyagi	82,510	14,676	6,000
Iwate	-	10,470	5,000
Fukushima	16,020	-	-
Ibaraki	3,000	-	-
Yamagata	9,000	-	-
Tochigi	15,000	-	-
Total	125,530	25,146	11,000

Each emergency relief kit consists of a portable radio, flashlight, wrapping cloth, booklet on post-disaster health knowledge, etc.

Each sleeping kit consists of a sleeping mats, pillow, eye-cover, earplug, slippers, and socks, etc.

Source: Japanese Red Cross Society, www.jrc.or.jp



Access to affected areas is improving, allowing Japanese Red Cross workers to deliver relief items to survivors. Here, staff unload a shipment of emergency household kits at a school gymnasium, which is now being used as a warehouse to store donated items. Photo: Kathy Mueller/ IFRC.

Restoring family links

A [website](#) (in six languages: Japanese, English, Korean, Chinese, Spanish and Portuguese) supporting restoring family links (RFL) has 5,619 registrations to date, with 1,432 from Japanese people. Trainings are ongoing in JRCS headquarters, supported by ICRC, to scale up capacity in this service.

Logistics

The road network is improving every day and most evacuation centres are accessible by one transport means or another. The fuel supply, while improving from the early days, is tightly rationed and hampering full access. Up to 700 tanker trucks have been mobilized from other parts of the country to ease the situation. Sendai airport is operational but has inadequate warehousing for relief needs- the World Food Programme (WFP) have been requested to assist in improving warehousing.

Japan has the most sophisticated and lean supply chain systems in the world; yet due to the disruption in supply chain sources many of which were concentrated in the east as well as significant shifts in demand patterns had an impact on the supply of certain essential items such as bottled water and fuel. There are signs of these disruptions being fixed but the situation is still challenging.

A logistics concept of operations that sets out a methodology to strengthen and enhance JRCS logistics capacity has been shared with the National Society but has yet to be discussed in detail. A more detailed plan of action to support this concept is currently being drawn up. This includes enhancing logistics infrastructure, information flows, creating a logistics hub, shipping by sea/air options and increasing warehouses in the field. The national distribution network for relief supplies is based on the prefecture organizational set-up and combines several elements of local government, civil, communal and Red Cross representation.

Communications

Domestic media attention seems to be equally focused on the aftermath of the earthquake/ tsunami and the concern over Fukushima Daiichi nuclear power plant. In the English language *Japan Times* daily, radiation readings – which remain below official health warning levels - are printed along with discussions over present and future power shortages. International media attention has shifted significantly to the tumultuous events in the Middle East.

The IFRC communications delegate is writing an aid worker's diary that is currently featured on the BBC website [here](#). The communications delegate has been travelling with the JRCS communications team to accompany a Euronews team in the affected area.

A two-member Norwegian Red Cross media team travelled on 27 March with the JRCS communications focal point to the affected areas of the Miyagi and Iwate prefectures. They are due to return to Tokyo on 30 March. Their material will be made available to Red Cross Red Crescent partners.

IFRC support

IFRC continues to have a small liaison presence in JRCS headquarters. The principal role of this support is to provide guidance on communications, logistics, reporting and partner relations to JRCS management. An overall support plan for the next three months in the above areas is taking shape and will be agreed with JRCS in the coming week.

Coordination

IFRC represented the excellent work of JRCS at a United Nations Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs (UNOCHA) coordination meeting. The United Nations Disaster Assessment and Coordination (UNDAC) team has closed down; the current OCHA presence will be until 6 April. UN agencies are seeking to support 'modestly' and 'appropriately' and as 'one UN'. WFP, at the request of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, was mobilized to improve storage capacity for the various Japanese non-governmental organizations operating in the affected area. WFP is doing assessments and has pulled in Japanese logisticians from its operations elsewhere in the world to support.

Security

Radiation levels in Tokyo remain well below official levels of concern in terms of health, as do those outside the government imposed exclusion zone. The situation at the Fukushima Daiichi nuclear power plant remains of concern. The Japanese prime minister, in his first televised address for the week, said: 'The current situation is still very unpredictable. We're working to stop the situation from worsening. We need to continue to be extremely vigilant.'

Tokyo remains subdued and quiet. Nights are chilly; people are stoic and perhaps a little wary. Shortages of bottled water in the central area are noticeable.

How we work

All International Federation assistance seeks to adhere to the [Code of Conduct for the International Red Cross and Red Crescent Movement and Non-Governmental Organizations \(NGO's\) in Disaster Relief](#) and is committed to the [Humanitarian Charter and Minimum Standards in Disaster Response \(Sphere\)](#) in delivering assistance to the most vulnerable.

The IFRC's vision is to inspire, encourage, facilitate and promote at all times all forms of humanitarian activities by National Societies, with a view to preventing and alleviating human suffering, and thereby contributing to the maintenance and promotion of human dignity and peace in the world.

The IFRC's work is guided by [Strategy 2020](#) which puts forward three strategic aims:

1. Save lives, protect livelihoods, and strengthen recovery from disaster and crises.
2. Enable healthy and safe living.
3. Promote social inclusion and a culture of non-violence and peace.

Contact information

For further information related to this operation please contact:

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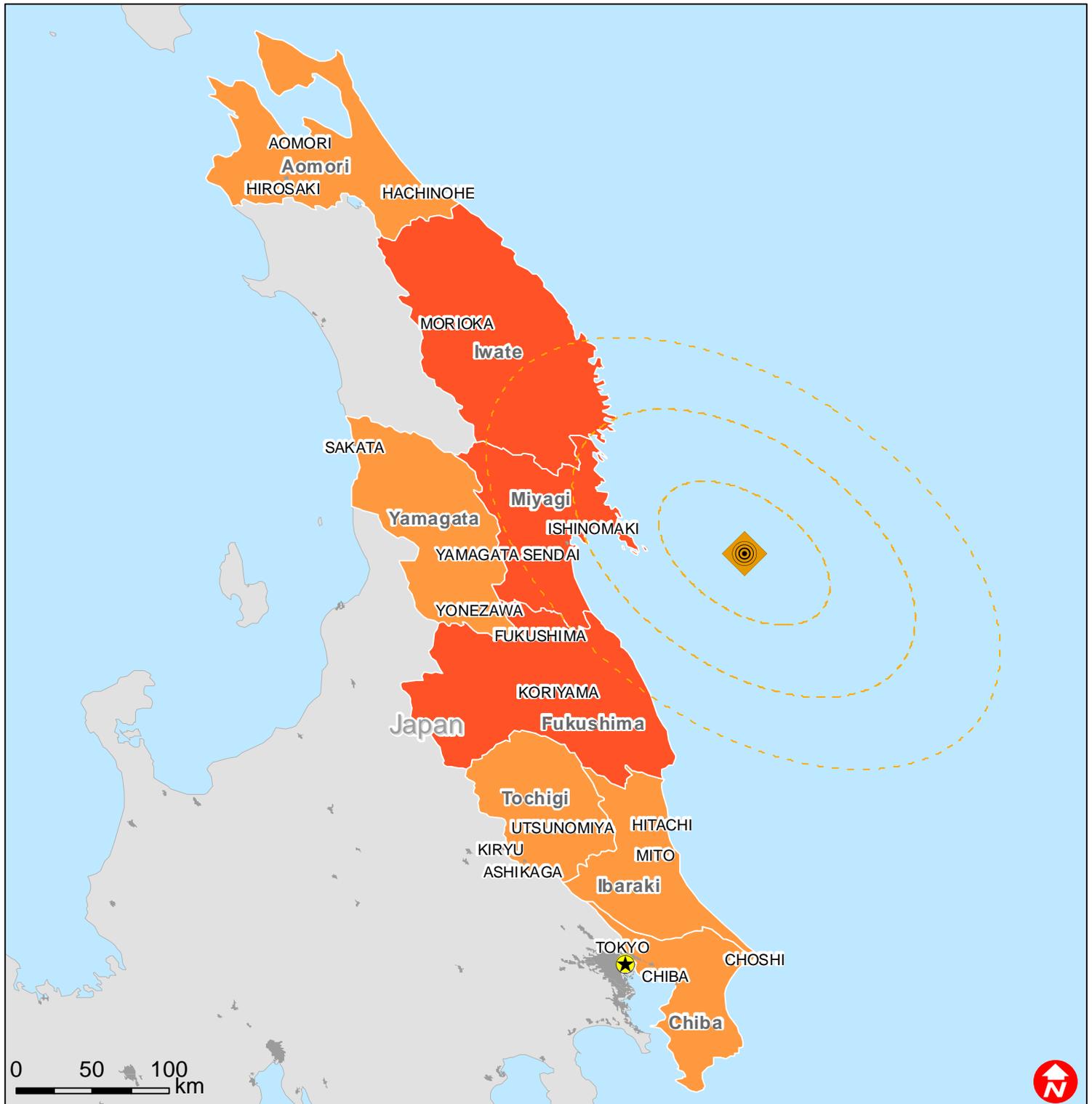
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[<map of affected areas below; click here to return to the title page>](#)



Japan: Earthquake and tsunami



- 9.0 earthquake
- 50-100-150 km lines
- Affected prefectures
- Most affected prefectures
- Main built up areas