

6:15 p.m. (Central Time, USA)

Dear friends,

As you may have heard by now, a massive earthquake has struck in an area among the Samoan Islands. The Samoan Islands are comprised of the two nations of American Samoa and Samoa. Many of you have tried to contact us by phone, email, etc., so we wanted to get this brief report to share some facts with you. Details are very sketchy at this point, and so the following report is subject to further update. Also, the information that we are sharing with you at this time is only reporting on American Samoa. As soon as we can confirm information from Samoa, we will update you.

First, at this time it appears that members of the church in American Samoa are okay – again, we do not have any update on members of the church in Samoa, but we hope to obtain that soon.

Second, the earthquake was large...reports have placed it at 7.9 to 8.3. Our radio station in American Samoa (KULA FM 95.1) received EAS alerts (emergency alert system) within minutes of the strike and quickly relayed the alerts to residents in the territory. Tsunami waves followed the earthquake and it has been confirmed that there has been extensive damage caused by these waves in American Samoa. It has also been reported that there is loss of life and those who are injured. Local authorities (Red Cross, Homeland Security, other agencies) are working to follow-up on residents. Just a few minutes ago it was reported that 28 deaths were confirmed and there were those injured as well. Again, at this exact time, officials in both countries are working to help those affected.

Third, we are sending you a report that has been provided by FOX News, and we will be writing again shortly to provide additional updates.

Thank you for your continued prayers.

**In Christ we live and serve,
Randy and Sharon English**

Tsunami Strikes American Samoa After 8.3-Magnitude Quake

Tuesday , September 29, 2009

PAGO PAGO, American Samoa —

A powerful earthquake with a magnitude of up to 8.3 struck in the South Pacific between Samoa and American Samoa around dawn Tuesday, sending terrified residents fleeing for higher ground as a tsunami swept ashore, flattening at least one village.

Samoan officials report an unspecified number of deaths and injuries.

Officials said they were checking reports of fatalities, including people being swept away from coastal communities, but communications and power outages were hampering rescue efforts.

The quake hit at 6:48 a.m. Tuesday midway between the two island groups. In Apia, the Samoan capital, families reported shaking that lasted for up to three minutes.

The U.S. Geological Service, which estimated the magnitude at 8.0, said the quake struck 20 miles below the ocean floor, 120 miles from American Samoa and 125 miles from Samoa, with a 5.6-magnitude aftershock 20 minutes later.

The Pacific Tsunami Warning Center put the quake's magnitude at 8.3 and issued a general alert for the South Pacific region, from American Samoa to New Zealand. It said there were indications a tsunami wave could be "destructive" along some coastlines. Several hours away from the epicenter, Hawaii was put under a tsunami watch that later was downgraded to an advisory.

American Samoa Gov. Togiola Tulafono was at his Honolulu office assessing the situation but was having difficulty getting information, said Filipp Ilaoa, deputy director of the office. Ilaoa could not confirm any deaths or injuries.

"There is some water damage to residences," Ilaoa said. "To what extent and how much, and how many villages are effected, that is a mystery at this time."

In Samoa, waves washed cars and houses from villages along the south coast into the sea "and out to the reef," Radio Polynesia reporter Jonat ui Lutfoga told New Zealand's National Radio. There were reports that several people were missing, but police said they had no confirmation.

New Zealander Graeme Ansell said the beach village of Sau Sau Beach Fale was leveled.

"It was very quick. The whole village has been wiped out," Ansell told National Radio from a hill near Samoa's capital, Apia. "There's not a building standing. We've all clambered up hills, and one of our party has a broken leg. There will be people in a great lot of need 'round here."

Schools and businesses were closed, with the Samoan capital virtually deserted with thousands of people reportedly clustered on nearby hills.

"Our house has been taken by the tsunami and we have lost everything," Teresa Sulili Dusi told National Radio, adding that "everything dropped on the floor and we thought the house was going to go down as well. Thank God, it didn't." Along with neighbors, they fled to high ground.

A five-foot tsunami wave swept into Pago Pago, capital of American Samoa, shortly after the earthquake, sending sea water surging inland about 100 yards before receding, leaving some cars and debris stuck in mud. Electricity outages were reported, and telephone lines were jammed.

The staff of the port ran to higher ground, and police soon came by, telling residents to get inland. Several students were seen ransacking a gas station/convenience store.

In Fagatogo, water reached the waterfront town's meeting field and covered portions of the main highway, which also was plagued by rock slides.

In Samoa, the powerful quake jolted people awake.

"It was pretty strong; it was long and lasted at least two minutes," one resident told local radio.

"It's the strongest I have felt, and we ran outside. You could see all the trees and houses were shaking," he said.

Another resident, Dean Phillips, said the southern coast of Upolu island had been struck by the tsunami.

"The police are sending everybody up to high ground," he said.

Local media said they had reports of some landslides in the Solosolo region of the main Samoan island of Upolu and damage to plantations in the countryside outside Apia.

There were no immediate reports of injury or serious damage from local emergency services, but people reported cracks in some homes and items tossed from shelves.

The Pacific Tsunami Warning Center in Honolulu issued a tsunami warning for numerous islands in the Pacific, including the Samoas, the Cook Islands, Tonga, Fiji, New Zealand, French Polynesia and Palmyra Island.

The center posted a tsunami watch for Hawaii, Vanuatu, the Marshall Islands, Solomon Island, Johnston Island, New Caledonia, Papua New Guinea, Wake Island, Midway Island and Pitcairn.

In New Zealand, a tsunami alert was issued by national Civil Defense, and the nation's national emergency center was activated.

The earthquake and tsunami were big, but not on the same large scale of the 2004 Indonesian tsunami that killed more than 150,000 across Asia the day after Christmas in 2004, said tsunami expert Brian Atwater of the U.S. Geological Survey in Seattle.

The 2004 earthquake was at least 10 times stronger than the 8.0 to 8.3 measurements being reported for Tuesday's quake, Atwater said. It's also a different style of earthquake than the one that hit in 2004.

The tsunami hit American Samoa about 25 minutes after the quake, which is similar to the travel time in 2004, Atwater said. The big difference is there were more people in Indonesia at risk than in Samoa.