

Emergency Operations Center Situation Report #2 Chile Earthquake

GENERAL OVERVIEW

- The massive 8.8 magnitude earthquake that struck Chile in the early hours of Saturday, 27 February, has now claimed at least 708 lives, according to government officials. The death toll is expected to continue to rise as communications are restored with the most affected areas.
- The quake's major impact was on infrastructure. An estimated 500,000 homes have been seriously damaged. It is believed that adobe structures will be most affected and indigenous populations most at risk. Access to health services will be a major challenge.
- A significant number of 'silent areas' (no information on status) exist. Over the next 24-48 hours more accurate information on the extent of damage in rural, isolated areas should be available.
- The earthquake generated some tsunami activity. State television quoted emergency officials as saying that 350 people were killed in the coastal town of Constitución, Chile, which was hit by the tsunami. In addition, in the coastal city of Concepción (hard hit by the earthquake itself), several hundred people may have been washed away by the tsunami. The threat appears to have passed and the Pacific Tsunami Warning Center called off the warning on Sunday morning.
- The President of Chile, Dr. Michelle Bachelet, has stated that the government of Chile is identifying areas that will require international aid (among others, field hospitals and electric generators for hospitals).



HEALTH SITUATION

- In the Northern region of Chile, from Arica to Valparaíso, the health network continues to function normally and no major damage has been reported.
- Hospitals continue to function in the Santiago metropolitan area. Non-structural damage occurred in some facilities and patients were evacuated as a preventive measure. However, an initial assessment revealed no major structural failures, and patients were moved back inside the facility as clean up began.
- The most serious problems have occurred in southern Chile, where six hospitals collapsed and two others were damaged severely and left unable to function. See map on page 3 for an update on the status of hospitals.
- Damage to sophisticated hospital equipment must be carefully assessed. For example, PAHO/WHO's experience with other earthquakes (even those of lesser magnitude) has shown that radiotherapy units can lose geometric precision and that this is not always readily apparent.
- Chile's Ministry of Health has informed that:

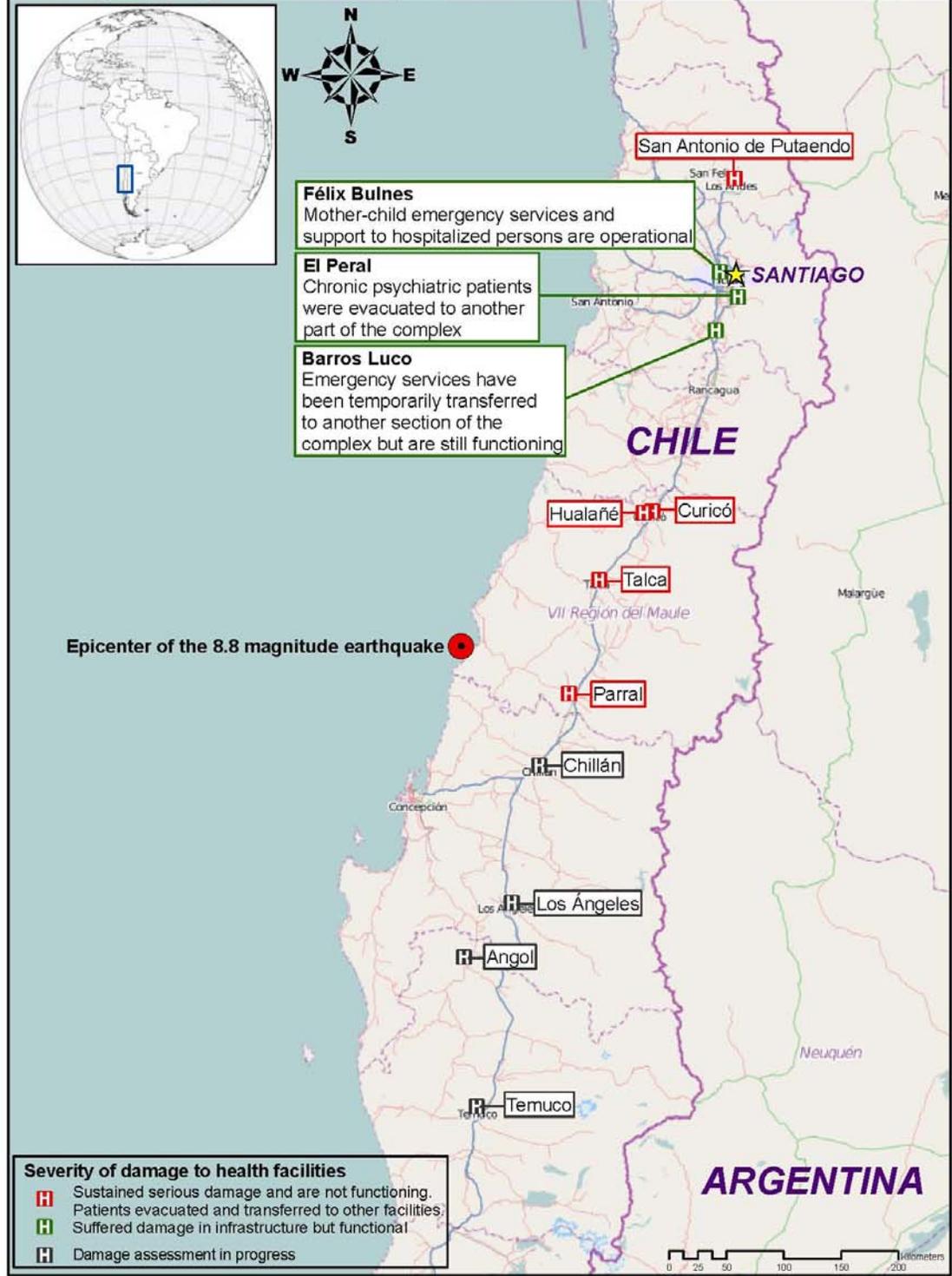
- four Chilean Air Force field hospitals are being set up with the capacity for 50-60 patients each, and there may be a need for additional temporary facilities to fill the gap left by the damaged facilities;
- there is currently a shortage of health personnel and therefore all staff are requested to report to work wherever possible; and
- everyone who needs medical assistance or health care is receiving it at this time.

PAHO/WHO RESPONSE

- Chile's Ministry of Health and the National Emergency Office of the Ministry of the Interior (*Oficina Nacional de Emergencias del Ministerio del Interior / ONEMI*) are very well-organized and have significant experience in disaster preparedness, readiness and response. PAHO has daily meetings on the ground with the Ministry of Health and regular contact with ONEMI.
- PAHO/WHO is supporting the government of Chile by contacting Member States in the Americas to determine the availability of field hospitals and generators and coordinate their deployment.
- A PAHO/WHO disaster management expert arrived today in Chile to support the PAHO/WHO Country Office. He will become part of a Ministry of Health-led assessment of the status of health facilities in the affected area. Two additional disaster managers are on standby and ready to be mobilized as required. A technical information specialist will also arrive in Santiago tomorrow to support information management needs.
- The PAHO/WHO Country Office in Santiago sustained damage and cannot be reoccupied until a structural assessment is completed. In the meantime, PAHO/WHO will continue to operate on the premises of the Economic Commission for Latin America and the Caribbean (ECLAC) in Santiago.
- The PAHO/WHO Health Emergency Response Team, with its roster of 80+ trained specialists in a wide variety of health disciplines, is on standby as the situation of external support is assessed.

Contact the PAHO EOC at +1 202 974 3399 or eoc@paho.org.
This report and others are online at www.paho.org/disasters

Health Facilities in Chile Affected by the Earthquake of 27 February 2010. Updated: February 28, 2010.



Generated by PAHO/WHO
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