

Administration of Barack H. Obama, 2010

Remarks on the Earthquake in Chile

February 27, 2010

Good morning, everybody. Earlier today a devastating earthquake struck the nation of Chile, affecting millions of people. This catastrophic event was followed by multiple aftershocks and has prompted tsunami warnings across the Pacific Ocean. Earlier today I was briefed by my national security team on the steps that we're taking to protect our own people and to stand with our Chilean friends.

Early indications are that hundreds of lives have been lost in Chile, and the damage is severe. On behalf of the American people, Michelle and I send our deepest condolences to the Chilean people. The United States stands ready to assist in the rescue and recovery efforts, and we have resources that are positioned to deploy should the Chilean Government ask for our help. Chile is a close friend and partner of the United States, and I've reached out to President Bachelet to let her know that we will be there for her should the Chilean people need assistance and our hearts go out to the families who may have lost loved ones.

We're also preparing for a tsunami that could reach American shores later today, particularly in Hawaii, American Samoa, and Guam. A tsunami warning is in place, and people have been alerted to evacuate coastal areas. I urge citizens to listen closely to the instructions of local officials, who will have the full support of the Federal Government as they prepare for a potential tsunami and recover from any damage that may be caused.

I also urge our citizens along the west coast to be prepared as well, as there may be dangerous waves and currents throughout the day. Again, the most important thing that you can do is to carefully heed the instructions of your State and local officials.

Once again, we've been reminded of the awful devastation that can come at a moment's notice. We can't control nature, but we can and must be prepared for disaster when it strikes. In the hours ahead, we'll continue to take every step possible to prepare our shores and protect our citizens. And we will stand with the people of Chile as they recover from this terrible tragedy.

Thank you very much, everybody.

NOTE: The President spoke at 1:48 p.m. in the Rose Garden at the White House. In his remarks, he referred to President Michelle Bachelet Jeria of Chile. The Office of the Press Secretary also released a Spanish language transcript of these remarks.

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