

# Baptist partners in Japan ready to respond to earthquake damage

A 7.6 magnitude earthquake hit western Japan on Jan. 1 – several aftershocks have since followed. It is reportedly the most serious and deadliest earthquake since those that hit the country in 2015 and 2016. As many as 55 are confirmed dead while rescue efforts are ongoing; many still remain without cell phone service, water, electric and other utilities.

Coy Webb, crisis response director of Southern Baptist's Send Relief stated, "We have partners on the ground assessing the situation in Japan. At this time Send Relief is not responding as our assistance has not been deemed needed." Send Relief is the compassion ministry of the International Mission Board and the North American Mission Board.

Webb noted, "Japan is a little different from other countries. They are very self-sufficient and don't always want outside help." Send Relief was active in helping with the 2011 earthquake and tsunami response. Webb says they are ready to help now if a request is made.

Toshitaka Katada, a University of Tokyo professor specializing in disasters, told the Associated Press, "There is probably no people on earth other than Japanese who are so disaster-ready." He added, "Japan is frequently hit by earthquakes because of its location along the 'Ring of Fire,' an arc of volcanoes and fault lines in the Pacific Basin."

"This is far from over," Katada noted.

A major tsunami warning was issued quickly but was soon downgraded to an advisory and was been canceled, Reuters reported. This is the first such warning since the earthquake-

generated tsunami of 2011 that killed nearly 20,000 people and caused a nuclear meltdown at the Fukushima power plant.

In Wajima City, more than 200 buildings have reportedly been damaged or burned down, CNN reported. At least 25 buildings collapsed and people are trapped in several. Roads in the area are damaged, hampering rescue efforts. As many as 500 people were reportedly stranded at the damaged Noto Airport.

At Tokyo's Haneda Airport, a Japan Airlines plane burst into flames on Tuesday (Jan. 2) after being struck on the runway by a coast guard plane. All 379 passengers and crew on the Japan Airlines plane escaped with only a few minor injuries. Five crew on the coast guard flight were killed and the pilot is in critical condition. The coast guard flight was part of the rescue response for the communities affected by the earthquake.

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*EDITOR'S NOTE – This story was written by Stephen R. Clark and originally published by The Baptist Paper.*