

Tzu Chi Japan Opens Relief Centre after Catastrophic Earthquake

Written by Tzu Chi Foundation
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The foundation's Tokyo branch has opened a relief centre to help those affected by the biggest earthquake in the history of Japan. Registering 8.9 on the Richter scale, the quake struck off the eastern coast of northeast Japan at 2.46 p.m. local time on March 11. It set off a tsunami that surged over the coast, leaving hundreds people dead and destroying houses, cars, factories and crops.

The centre, on the branch's first floor, opened at 6.30 p.m. on Friday, less than four hours after the quake. It is providing people with snacks, an Internet service to contact their loved ones, a place to rest and sleep and comfort for those in shock. The volunteers have supplied 500 items to those who were trapped on the streets of Tokyo and unable to go home: two spent the night in the centre because they lived too far away. More than 200 people have made use of the Internet service. Five visitors from Kaohsiung in southern Taiwan were unable to return home because their flight was cancelled; without sufficient money for another ticket on next Tuesday, they asked the foundation for help.

The volunteers also checked the safety of their fellow members in the affected areas. All those in Tokyo, Kanagawa and Kansai reported in safely. But it was impossible to contact those close to the epicenter of the quake, in Utsunomiya and Gunma and Yamanashi prefectures. The volunteers will continue to try to make contact with them. Through the Internet, they contacted Japanese foundations and other related people to convey the deep concern of Master Cheng Yen.



At the foundation's headquarters in Hualien, an emergency command center was established on March 11 and held a video conference with the Japan branch to ask what aid was needed. The headquarters has prepared 50 tons of instant rice and 17,000 environmentally friendly blankets; it has contacted the airlines about shipping these goods to the areas affected by the quake.

During the daily meeting of volunteers on Saturday morning, [Master Cheng Yen](#) asked everyone to pray for Japan. She emphasized the importance of prudence and sincerity, a spirit of repentance and keeping to a vegetarian diet.