

## Tzu Chi Sets Up Relief Center in New Zealand

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Tzu Chi volunteers in New Zealand have set up an emergency relief centre to help the people of Christchurch, hit by the country's worst earthquake in 80 years, which has left more than 75 dead and several hundred missing. The volunteers are liaising closely with the foundation's headquarters in Hualien on the best way to help.

The earthquake, registering 6.3 on the Richter scale, struck at 12:51pm on February 22, with its epicenter just 10 kilometers southeast of the city. Over the next two hours, there were two more quakes, of 5.6 and 5.5, followed by dozens of aftershocks. Since it was a 'shallow' earthquake, only five kilometers below the ground, the impact was especially severe; it came at the worst time, when the offices and shops in the city were crowded with people. It brought down dozens of buildings, cut power supplies to 80 per cent of the city, burst water pipes which caused flooding in the roads and closed the city's international airport. The city government told people to evacuate damaged buildings and move to safe areas.

The earthquake was more serious than one that struck the city in September last year. New Zealand Prime Minister John Key flew immediately to the city: he said that February 22 was the 'blackest day' in the country's history. Most of the buildings in the city were not built to withstand such a quake.

When she heard the news, [Master Cheng Yen](#) was deeply concerned. She said that, in the face of such natural disasters, everyone should raise their awareness and pray with the deepest sincerity for those affected by the disaster. She is in close contact with the foundation's volunteers in New Zealand over how best to deliver aid to the people of Christchurch. The volunteers are based in Auckland, the country's largest city on the tip of North Island, 1,000 kilometers from Christchurch, on the east side of South Island. They felt nothing of the quake and learn of it from the media. Once they have worked out a detailed plan, they will deliver the aid to Christchurch at the earliest opportunity.