

# Natural disaster in Japan

March 2011



## The situation

On 11 March 2011, an 8.9 magnitude earthquake struck Japan's main island, Honshu, with the epicentre located approximately 125km east of the city of Sendai, situated on Honshu's east coast. In the immediate aftermath of the quake, casualties and significant property damage were reported in various areas of central and northern Honshu, while the tremor was also felt in the capital, Tokyo, located some 370km from the epicentre. More than 9,000 people died, with 14,000 still missing (as of April 2011). The earthquake destroyed over 48,000 buildings and caused significant damage to other infrastructure, including roads and railways.

As a result of the earthquake, a series of tsunamis, some of which reached as high as ten metres, caused further damage to the eastern coast of Honshu island, with significant damage being reported in Sendai and a number of other nearby towns.

Furthermore, dozens of aftershocks measuring between 5.0 and 7.1 in magnitude were reported in the region, which, together with bad weather conditions, made rescue operations extremely challenging. All of these events also led to major transport problems.

## Assistance

red24 immediately sent out alerts for the earthquake and the resultant tsunami warnings, and then amended the travel advisory and risk ratings for the country. red24 also provided clients with regular in-depth reports on the developing situation in Japan.



*Rail and metro services are running limited services; taxi services in the city, although severely overburdened, are available. Persons in the affected area should brace for aftershocks for the short-term, and clients are advised to defer travel to the Miyagi prefecture due to the ongoing seismic activity in the region. Clients on Honshu island should avoid all coastal areas at this time and are advised to move away from low-lying areas.*

red24 acted proactively throughout the situation, sending emails to clients who were listed as being in the country. These clients responded over the following 48 hours, confirming their safety and wellbeing. red24's 24/7 Crisis Response Management (CRM) Centre in Cape Town provided clients with SMS updates, emails and verbal assistance, including 20 briefs to clients who wanted advice on travelling or residing in certain areas of Japan. One of these clients was a mother wanting to visit her children in

Onishi town, Gunma prefecture, and Niseko, Hokkaido, respectively. Upon calling the CRM, she was connected to an Analyst and Security Specialist, who gave her a verbal briefing about the situation in Japan, as well as advice on the specific destinations.

Since the earthquake and tsunami had caused severe damage in several parts of Honshu island, clients contacted red24 for advice and assistance on transport options. While most airports in Japan were re-opened shortly after the earthquake, railways and roads were not fixed as rapidly. red24 provided assistance to clients, making sure that they had reached their destination safely through regular calls. Other assistance involved the rebooking of flights.



*A nuclear emergency situation has been declared in north eastern Japan following reports that a cooling reactor at the Fukushima nuclear plant suffered mechanical difficulties. Authorities have confirmed that radiation has leaked from four reactors of the Fukushima Daiichi nuclear plant on Honshu island. red24*

*advises that travellers defer all travel to Honshu island at this time as a precaution.*

The severe earthquake and the following tsunamis caused severe damage at the Fukushima Daiichi nuclear power plant, resulting in an explosion at the number 1 reactor on 12 April, followed by explosions in the number 2 and 3 reactors on 14 and 15 April, as well as a fire in the number 4 reactor. These incidents increased the danger of nuclear radiation and a state of nuclear emergency was declared; an evacuation zone was established for persons within 20km of the Fukushima Daiichi nuclear power plant and more than 70,000 people were subsequently evacuated.

red24 continued to send out alerts to clients with updates relating to the earthquake, including safety advice on issues relating to the nuclear radiation risk and updated emergency measures. red24 provided updates on the situation, together with the offer of verbal assistance if required, and also continued to provide on-the-ground security support.