Adventists respond to New Zealand quake

Posted: 22 Feb 2011 09:00 PM PST

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At least 65 people are known to have been killed, and another 100 are trapped in collapsed buildings, the New Zealand Herald reported. Unlike the 7.1-magnitude quake, which hit the same area last September, this temblor struck closer to downtown Christchurch, and in midday, when office workers and shoppers were abundantly present.

The denomination's Sanitarium Health Food Company in Papanui has been asked by Emergency Services in Christchurch, New Zealand, to provide a triage center for the injured. The Christchurch Hospital, the largest tertiary teaching and research hospital in the South Island, was evacuated due to safety concerns and is now only admitting people with serious injuries.

Pierre van Heerden, general manager for Sanitarium in New Zealand, said the site has been made available.

"We're blessed to have little damage to our buildings and to serve the wider community in times of devastation. The Christchurch factory in Papanui has a large garden and extra space for people to congregate and use as a triage center. We have a borehole on site that is functioning and that will give us an opportunity to provide fresh drinking water to the Christchurch community." Sanitarium also plans to provide Weet-Bix, milk and bottled water for those in need.

Craig Gillis, president of the church in South New Zealand said, "At this time it is difficult to get much information about what has happened due to communication channels being blocked and overloaded. Our office staff are all fine. Christchurch Adventist School students, teachers and staff are fine, as are the preschools."

At this stage there aren't any reports on church members.

The earthquake is reported to have lasted approximately a minute with extreme violence -- rocking buildings back and forth. There are reports of absolute devastation in the city center of Christchurch as buildings have collapsed.

There are reports of people trapped in rubble in the central business district and emergency services report there aren't enough ambulances to serve the injured and fatalities.

"We're shocked at what's happening in Christchurch," said Barry Oliver, president of church's South Pacific Division. "We want to assure the people of Christchurch and our Church community of our support. I invite everyone to pray for safety and a sense of peace."