

ELON RESPONDS TO DISASTER IN JAPAN

Elon students studying in Japan safe after 8.9 magnitude earthquake

Anna Johnson
Editor-in-Chief

The three Elon University students studying in Japan are safe after an 8.9 magnitude earthquake and tsunami struck the country, said Eric Townsend, director of Elon's News Bureau.

The five Japanese international students studying at Elon all have reported their families are fine, according to an e-mail sent by Smith Jackson, dean of Student Life.

The Japanese media has reported that the quake has killed thousands, and hundreds of thousands more are left displaced.

Juniors Sarah Naiman, Dina Hilaris and Kenny Tamres are studying at Kansai Gaidai University in Osaka, Japan, 502 miles from Miyagi Prefecture, the epicenter of the quake.

Naiman said she felt the earthquake on the fifth floor of her apartment complex but was one of the few in the area who did. Later in the night she learned how serious the quake was.

She said she doesn't know anyone personally affected by the disaster but there are students from the area impacted. The students' classes have not been disrupted, she said.

Senior Joe Siler studied at Kansai Gaidai last semester.

He said he has sent out Facebook messages checking on his Japanese friends.

"I sent out a massive message to my friends to see how they are doing," he said. "All the replies say they



The earthquake, which struck March 11, also created a tsunami. Currently, concerns are being raised about the state of damaged nuclear plants. PHOTO COURTESY OF MCT CAMPUS

are OK but one girl said her father is in Tokyo, so she's worried about him."

The Elon Alumni Association updated its Facebook page stating 2005 alumna Amy Jo Jenkins, the director of aquatics at the U.S. Naval Base in Yokosuka, Japan, was all right and there were no damages.

"We are OK on Yokosuka base," Jenkins' Facebook message read. "No injuries that I heard of and no major damage here."

It is unknown how many alumni are currently in Japan.

President Barack Obama called the disaster a heartbreaking situation and the United States

would offer the Japanese government any assistance needed.

"The main struggle is the loss of loved ones," Siler said. "It will take time to recover, but the deepest part is the loss of friends and relatives for everyone over there. My heart and prayers go out to them."

There was a moment of silence at 10 a.m. at College Coffee where three students from Japan spoke about the crisis. A meeting was held later in the day to brainstorm fundraising ideas.

Individuals can send a \$10 donation to the relief efforts in Japan through the Red Cross by texting "Red Cross" to 90999.

AN OUTSIDE PERSPECTIVE:

Monitoring the Japan earthquake from afar

Junko Aoyama
Columnist

My name is Junko Aoyama. I'm a sophomore broadcast journalism major here at Elon. I'm also an international student from Tokyo, Japan.

On March 11, a devastating 8.9 magnitude earthquake and tsunami hit Japan, claiming more than one thousand lives with countless still missing. The Tohoku region was damaged the most. The aftershock tremors are still rocking Japan as I write this.

The tsunami waves submerged cities and forced many people to evacuate to higher ground to avoid being swallowed by the waves and the fissured grounds caused by the quakes. Many are without electricity, running water and are low on food and supplies. With only a blanket to warm them in the cold Tohoku nights, many are living in the dark facing uncertainties, worried about their homes, their missing family members and losing sleep wondering when the next aftershock tremor will come.

Electricity and phone lines are some of the biggest issues surrounding the quake. With many people trying to contact their loved ones, from the people in Tohoku to overseas family members (like me), the lines became all jammed up, increasing frustrations and worries.

Many major networks and cell phone providers are providing free broadcasts of news channels and Wi-Fi to assist everyone. Facebook and Twitter became the main modes of communication and spreading information. Celebrities opened up their blog comments sections and Twitter accounts to assist people reaching out to their loved ones.

The power reactors in the Fukushima prefecture were also damaged by the quake, leading to power outages in many homes and less distribution of energy. The reactors also emitted some radioactive substances, forcing many people in

proximity of the plant to evacuate to avoid radiation poisoning. The power plants are urging many people to conserve as much power as they can and will start administering periodical blackouts to make sure the power goes to those who need it the most.

My native Tokyo was also affected by this earthquake, though not so much compared to those in Tohoku. Public transportation was halted until late midnight, forcing 12,000 people immobile until it was safe to travel home. It was quite chaotic. Highways were closed off, causing traffic jams that lasted from three to eight hours. I know that in my K-12 school, the last bus didn't complete their route until 1:30 a.m. the next day.

My father was one of the 12,000 people in Tokyo who were rendered immobile from their workplaces because of the shutdown of public transportation. He works inside a tall skyscraper in the Tokyo bay area. He was in his office with 19 co-workers when the earthquake struck that afternoon. Each worker hid under the tables for protection, also wearing the helmets and gloves provided by the company.

Even after the first wave of the earthquake ceased, the building was still shaking slowly due to the building's structure. Three hours passed and the floor was still shaking. Because some of the workers appeared sick from the continuous shaking and the roads seemed to be OK, my father led the group outside and onto level ground because it was no use staying in the building.

Fortunately, a small restaurant bar near the office was open and took my father and his group in, providing shelter and food until the public transportation was back. When the system was operating again, all the workers were able to get home, including my father, who reached the house at around 2:30 a.m.. While most of metropolitan Japan was in chaos, I'm proud that even my father stayed calm and took leadership of a group of



people relying on him.

All of my immediate family and extended family members reside in Tokyo and are currently safe. I contacted my mom through Skype Friday morning. Most of my friends I know that are in Japan have told me they're safe, although some had to spend the night in emergency shelters. Despite this relieving piece of news, I know there are thousands of other families who aren't as lucky as I am. In fact, some of my friends have relatives up in Tohoku.

It's been tough for me the last couple of days. All I've been doing is watching the Japanese news, contacting people through Skype, Facebook and e-mail and constantly praying that the worst will be over soon. Watching the nightmarish footage unfold in front of me makes me sick to my stomach.

Even now, I feel like I don't deserve being at Elon and feeling safe when so

many people back home are feeling sad and traumatized. Even though I'm not going home for spring break, if I had the money, I really want to go home right now. Even with midterms coming up, I have trouble concentrating or studying. I hate feeling so powerless and being so far away in this dire situation.

To everyone who liked, commented on my statuses and left messages on my wall on Friday, thank you all so much. It really meant a lot to my family. They're glad that there are people out there who care about what's happening. I am grateful to be a part of this Elon community.

Please keep Japan in your thoughts and prayers. With all your support, we can bounce back from this tragedy and people can resume their normal lives. It's going to be a long process, but I know we will make it eventually.