



Seattle-based World Concern Sends Disaster Response Expert To Haiti After Major Earthquake

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World Concern's disaster response expert Merry Fitzpatrick will leave from SeaTac Airport on Alaska Airlines flight 16 to Miami at 1:15 this afternoon. Media availability will be between 10:30 am and 11:30 am at SeaTac, near the Alaska ticket counter.

This morning, World Concern has heard from one other staff member in Haiti over e-mail. Pierre Duclona directs World Concern's programs in South Haiti, and he said that he was safe and his family was safe, but scattered throughout the region have collapsed because of the earthquake. The e-mail reads in part:

"Les Cayes citizens were terrified yesterday night. Most of them, including my family, slept out (in front of our homes) fearing other major earthquakes. Port Au Prince, the capital city, is largely destroyed. Right (now) I'm alone at the office to inform you."

An initial report from World Concern Haiti indicates that the primary office in Port Au Prince remains standing, though the earthquake destroyed surrounding buildings, some with people still inside. Staff and families of staff were still being accounted for.

"It has just happened and it is their own families that are in the midst of it," said Fitzpatrick

World Concern's staff of more than 100 people has already begun responding to urgent needs. During this initial response, we are providing blankets, emergency shelters and supplies of clean water. There is a very high likelihood that existing water systems will be combined with sewage.

For more information and to donate, visit www.worldconcern.org or call 1-866-530-5433 (LIFE)

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Fitzpatrick says it is also likely that people who have escaped from the quake into the streets may elect to sleep outside until they have confidence their homes are safe to enter.

The director of World Concern's operations in Haiti made one phone call shortly after the quake, describing people yelling in the street and buildings collapsed. Substandard construction in Haiti puts families in apartment buildings and children in schools at great risk.

"He said that the office shook really bad, that the building next door collapsed, that there were people running in the streets in shock, screaming and crying," said Fitzpatrick.

After that one phone call, we have been unable to make contact again to find out more details. It appears early all lines of communication are either severed or overloaded.

World Concern has worked in Haiti since 1978 and currently provides hope to 125,000 people. Our work with the poor includes microfinance, agriculture, disaster response and small business development. World Concern's goal is to transform the lives of those we touch and lead them on a path to self-sustainability.

Worldwide, World Concern touches the lives of more than six million people.

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After A Disaster: World Concern's Expected Sequence of Events

1. Provide water, shelter, blankets and food. People are thirsty and the water is unsafe. They no longer have homes, and need blankets and shelter, which usually comes in the form of tarps. Assist when possible to rescue survivors, but focus on the living.
2. Ramp up emergency food distribution. This will become increasingly important in the second and third day on. Among the shipments expected to arrive in the port, the US government should be shipping in emergency supplies from the Guantanamo Navy Base.
3. Reconnect children separated from their parents. In a disaster like this, an organization like World Concern can serve as an intermediary, reuniting families. In cases where parents may have died, we try and connect children with relatives or other guardians.
4. Coordinate with the UN and other relief agencies. The effort should begin in the next three days. The UN has faced the collapse of its headquarters, according to news reports, so it has work to reestablish itself as well as a coordinating agency.
5. World Concern staff and their families who have lost homes will live in our offices that remain standing.
6. After several days, people within cities will likely check on relatives in rural areas – both to see if they have survived, and see if they have a better living arrangement.
7. World Concern expects to set up transitional care camps for survivors without homes. These camps, which will likely be large tents with cots, will stay in place for at least three months.
8. In the weeks and months after the earthquake, World Concern will begin the process of rebuilding lives. This includes assisting people with new homes, new livelihoods, new schools and a more promising future. World Concern is committed not only to a prompt emergency response, but also to stand with the people of Haiti in the months and years to come.

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