



Written by [Raven Clabough](#) on March 14, 2011

## Japan Calculates Lives Lost and Financial Costs

Japan's tsunami, triggered by an 8.9 magnitude earthquake — one of the world's five most powerful in recorded history — is projected to leave tens of thousands dead in its wake. Two thousand bodies have already been uncovered on the shores of Miyagi prefecture, an area that suffered the majority of the damage.



*The Guardian* reports, "Officials say at least 10,000 people in more than a quarter of Japan's 47 prefectures are likely to have been killed." The widespread destruction has impeded the delivery of necessities such as food, water, and blankets.

In the Miyagi prefecture, 785 people have been confirmed dead, with local authorities fearing the number will far exceed 10,000, as at least that many people have been reported missing following the tsunami.

Likewise, 574 people are confirmed dead in the Iwate prefecture, where the city of Rikuzentakata is reportedly "almost completely wiped out," says the fire department. Patrick Fuller of the International Red Cross Federation described the town of Otsuchi — where more than 12,000 people are missing — as "a scene from hell, absolutely nightmarish." He added, "The situation here is just beyond belief[;] almost everything has been flattened. The government is saying that 9,500 people, more than half of the population, could have died, and I do fear the worst." Unfortunately, relief efforts in Otsuchi are being hampered by fires as well as near-freezing temperatures.

As for the Fukushima prefecture, 420 people are confirmed dead, with 1,200 more missing. In the town of Soma, the crematorium has been overwhelmed with bodies brought in for funerals. Katsuhiko Abe, an official in Soma, explains: "We have already begun cremations, but we can only handle 18 bodies a day. We are overwhelmed and are asking other cities to help us deal with bodies. We only have one crematorium in town."

Over 100,000 Japanese troops and 500 foreign rescue specialists have been deployed, but rescue efforts are hampered by severe damage to infrastructure, roads, railroads, power, and ports.

As friends and family are still frantically searching for the thousands of missing people, Google released a person finder application for victims of the Japanese tsunami and earthquake. Google claims to have information regarding 7,200 people and indicates that all information is available to the public and viewable by anyone.

Similar tools were created by Google in response to natural disasters in Haiti, Chile, Pakistan, Brazil, and New Zealand.

Meanwhile, thousands of Japanese survivors are trudging through the rubble in search of loved ones. One resident, 54-year-old Yuko Abe, lamented, "I am looking for my parents, and my older brother. Seeing the way the area is, I think perhaps they did not make it. I also cannot tell my sibling who lives



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away that I am safe, as mobile phones and telephones are not working.”

Hundreds of thousands are now homeless, forced to huddle under blankets around heaters in shelters along the coast. Hospitals are flooded with the injured, though specific figures are not yet available.

According to *American Public Media*, global insurers have calculated the [cost](#) of Japan’s megaquake and tsunami to be around \$35 billion. Risks analysts indicate that if the estimates are correct, it would be one of the most expensive disasters ever.

As Japan struggles to cope with the after-effects of this catastrophe, donations are being accepted. Those interested in making \$10 donations to the Red Cross for the Japanese relief efforts can text REDCROSS to 90999. Likewise, Apple has added a special [page](#) to its iTunes store that allows users to donate money to the Red Cross, with 100 percent of the proceeds, according to the donation page, going to “support our relief efforts to help those affected by the earthquake in Japan and tsunami throughout the Pacific.”

*Graphic (above and left): Map showing the epicenter of the earthquake*



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