



Office of U.S. Foreign Disaster Assistance

DISASTER CASE REPORT

Agency for
International
Development

Washington D.C.
20523

TONGA - Earthquake

Data

Date: June 23, 1977 (FY 77)

Location: Tongatapu and Eva islands, including Nuku`alofa and many outlying villages

No. Dead: 1

No. Injured: 5

No. Affected: 5,000

No. Homeless: 500 estimated

Damage: Structural damage to roads, government and private buildings, and wharfs; a power failure resulted in the breakdown of electrical and telecommunications systems; total property damage estimated at \$1,200,000

The Disaster

An earthquake registering 7.2 on the Richter scale struck Tonga at 1210 hours on Thursday June 23, 1977. Located in the Tonga Trench between Tonga and Nive, the quake lasted approximately 2 1/2 minutes. As a result of the earthquake, there was a power failure which affected the electrical and telephone systems. However, damage in terms of loss of life or major disruption of daily life was not severe enough to warrant a State of Emergency. Major property damage included: partial destruction of the Prime Minister's office and other government buildings in Nuku`alofa; structural damage to roads, Vuna wharf, Queen Salote wharf, and 15 primary schools; loss of one-third of all drugs and chemicals at Vaiola Hospital.

Action Taken by the Government of Tonga (GOT)

The Commanding Police Officer took charge and organized mobile patrols to maintain order and assess damage. Emergency lighting and tele-radio communications were set up. On-site survey reports were sent to the Prime Minister's office where final damage assessments were made. Most of the overseas funded reconstruction was carried out by Tongans themselves and it is virtually impossible to attach a dollar value to this work.

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Assistance Provided by the United States Government (USG)

The Ambassador provided a \$25,000 cash donation from the International Disaster Assistance Account to assist in rehabilitating schools.....\$25,000

TOTAL \$25,000

Assistance Provided by U.S. Voluntary Agencies

None reported.

Assistance Provided by the International Community *

Australia - \$18,000 in cash, equipment, and services of a building supervisor

Fiji - \$10,900 in cash

Great Britain - unknown

New Zealand - unknown, but considerably more than US/Australia

South Pacific Bureau for Economic Cooperation - \$10,900 in cash

TOTAL \$39,800

* Please note: the figure for total international assistance is an approximation. In many cases the cash value of in kind aid is unavailable.