

September 29, 2009

It was a Tuesday morning, about 7:30 a.m., when the earthquake hit. Within 10 minutes, giant tsunami waves struck the island nations of Samoa and American Samoa. It was a whopping 8.3 magnitude, the largest earthquake of 2009, and was deep underground just over a hundred miles from the islands.

Samoa has about 220,000 people and American Samoa about 65,000. The entire south coast of all islands were devastated, but the earthquake and resulting waves hit Samoa first and hardest.

People were going to work, getting off to school, starting their day. Within minutes, scores of them were washed away or found high in the trees at the top of the water level.

Cars were swept first inland, then back out to sea. Buildings collapsed. Buses turned over. Cliffs were undermined and fell. Beachside communities were leveled and left full of debris that was wet and quickly smelling bad in the tropical sun. Whole villages disappeared.

By October 4, Samoa reported 135 deaths, mostly elders and children, and 310 injured. Some were still missing. American Samoa reported 31 deaths but were still searching.

An international news report in the Netherlands compared the devastation to Hurricane Katrina.

Both Samoas were left without drinkable water, no system for public sanitation, and, in some places, no electricity. The pools of water and wet debris started to fester disease.

Many people were afraid to go home, or to what was left of it. Some camped in the mountain, or searched for shelter in churches, the homes of friends or relatives, or simply in the open away from the once-friendly sea.

American Samoa, a US Territory, has some help from the government to rebuild infrastructure like roads, schools, and community buildings. In Samoa, each village must build its own.

**The 2010 Arizona Aloha Festival is asking you to help.**

**The 2010 official Festival limited edition teeshirt will commemorate Samoan Tsunami Relief. Shirts will sell for \$15 and \$20. ORDER yours today or buy it at the Festival, in the booth right by our Lakeside Stage sponsor, Hawaiian Air.**



Shirts are black with white design and lettering.

ALL PROFITS go to support the rebuilding effort.