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Haitian pediatric hospital supported by Saint Alphonse Foundation badly damaged in earthquake

Officials with Saint Alphonse Foundation say they are not sure of the extent of damage Tuesday's earthquake did to a pediatric hospital they support in Haiti or the patients being treated there - but they do know the damage was significant.

The foundation's "Project Haiti" has donated more than \$1.5 million in medical supplies, equipment, pharmaceuticals and volunteer hours over the past decade to support the work of priest and doctor Rick Frechette, who founded and runs Saint Damien, a pediatric hospital in Port-au-Prince, and an orphanage outside the capital.

The main hospital and several other buildings on the Saint Damien campus were damaged by the quake, along with several perimeter walls, said Debbie Hamilton, the "Project Haiti" coordinator for the Saint Alphonse Foundation. It is unclear if any of the kids being treated at Saint Damien, which was built in 2006, were killed or injured as a result of the earthquake, Hamilton said. Two Americans were killed when the old Saint Damien building collapsed in a different part of Haiti, which had been converted to lodging for volunteers who help Frechette, Hamilton said.

Frechette was not in Haiti for Tuesday's devastating earthquake, which was measured with a preliminary magnitude of 7.0 and was centered about 10 miles (15 kilometers) west of Port-au-Prince. Frechette, who was taking care of his sick mother in New York, posted a blog entry Wednesday which mentions damage to several buildings on the Saint Damien campus:

"I know there is extensive damage at our new hospital (Saint Damien), that the perimeter walls of three programs have fallen. I know there is damage to the hospital walls. I also know there is severe damage at the old hospital in Petionville. Lets pray everyone is alright. I have heard that everyone at the orphanage in Kenscoff is OK."

Frechette says he is trying to get back to Haiti as soon as he can. "I will not arrive until Thursday morning, since the border between Dominican Republic and Haiti will be closed when we arrive tomorrow. We will find the best way to keep you informed and let you know how you can help."

Humanitarian officials say as many as 3 million people need medical aid. Port-au-Prince - where Frechette's hospital is located - was hard hit. Officials estimate hundreds of people may be trapped in the rubble. Medical teams from Saint Alphonse Regional Medical Center have made numerous trips to Saint Damien - the grounds of which now include the "Boise orchard," growing mangoes and coconuts - over the past decade, but nobody was there Wednesday. A team of medical volunteers from Saint Alphonse were scheduled to make a trip to Saint Damien in March.