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8.0 quake hits Samoa islands

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The scene of devastation in Pago Pago village, 9 a.m., Sept. 29, 2009. More photos soon. [photo:Ausage Fausia]

Around 6:52 a.m. Tuesday, Sept. 29, 2009, American Samoa time, an earthquake measured at 8.0 on the Richter Scale struck with an epicenter located 195 km southwest of the Samoa coast, with a depth of 18 km. The temblor generated a nearly 3-meter tsunami -- measured from crest to trough -- according to preliminary data, said Chip McCreery, the director of the Pacific Tsunami Warning Center in Ewa Beach, Hawaii.

At 3 PM American Samoa time, Lt. Gov. Faoa Sunia announced that the tsunami has caused great damage to the electrical infrastructure, knocking out the main generator at Satala that supplies power to the island from the central village of Fagaalu all the way east to Onenoa. There is also damage to the fresh water system and water is limited in that area. The Satala plant may be down as long as a month and ASPA has stated power is out indefinitely.

Reports from Ofu say there is no power and a government plane has been deployed to access the situation.

Confirmed deaths stand at 22 with many people still unaccounted for from the villages of Leone and Pago Pago.

Water service on the eastern side is out due to broken water lines. ASPA water division will be taking water trucks to try to supply the villages and people are cautioned to boil and conserve all water until further notice.

The public is urged to limit travel so that emergency crews and vehicles can function.

People off island who are looking for information about families can call the Red Cross at 699-6011 or 733-4645.

"My heart goes out to the people of Samoa as they struggle to cope with this terrible tragedy that has taken its toll in lives lost and property destroyed," said Senator Daniel K. Inouye. "We will do all we can to support federal assistance for those affected by the earthquake and tsunami as they look to recover and rebuild. Hawaii's thoughts and prayers are with Samoa this day."