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Wolong Pandas at Earthquake Epicenter

Pandas International coordinating assistance needed to maintain safety of endangered giant pandas

Denver (May 13, 2008) –

The epicenter of the 7.9 magnitude earthquake in the Sichuan Province of China on Monday afternoon is reported to be less than 30 km from China's Giant Panda Research Center in Wolong. Pandas International, a worldwide nonprofit organization, provides medical and veterinary equipment and supplies to save the endangered giant pandas at the Wolong Nature Reserve, and assists with donations at other panda reserves in China. With a recent estimate of only 1,590 giant pandas in the wild, Pandas International works to support the breeding programs and assist in the reintroduction program of captive born pandas into the wild.

Pandas International has received reports of satellite phone calls from Wolong to the Sichuan Forestry Department reporting the pandas and staff are safe. We heard the Wolong staff is moving the cubs to the village of Shawan, 7km up the road from the research center. The Research Center administration offices and the Wolong Hotel are located in the town and the area is not as surrounded by steep mountains as the pandas' hospital and living areas. Suzanne Braden, Pandas International Executive Director, is attempting to verify all reports, including information that 20 Wolong residents have died

The quake struck 57 miles northwest of the city of Chengdu in Wenchuan County. The mountainous road from Chengdu to Wolong has been heavily damaged. Portions of the road have been washed away by mud slides, and the route is inaccessible. Heavy rain has prevented four helicopter flights from landing in the area, but the Chinese news says the Army is preparing to drop paratroopers and supplies. Thousands of communication towers are down in the earthquake region.

Wolong is the home of approximately 80 adult and baby pandas. This year's cubs are expected to start arriving in June and an operable nursery with utilities and incubators will be a priority in addition to medicines and a special powdered milk formula made in the United States. Due to the heavy earthquake devastation reported near the epicenter, Pandas International may need to replace numerous supplies and various medical items such as incubators, blood analyzers, and surgical equipment.

The Chinese government has provided Pandas International with import privileges equal to the International Red Cross to supply the pandas' needs. Pandas International is making preparations to respond to the veterinary, medical, and nutritional needs at China's premier breeding center as well as the needs of the caretakers.

For information and daily updates or to support our efforts www.pandasinternational.org or P.O. Box 620335 Littleton, Colorado 80162.

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Endangered means there is time.
Extinction is forever!