

**For Release: Immediate**

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## **Wolong Pandas, Staff and Stranded Tourists Reported to be safe**

**Denver, May 14, 2008** Pandas International has confirmed via two reliable sources that 50 foreign tourists including 12 Americans with the World Wildlife Federation are alive and uninjured at the Wolong Hotel 7 km north of the Wolong Panda Reserve and Breeding Center. Rescue workers have been hiking into the remote area since the 7.9 magnitude earthquake struck about 30 km from the Center and destroyed roads and communications. Rescuers are expected imminently and it is hoped names of the missing tourists can be communicated during the next 24 hours.

The sources reported about 90% of homes in Wolong have been destroyed and aid and medicines are needed. The injured will need to be airlifted to hospitals. The death toll is unknown. The government has made plans to drop emergency supplies, but confirmation of an actual drop has not occurred. The original plan to drop paratroopers into the region was cancelled and heavy rains have slowed rescuers.

The State Forestry Department will be the only official authority releasing information about China's pandas. They are reporting many reserves in Minshan and Qianlaishan were seriously damaged and many protection stations have collapsed. The SFD and our sources report that the Wolong pandas are safe. However, the official government Xinhua news agency has started to report the General Brigade of Sichuan Forestry Armed Police rescued 40 trapped pandas from the Wolong Nature Reserve in Wenchuan. Pandas International is seeking confirmation and further information. At this time Pandas International believes our sources have verified the staff at the Wolong Reserve has survived and are working hard. We are waiting for further reports before confirming the health and well being of all the Wolong pandas and their cubs.

We know there will a need for medicine for both the people and pandas of Wolong. Suzanne Braden, director of Pandas International, is gravely concerned about the availability of bamboo due to the destruction of local farms and transportation disruptions. The Chengdu Panda Base, which sustained no damage, is also concerned about the availability of bamboo for their pandas. Wolong will also experience problems obtaining veterinary medicine and nutritional supplements.

Sherry Lummis, Pandas International board member in China continues to provide updates and says, "We are devoted to China's treasured pandas and congratulate their efforts to save them, but our hearts are breaking from the pain and suffering of China's people during this terrible tragedy."

Pandas International is collecting donations for relief efforts for the pandas and any needs at the Wolong Panda Center. To support their efforts visit [www.pandasinternational.org](http://www.pandasinternational.org)

