

FreshPRESS ALERT

March 1, 2010

Chilean Earthquake: Effecting Your Produce

Chile was rocked with a massive 8.8 Earthquake Saturday.

This Chilean quake was hundreds of times stronger than the most recent earthquake in Haiti. The epicenter is about 200 miles south of the capital city of Santiago. Even so, there was tremendous damage to buildings, roads, bridges and communications.

This time of year, it is summertime in Chile. They are a major exporter of **Peaches, Plums, Nectarines, Grapes, Blueberries and Raspberries**. Most of the berries and the tree-ripened Peaches and Nectarines come here via airplane through the Santiago International Airport. The airport was shutdown, which of course immediately stops all air shipments of produce from Chile to the United States. Part of the Santiago International Airport is now open, and they are resuming some flights. Air-shipments of produce, (particularly tree-ripened Peaches, Nectarines and Berries) have not resumed.

There is going to be some disruption of export activity at the main port in Valparaiso. The port was shut down to assess damage. Workers at the port will no doubt be shifted to emergency operations, off-loading equipment and supplies for the damaged areas. We have learned that the condition of equipment in the port of Valparaiso is being evaluated for any damage and although some ships did get out over the weekend, there will be a small percentage of fruit loaded until further notice.

The Pan American highway, the main highway that connects southern Chile to northern Chile, is heavily damaged. Many bridges on this highway were destroyed. This is the main road for getting **Stonefruit, Grapes, Apples, Kiwifruit and Avocados** from the farms to the airport or seaport.

The President of Chile has declared a state of catastrophe in Central Chile, the prime growing region of **stonefruit and grapes**, in harvest right now. This region also grows a lot of berries, apples, pears, kiwifruit and avocados. Of all the fruit exported from the Southern Hemisphere, about 90% comes from Chile. The country is an island geographically, making it one of the most unique growing regions in the world today. Each year, Chile ships about 1 billion pounds of fruit to North America, worth about \$3 billion.

Today, there will be a full assessment of all packing shed operations. Food Safety is priority one, so if there is any issue of water contamination in the region, they will not be packing fruit. We will continue to keep you posted on additional information.

