

Press Release



Travel claims relating to the earthquake and subsequent tsunami in Japan

Sydney – 15 March, 2011 – An Australian leader in general insurance, Chartis has clarified its position in regards to travel insurance claims relating to the recent earthquake and subsequent tsunami in Japan.

The magnitude 9.0 earthquake and subsequent tsunami in Japan has resulted in devastating loss of life, injury and severe travel disruptions, with DFAT advising Australians to reconsider their need to travel to Tokyo and surrounding earthquake affected districts on 11 March, 2011. For this reason Chartis would like to confirm that claims arising from the earthquake and subsequent tsunami will generally be covered if the insurance policy was already in place prior to the earthquake and subsequent tsunami. Chartis has also taken the view that any future travel disruptions directly caused by the earthquake and subsequent tsunami will, in most cases, be unforeseen or unexpected, and would generally be covered subject to the other terms, conditions and exclusions of the policy.

“The scale of this tragedy is immense and our hearts go out to the people impacted. Chartis is focused on the safety and well-being of all Australian’s currently in Japan. DFAT urge all Australians currently in Japan to contact the Australian Embassy in Tokyo on the local phone number 03 5232 4111”, stated Mark Kopec, Australasian Travel Insurance Manager, Chartis. “Chartis Travel Guard, our Emergency Assistance team, has received many calls over the past few days and we urge any remaining overseas insureds to do the same on +61 2 9251 4298. For travellers that have yet to depart to Japan that require assistance, please contact Chartis Travel Insurance on 1800 017 682. Please be patient when calling as this event has resulted in high call volumes and wait times may be considerable”, continued Mr. Kopec.

If an insured’s policy was activated* or purchased before 11 March, 2011, Chartis consider the earthquake and tsunami in Japan as unforeseen. Cancellation claims directly arising in such instances would generally be covered^.

If an insured departed for their travel before 11 March, 2011, Chartis consider the earthquake and tsunami in Japan as unforeseen. Medical and Travel disruption claims directly arising in such instances would generally be covered^.

For policies activated or purchased after 11 March, 2011 and travel that commenced after the 11 March, 2011, Chartis believe that an insured would have known, or a reasonable person should have known, that their travel was likely to be disrupted. In this instance, Chartis is unlikely to pay their claim. For example, if an insured purchased or activated their insurance policy within a short period of their planned travel date and after 11 March, 2011, their claim may be denied on the basis that the disruption was either expected or foreseeable.

DFAT have also stated that "Japanese authorities have widened to 20 kilometres the precautionary evacuation zone around the Fukushima Nuclear Power Plant in Okumacho following an explosion on 12 March, 2011." Some Chartis Travel Insurance policies have an exclusion that states that the policy does not cover contamination by radioactivity from any nuclear fuel. Claims relating to the release of radiation may be denied.

Chartis Corporate Travel policies (Policy Wording reference AH 1700.4 and 1700.5) do not include an exclusion related to contamination by radioactivity from any nuclear fuel. Should any claims relating to radiation exposure or similar events then be lodged under these policies then cover will generally be provided.

For all Medical and claims assistance, please contact Chartis Travel Guard on +61 2 9251 4298.

Before Chartis can consider a Cancellation claim or provide advice on a claim, insureds should:

1. Confirm with their travel agent, airline, bus line, accommodation provider and/or tour company that their trip has been cancelled;
2. Make alternative arrangements with their travel agent, airline, bus line, accommodation provider and/or tour company;
3. Contact their travel agent, airline, bus line, accommodation provider and/or tour company to see what costs they will meet or amendment concessions or refunds they are prepared to provide.

As always, each claim will be considered on its merits taking into account the individual circumstances of the claim and the terms and conditions of the policy.

No cover is available for used portions of prepaid travel arrangements. Where cover is available under both Cancellation and Additional Expense Sections, insureds can claim under either the Cancellation or Additional Expense Section for the same period, not both.

Chartis underwrites Travel Insurance products for many blue chip companies in Australia including; airlines, banks, travel companies.

* For credit card complimentary insurances and annual multi-trip travel policies (including Corporate Travel policies), the date you took out your travel insurance is generally deemed to be the date you activated cover for that trip by purchasing the travel arrangements.

^ Policy holders are advised to check their particular policy wording for eligibility, cancellation/travel disruption coverage, limit of coverage and the type of expenses that can be claimed.

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Notes to editors:

Chartis is a world leading general insurance organisation serving more than 45 million clients in over 160 countries and jurisdictions. With a 50 year local history, one of the industry's most extensive ranges of products and services, deep claims expertise and excellent financial strength, Chartis enables its commercial and personal insurance client to manage virtually any risk with confidence.

For more information visit www.chartisinsurance.com.au