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EARTH: Highlights of 2011 – New Zealand: after 8,000 aftershocks, when will it stop?

Alexandria, VA – “You know you are from Christchurch when...” you manage to keep your sense of humor through a year of nonstop hardship. This phrase, coined by Christchurch native Bruce Raines, exploded on Facebook and takes on a multitude of equally morose and light-hearted endings. These phrases accurately capture the spirit of the local inhabitants after a series of earthquakes and aftershocks rocked the city, dramatically changing life for all Cantabrians. Homes and historic buildings were leveled, and everyday luxuries such as electricity and plumbing were lost. However, while those of us on the outside watched the disaster unfold for a few days, we were able to safely return to our heated homes and refreshing showers. To this day, many Cantabrians are stuck in a permanent “camping mode:” boiling water, and using primitive outhouses when available. In the December issue of EARTH magazine, learn more about how the citizens of Christchurch are coping with the disaster, one aftershock at a time.

On September 4, 2010, a magnitude-7.1 earthquake struck 40 kilometers west of Christchurch, New Zealand near the small town of Darfield. No sooner had communities begun to rebuild when disaster struck again: this time in the form of a magnitude-6.3 earthquake much closer to the city. While the first quake caused more damage than harm, the second quake claimed the lives of 181 people. How long will it take for the city of Christchurch to get back to normal? Find out more about this story online at <http://www.earthmagazine.org/earth/article/5cd-7db-b-17>.

Check out this story and more in the December issue of EARTH Magazine available online at <http://www.earthmagazine.org/digital/>. Learn about the “Big Crew Change” as a generation of geoscientists prepares to retire; discover the secret of Africa’s killer lakes; and vindicate a family of asteroids long blamed for the dinosaurs’ extinction.

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Keep up to date with the latest happenings in Earth, energy and environment news with EARTH magazine online at <http://www.earthmagazine.org/>. Published by the American Geosciences Institute, EARTH is your source for the science behind the headlines.

The American Geosciences Institute is a nonprofit federation of 50 geoscientific and professional associations that represents more than 250,000 geologists, geophysicists and other earth scientists. Founded in 1948, AGI provides information services to geoscientists, serves as a voice of shared interests in the profession, plays a major role in strengthening geoscience education, and strives to increase public awareness of the vital role the geosciences play in society’s use of resources, resiliency to natural hazards, and interaction with the environment.