

A first hand account of the Tokyo earthquake

Scott Brown, one of our International portfolio analysts based in San Francisco, was in Tokyo on a research trip when the earthquake struck. Here he recounts his experience.

It was the most powerful thing I have experienced. I was in downtown Tokyo and I thought for sure the buildings were going to collapse, the shaking, the noise, people were running into the streets, it seemed like the initial big one went on for quite awhile.

Somehow in Tokyo there was very little visible damage after all that and people were amazingly calm. Throughout Friday night there were multiple after-shocks that kept waking me. I was on the 28th floor of my hotel and it was shaking and creaking quite a bit many times throughout the night.

I was lucky to get out Saturday as the highways were closed and trains were not operating. My hotel somehow rented a van and hired a driver to take customers to Narita. Ordinarily this is about 1 hour maybe 1.5 hours. I left the hotel at 10am and arrived at 4:30pm, there was massive congestion trying to get out of the city. My flight was at 5pm so I nearly missed it, ordinarily they would not have let me on but given the circumstances they were more flexible. The Japanese people handled the situation with amazing calmness.

My heart goes out to all those in areas that were more severely impacted. I could not believe the scale of damage when I saw it. I can only imagine how it felt at the epicenter given how powerful it felt in Tokyo many miles away.