Beat: Lifestyle

Magnitude-6.5 quake shakes Papua New Guinea, no damage

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USPA News - A strong earthquake struck just off the island of New Guinea in Papua New Guinea on early Monday morning, seismologists and witnesses said, but there were no immediate reports of damage or casualties. No tsunami warnings were issued.

The 6.5-magnitude earthquake at 8:51 a.m. local time on Monday (2251 GMT Sunday) was centered about 33.5 kilometers (20.8 miles) east of Finschhafen, a town located on the Huon Peninsula in Morobe Province. It struck about 28.9 kilometers (18 miles) deep, making it a shallow earthquake, according to the United States Geological Survey (USGS). Geoscience Australia said such an earthquake could potentially have been felt up to 924 kilometers (574 miles) away, but there were no immediate reports of damage or casualties. The USGS estimated some 17,000 people near the epicenter may have experienced strong shaking while up to 1.1 million others may have felt light to moderate shaking. Because earthquakes with a magnitude below 7 are unlikely to generate tsunamis, no tsunami watches or warnings were issued. "No destructive widespread tsunami threat exists based on historical earthquake and tsunami data," the Pacific Tsunami Warning Center said in a bulletin. Earthquakes in the mountainous nation of Papua New Guinea, which is on the so-called `Pacific Ring of Fire`, do rarely cause damage or casualties as most structures in the region are light and flexible. This allows them to bend, rather than snap, when a major earthquake happens. In December 2011, a powerful 7.1-magnitude earthquake struck near the town of Wau in Morobe province. The earthquake was felt as far away as the capital Port Moresby, about 221 kilometers (137 miles) south-southeast of the epicenter, but there were no reports of damage or casualties. Most notably, in July 1998, a powerful 7.0-magnitude earthquake struck just off the north coast of the country`s island of New Guinea, causing a landslide which resulted in a local tsunami. The disaster left at least 2,183 people killed and thousands more injured.

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