

USGS monitoring Twitter for earthquake details

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(AP) -- OMG! Earthquake!

The U.S. Geological Survey is scouring the popular microblogging site Twitter soon after a [temblor](#) hits to pinpoint regions where shaking occurred.

"People like to tweet after earthquakes," USGS seismologist Paul Earle said Monday during an American Geophysical Union meeting in San Francisco.

There is usually a lag between when an [earthquake](#) strikes and when researchers can analyze the data that floods in from seismic stations. During that gap, scientists combing through hundreds of [tweets](#) can get an initial picture of where the shaking was felt and areas of potential damage.

A prototype system aggregates tweets based on key words such as "earthquake" or the equivalent in different languages. It can then send an e-mail listing the cities where the tweets came from and what the tweets said.

"It would give you a little information about what potentially happened in that earthquake," Earle said.

There are still wrinkles to be worked out. Scientists are developing filters to distinguish tweets about a real temblor from say, an earthquake drill

that can cause scores of people to pound out 140 characters.

On the Net: USGS Twitter Earthquake Detector:

<http://twitter.com/USGSted>

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