

Taiwan builds first undersea earthquake sensor

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A house lies in the sea off a village near the Onagawa nuclear power plant, nine days after the deadly March 11 earthquake and tsunami that hit the northeastern coast of Japan's main island of Honshu. Taiwan began building its first undersea earthquake sensor on Sunday in a project aiming to give earlier warnings of the quakes and tsunamis that frequently hit the region.

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In the wake of the 9.0 magnitude quake and tsunami that have devastated northeastern Japan, the head of Taiwan's [seismology](#) centre said the device would give seconds or even minutes of extra time ahead of a natural disaster.

"It is expected to give us an average of 10 seconds' extra warning if earthquakes hit off the east," Kuo Kai-wen told AFP. Nearly 70 percent of Taiwan's quakes strike off the east.

"It will also allow us extra 10 minutes to issue tsunami warnings," he said.

The Tw\$4.28 million (\$14.5 million) sensor, 45 kilometres (28 miles) off Toucheng in Taiwan's Yilan county, is due to start working in October.

Taiwan has more than 100 quake sensors, making it -- like Japan -- one of the world's best-equipped countries with [earthquake](#) monitoring devices.

"But many of the temblors off the island had not been detected," Kuo said, adding that the centre would deploy several more seabed [sensors](#) if the government approves their construction.

Taiwan is regularly hit by earthquakes, as the island lies near the junction of two [tectonic plates](#).

In September 1999, a 7.6-magnitude tremor killed around 2,400 people in the deadliest natural disaster in the island's recent history.

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