

# Quakes destroy or damage 83 houses in Philippines

September 20 2014

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A series of earthquakes destroyed 17 houses and damaged 66 others Saturday in a southern Philippine town, slightly injuring three people, officials said.

A magnitude-5 quake, the strongest of the tremors that shook the area, caused most of the damage in one mountain village, said Eduardo Buenacosa, disaster officer of Makilala municipality in North Cotabato province.

Local officials were preventing residents of houses that were destroyed from returning home because of the danger of a collapse, he said.

He said three people were treated for bruises after they were hit by concrete fragments from collapsed walls.

Renato Solidum, chief of the Philippine Institute of Volcanology and Seismology, said a similar series of small shallow tremors known as a "swarm" hit the same region several years ago and was caused by movements of a fault line. In some cases, a "swarm" precedes a [major earthquake](#), he said.

Residents of the worst-hit mountain village of Luayon, where 45 houses were damaged and 15 destroyed, were celebrating its foundation day with a program at which provincial Gov. Emmylou Mendoza was a guest when the strongest earthquake struck, Buenacosa said.

"We felt the stage swaying," Mendoza told reporters. "We grabbed hold of our chairs and looked at each other. After about 10 seconds it was over and the program continued."

Buenacosa said officials stopped residents from returning home where concrete walls had cracked and collapsed. Two Protestant chapels and an empty daycare center were also damaged.

He said he was preparing breakfast when the first quake struck. The seismology institute recorded more than a dozen earthquakes striking minutes apart.

The Philippine archipelago lies in the Pacific "Ring of Fire," where earthquakes and volcanic activities are common. A magnitude-7.2 [earthquake](#) in central Bohol province killed 200 people last year.

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