

# Tsunami warning issued for parts of Pacific after earthquake

March 30 2015, by Kristen Gelineau

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Credit: Tiago Fioreze / Wikipedia

A powerful earthquake rattled the South Pacific nation of Papua New Guinea on Monday, prompting officials to issue a tsunami warning for vast swathes of the Pacific and as far north as Russia.

The magnitude-7.7 earthquake struck at a depth of 65 kilometers (40 miles), about 50 kilometers (30 miles) southeast of the town of Kokopo

in northeastern Papua New Guinea, the U.S. Geological Survey said.

The Pacific Tsunami Warning Center said hazardous [tsunami waves](#) could hit coasts located within 1,000 kilometers (620 miles) of Kokopo, with waves between 1 to 3 meters (3 to 10 feet) possible for Papua New Guinea.

Farther afield, tsunami waves of less than 0.3 meters (1 foot) could hit other Pacific island nations, Russia, China, Japan, Australia, New Zealand, the Philippines, Indonesia, Hawaii, Mexico, Guatemala, Costa Rica, Panama, Colombia, Ecuador, Peru, Chile and Antarctica later Monday, the [tsunami warning](#) center said. The Japan Meteorological Agency, however, said there was no tsunami risk to Japan from the quake.

In Rabaul, a town near Kokopo, residents noticed the sea level rose slightly, prompting ocean water to flood the parking lot of a shopping center near the beach, said Mika Tuvi, an employee at the Rabaul Hotel. "But nothing beyond that—no damage caused," she said.

When the quake struck, guests and workers at the hotel fled outside, fearing the building would collapse, Tuvi said. The tremors, which lasted for about 5 minutes, were frightening in their intensity, but the hotel withstood the shaking and suffered no damage, she said.

Officials in the capital, Port Moresby, were working to contact their counterparts in the outer provinces, but there had been no reports of damage or injuries, said Martin Mose, acting director for Papua New Guinea's National Disaster Center. No one had reported seeing any tsunami waves, he added.

"The situation seems to be under control at this stage," he said.

The quake caused strong shaking and knocked items off shelves in Kokopo, but had not prompted any immediate reports of damage, said Chris McKee, assistant director of the Geophysical Observatory in Port Moresby. A few people in the capital reported feeling the quake as well, he said.

By early afternoon, there were still no sightings of unusual wave activity and officials weren't sure if a tsunami had been generated, McKee said.

"If there was a tsunami generated, it would have already impacted nearby coastlines," he said.

Earthquakes are common in Papua New Guinea. The country lies on the "Ring of Fire"—an arc of earthquake and volcanic activity that stretches around the Pacific Rim.

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Citation: Tsunami warning issued for parts of Pacific after earthquake (2015, March 30)  
retrieved 25 April 2024 from

<https://phys.org/news/2015-03-tsunami-issued-pacific-earthquake.html>

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