

Strong quake rocks Papua New Guinea, tsunami threat lifted

May 7 2015, by Kristen Gelineau

A powerful earthquake rattled Papua New Guinea on Thursday, the fourth strong quake to hit the South Pacific island nation in a week. The temblor prompted officials to issue a local tsunami warning, but it was lifted shortly afterward with no reports of damage.

The 7.1-magnitude [quake](#) struck about 150 kilometers (94 miles) southwest of the town of Panguna on Bougainville Island at a depth of 23 kilometers (14 miles), the U.S. Geological Survey reported.

The Pacific Tsunami Warning Center said [tsunami waves](#) of up to 1 meter (3 feet) were possible within 300 kilometers (186 miles) of the epicenter on the coast of Papua New Guinea. The agency lifted the warning about an hour later.

There were no reports of damage, said Chris McKee, assistant director of the Geophysical Observatory in the capital, Port Moresby. Because the epicenter was so far offshore, the chance of serious damage on land was less likely, he said.

"The earthquake appears to have not been as big as first estimated," McKee said. "I think the threat from that event is basically passed now. So we'll just wait for the next one."

Thursday's quake was located in a different area of Papua New Guinea than the previous three temblors that rattled the region over the past week, and was therefore an unrelated event, McKee said. Still, the area

has been unusually active.

"We think it's probably something along the lines of just regional readjustment—movements in one area allow stress to be redistributed and that allows other areas to rupture," McKee said.

Betha Lorenz, owner of Rising Sun Lodge in the town of Arawa on Bougainville Island, said the quake delivered a powerful jolt, but did not appear to have caused any damage.

"One of my neighbors ... she ran down the stairs and I was laughing and she said, 'Am I gonna live?' and I said 'Yeah, nothing will happen—just relax,'" Lorenz said.

When the shaking started, Lorenz ran outside, but the rumbling ended a few seconds later. Her lodge weathered the quake with no damage, and she hadn't heard of any tsunami waves hitting the coast.

"Everyone is OK," she said with a laugh. "We are happy."

Papua New Guinea sits on the Ring of Fire, the arc of seismic faults around the Pacific Ocean where earthquakes are common.

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Citation: Strong quake rocks Papua New Guinea, tsunami threat lifted (2015, May 7) retrieved 26 April 2024 from <https://phys.org/news/2015-05-strong-quake-papua-guinea-tsunami.html>

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