

Philippine capital holds drill to prepare for killer quake

July 30 2015



Hotel and office employees cover their heads as they take part in a Metropolitan Manila-wide earthquake drill which was designed to boost preparedness in the country Thursday, July 30, 2015 at the financial district of Makati city east of Manila, Philippines. Filipinos poured out of buildings and shopping malls in a massive drill across Manila on Thursday to brace for a 7.2-magnitude earthquake that experts fear could kill tens of thousands and displace millions. (AP Photo/Bullit Marquez)

Filipinos poured out of buildings and shopping malls in a massive drill

across Manila on Thursday to brace for a 7.2-magnitude earthquake that experts fear could kill tens of thousands and displace millions.

The Philippines is one of the world's most disaster-prone countries in the so-called Pacific "Ring of Fire," where earthquakes and [volcanic activities](#) are common. A 7.7-magnitude quake in 1990 killed nearly 2,000 people on the main northern island of Luzon, which includes Manila.

A fault line cutting across the sprawling capital of more than 12 million people and nearby provinces could shift anytime, based on its seismic history, said Renato Solidum, head of the Philippine Institute of Volcanology and Seismology.

"We don't have a culture of preparedness," said Metropolitan Manila Gov. Francis Tolentino, adding work needed to be done to reduce a potential death toll estimate of 35,000.

When alarms sounded, tens of thousands rushed out of buildings and [shopping malls](#) in Manila.

The government is planning to reinforce at least five bridges, including a key span that connects the main EDSA highway in the capital, to shield them from critical damages in a major [earthquake](#), said Secretary Rogelio Singson of the Department of Public Works and Highways.

Several old buildings in the capital that do not comply with the safety code also needed to be reinforced, he said.

Such drills are crucial because they familiarize people with simple things, like the location of fire exits, and prompt them to prepare flashlights and whistles that could save lives in real disasters, said Mark Bidder of the U.N. Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs.

He cited Japan's resiliency against natural disasters, including [major earthquakes](#), because of its effort to expose residents to drills starting at a young age. "They're not afraid of earthquakes because they know what to do," Bidder said.



Hotel and office employees cover their heads as they take part in a Metropolitan Manila-wide earthquake drill which was designed to boost preparedness in the country Thursday, July 30, 2015 at the financial district of Makati city east of Manila, Philippines. Filipinos poured out of buildings and shopping malls in a massive drill across Manila on Thursday to brace for a 7.2-magnitude earthquake that experts fear could kill tens of thousands and displace millions.(AP Photo/Bullit Marquez)



Philippine Coast Guard prepare to transport a "disaster victim" to a hospital ship during a Metropolitan Manila-wide earthquake drill which was designed to boost preparedness in the country Thursday, July 30, 2015 at the financial district of Makati city east of Manila, Philippines. Filipinos poured out of buildings and shopping malls in a massive drill across Manila on Thursday to brace for an earthquake that experts fear could kill tens of thousands and displace millions(AP Photo/Jim Gomez)



Caregivers of patients hold plastic chairs over their heads as they participate in a metropolitan Manila-wide earthquake drill designed to boost preparedness in the country at the Veterans Memorial Medical Center in suburban Quezon city, north of Manila, Philippines on Thursday, July 30, 2015. Filipinos poured out of buildings and shopping malls in a massive drill across Manila on Thursday to brace for an earthquake that experts fear could kill tens of thousands and displace millions. (AP Photo/Aaron Favila)



Hotel and office employees occupy an empty avenue as they take part in a Metropolitan Manila-wide earthquake drill which was designed to boost preparedness in the country Thursday, July 30, 2015 at the financial district of Makati city east of Manila, Philippines. Filipinos poured out of buildings and shopping malls in a massive drill across Manila on Thursday to brace for a 7.2-magnitude earthquake that experts fear could kill tens of thousands and displace millions.(AP Photo/Bullit Marquez)

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