

The Latest: Geologist: creeping tectonic plate caused quake

August 24 2016



A man walks amid rubbles after an earthquake struck in Amatrice Italy, Wednesday, Aug. 24, 2016. The magnitude 6 quake struck at 3:36 a.m. (0136 GMT) and was felt across a broad swath of central Italy, including Rome where residents of the capital felt a long swaying followed by aftershocks.(AP Photo/Alessandra Tarantino)

The Latest on the earthquake in central Italy (all times local):

2:30 p.m.

A geologist in Poland says that the magnitude 6 earthquake in central Italy was caused by the slow but constant under-surface movement of the African Plate toward Europe.

Jerzy Zaba of the Silesian University in Katowice, in southern Poland, said Wednesday that a wedge-shaped front of the African Plate is pressing into the Eurasian Plate in the Adriatic Sea region and pushes into the neighboring regions, like Italy's Apennine Mountains. The tension that accumulates leads to a sudden release in the form of under-surface rock movement that causes earth tremors.

Zaba told Polish PAP agency that the African Plate is moving northwards at the speed of up to 5 centimeters (2 inches) a year.

2:15 p.m.

A resident of the hamlet of Illica, north of hard-hit Amatrice, reached for a literary reference to describe the scene after the earthquake hit.

Agostino Severo, a Rome resident visiting Illica, said: "We came out to the piazza, and it looked like 'Dante's Inferno.' People crying for help, help. Rescue workers arrived after one hour... one and a half hours."



Firefighters search amid the rubbles of a collapsed building in Amatrice Italy, Wednesday, Aug. 24, 2016, where a magnitude 6 quake struck at 3:36 a.m. (0136 GMT) and was felt across a broad swath of central Italy, including Rome where residents of the capital felt a long swaying followed by aftershocks. (AP Photo/Alessandra Tarantino)

1:30 p.m.

The quake-hit Italian city of Amatrice is famed as the birthplace of one of the most famous Roman dishes: spaghetti all'amatriciana, a hearty dish of pasta made with bacon-like bits of cured pork jowl, pecorino cheese and tomato.

Amatrice, in fact, was due to have its annual festival honoring its namesake food on Aug. 27-28 in the historic center now rendered to

rubble.

Legend has it that the amatriciana sauce was originally prepared only with the pork—known as guanciale—and sheep-milk pecorino available to peasants, and that tomatoes were added at a later date.

1:10 p.m.

The mayor of quake-devastated Amatrice says rescue teams are trying to reach all 69 hamlets around his central Italian city and that so far 17 deaths have been confirmed in Amatrice alone.



A post office is engulfed by rubbles in Arcuata del Tronto, central Italy, where a 6.1 earthquake struck just after 3:30 a.m., Wednesday, Aug. 24, 2016. The quake was felt across a broad section of central Italy, including the capital Rome

where people in homes in the historic center felt a long swaying followed by aftershocks. (AP Photo/Sandro Perozzi)

But Mayor Sergio Pirozzi tells The Associated Press: "I believe the number will rise."

Pirozzi, wearing a blue sweatshirt with "Amatrice" on it, said he had given rescue teams indications of which hamlets might have people still trapped under debris.

Italy's civil protection service says the preliminary toll from Wednesday's 6 magnitude quake is 38.

12:30 p.m.

Italian Premier Matteo Renzi says the priority for the coming days is to rescue any survivors of the [devastating earthquake](#) and that he will head to the zone later in the day.

In brief remarks, Renzi thanked [rescue workers](#) who dug through debris, some with their bare hands, to reach residents crushed by their homes.

Renzi says that in times of trouble, Italy shows its true face. He says: "No family, no city, no hamlet will be left alone."



Rescuers and residents walk amid collapsed buildings in Amatrice, central Italy, where a 6.1 earthquake struck just after 3:30 a.m., Italy, 24 August 2016. The quake was felt across a broad section of central Italy, including the capital Rome where people in homes in the historic center felt a long swaying followed by aftershocks. (Massimo Percossi/ANSA via AP)

12:20 p.m.

German leaders have offered condolences and assistance to Italy following the devastating earthquake.

Foreign Minister Frank-Walter Steinmeier said that "if it is wanted, we are of course ready to provide support."

Chancellor Angela Merkel expressed "the deep sympathy of the German people" in a message Wednesday to Italian Premier Matteo Renzi. She wrote that "the pictures of the devastation are shocking."

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12:05 p.m.

French President Francois Hollande is offering Italy "all the help that might be necessary" after the deadly earthquake in Umbria.



Rescuers search a crumbled building in Arcuata del Tronto, central Italy, where a 6.1 earthquake struck just after 3:30 a.m., Wednesday, Aug. 24, 2016. The quake was felt across a broad section of central Italy, including the capital Rome where people in homes in the historic center felt a long swaying followed by aftershocks. (AP Photo/Sandro Perozzi)

Calling it a "terrible tragedy" in a statement after a special security meeting Wednesday, Hollande offered the support of "all the French people." He didn't elaborate on what help France is offering.

11:59 a.m.

The European Union's top crisis management official says Italy has requested satellite images of earthquake-hit parts of the country as Rome tries to establish the scope of the damage.

Commissioner Christos Stylianides said Wednesday that the EU emergency response center is in contact with Italian civil protection authorities to see what additional help might be required.

Stylianides conveyed the EU's condolences and expressed solidarity with Italy, saying that its "thoughts are also with the first responders and all those involved in the rescue operations."

11:55 a.m.



Rescuers carry a victim on a stretcher in the town of Amatrice, central Italy, Wednesday, Aug. 24, 2016 following an earthquake. A strong earthquake rocked central Italy early Wednesday, collapsing homes on top of residents as they slept. (Italian Firefighters Vigili del Fuoco via AP)

Italy's civil protection agency says at least 37 people have died in the magnitude 6 quake that struck central Italy.

The agency, which is coordinating the rescue effort, gave the preliminary toll as rescue teams continued to claw through debris in hard-hit towns.

Previously, reports and officials had said at least 23 were dead.

11:15 a.m.

Israel's leader says he has offered Italy rescue assistance following the magnitude 6 earthquake that shook the country.

A statement from the office of Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu on Wednesday says he offered the help to his Italian counterpart Matteo Renzi. The statement says he sends his condolences to the people of Italy.

Italy and Israel are close allies. Israel often offers and sends rescue assistance to countries that have experienced temblors.



A man is rescued from the rubble of a building after an earthquake, in Accumoli, central Italy, Wednesday, Aug. 24, 2016. A devastating earthquake rocked central Italy early Wednesday, collapsing homes on top of residents as they slept. At least 23 people were reported dead in three hard-hit towns where rescue crews raced to dig survivors out of the rubble, but the toll was expected to rise as crews reached homes in more remote hamlets. (AP Photo/Andrew Medichini)

11:05 a.m.

Italy's forestry police say they have extracted dozens of people alive from hard-hit Pescara del Tronto in Italy's Le Marche region, but rescue crews still haven't reached the nearby hamlet of Peracchia di Acqua Santa Terme.

The forestry police joined Italian carabinieri, firefighters, [civil protection](#) crews, Red Cross workers, army and Alpine troops in the rescue effort in towns hit by the magnitude 6 quake in central Italy. Pescara del Tronto was one of the hardest-hit towns, along with Accumoli and Amatrice.

10:50 a.m.

Residents say another town in central Italy has been devastated by the 6 magnitude quake: Pescara del Tronto in the province of Ascoli Picenza, in eastern Le Marche region.

The ANSA news agency reported 10 dead there, but there was no official confirmation.



A man is rescued from the rubble of a building after an earthquake, in Accumoli, central Italy, Wednesday, Aug. 24, 2016. A devastating earthquake rocked central Italy early Wednesday, collapsing homes on top of residents as they slept. At least 23 people were reported dead in three hard-hit towns where rescue crews raced to dig survivors out of the rubble, but the toll was expected to rise as crews reached homes in more remote hamlets. (AP Photo/Andrew Medichini)

The main road into and out of the town was covered in debris, making rescue difficult; residents were digging their neighbors out by hand. Photos taken from the air by regional firefighters showed much of the tiny town essentially flattened

10:40 a.m.

Pope Francis has skipped his catechism lesson during his Wednesday general audience and instead led pilgrims in praying the rosary for the victims of Italy's earthquake.

Holding a rosary in his right hand, Francis told the crowd that he was stunned by the devastation of the magnitude 6 temblor that struck central Italy early Wednesday. He said he wanted to express his pain and solidarity with the victims.

The crowd in St. Peter's Square recited the prayer along with him.

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7 a.m.



A man is rescued from the rubble of a building after an earthquake, in Accumoli, central Italy, Wednesday, Aug. 24, 2016. A devastating earthquake

rocked central Italy early Wednesday, collapsing homes on top of residents as they slept. At least 23 people were reported dead in three hard-hit towns where rescue crews raced to dig survivors out of the rubble, but the toll was expected to rise as crews reached homes in more remote hamlets. (AP Photo/Andrew Medichini)

The ANSA news agency says two bodies have been pulled from the rubble of quake-hit Amatrice in central Italy after a strong quake levelled buildings as residents slept.

Many buildings in center of Amatrice were razed by the 6.1 magnitude quake, which struck at 3:36 a.m. Wednesday. As dawn broke, residents with shovels and emergency workers with bulldozers were beginning to try to reach people trapped under the debris and clear blocked roads.

The two bodies mark the first known victims of the quake, although the mayor of the other hard-hit town of Accumoli, Stefano Petrucci, says a family of four is buried without any signs of life.

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6:15 a.m.

The mayor of the quake-hit town of Accumoli says a family of four has been located under the debris of a collapsed building and but there are no signs of life.

Mayor Stefano Petrucci told state-run RaiNews24 that there was also another victim in the town, which is close to the epicenter of Italy's 6.1 magnitude quake.

Officials say Accumoli and Amatrice have been the hardest hit by the quake. Residents across a broad swath of central Italy felt the temblor, which struck at 3:36 a.m. and sent people running into the streets.



The body of a victim is pulled out of the rubble following an earthquake in Amatrice Italy, Wednesday, Aug. 24, 2016. The magnitude 6 quake struck at 3:36 a.m. (0136 GMT) and was felt across a broad swath of central Italy, including Rome where residents of the capital felt a long swaying followed by aftershocks. . (AP Photo/Alessandra Tarantino)

5 a.m.

The mayor of the Umbrian town of Amatrice, hit hard by the 6.1

magnitude quake, says residents are buried under the debris of collapsed buildings and that "the town isn't here anymore."

Sergio Pirozzi told state-run RAI radio and Sky TG24 that he needs heavy equipment to clear rubble-clogged streets to get to the injured.

Asked if there were any dead he said: "Look there are houses that aren't here anymore. I hope we get some help."

The quake struck central Italy, near Rieti, shortly after 3:30 a.m. and was followed by several aftershocks.



A man rescued from the rubble of a building after an earthquake is pushed inside an ambulance, in Accumoli, central Italy, Wednesday, Aug. 24, 2016. A devastating earthquake rocked central Italy early Wednesday, collapsing homes on top of residents as they slept. (AP Photo/Andrew Medichini)



A man leans on a wall as the collapsed village of Pescara del Tronto, central Italy, is seen behind him, Wednesday, Aug. 24 2016 following an earthquake. The magnitude 6 quake struck at 3:36 a.m. (0136 GMT) and was felt across a broad swath of central Italy, including Rome where residents of the capital felt a long swaying followed by aftershocks. (Crocchioni/ANSA via AP)



An elderly woman is escorted by rescuers following an earthquake, in Accumoli, central Italy, Wednesday, Aug. 24, 2016. A devastating earthquake rocked central Italy early Wednesday, collapsing homes on top of residents as they slept. (AP Photo/Andrew Medichini)



People sit outside as a partially collapsed building is seen in the background following an earthquake, in Accumoli, central Italy, Wednesday, Aug. 24, 2016. A devastating earthquake rocked central Italy early Wednesday, collapsing homes on top of residents as they slept. (AP Photo/Andrew Medichini)



A man is rescued from the rubble of a building after an earthquake, in Accumoli, central Italy, Wednesday, Aug. 24, 2016. A devastating earthquake rocked central Italy early Wednesday, collapsing homes on top of residents as they slept. At least 23 people were reported dead in three hard-hit towns where rescue crews raced to dig survivors out of the rubble, but the toll was expected to rise as crews reached homes in more remote hamlets. (AP Photo/Andrew Medichini)



A man walks with a baby carry cot past a partially collapsed building after an earthquake, in Accumoli, central Italy, Wednesday, Aug. 24, 2016. A devastating earthquake rocked central Italy early Wednesday, collapsing homes on top of residents as they slept. At least 23 people were reported dead in three hard-hit towns where rescue crews raced to dig survivors out of the rubble, but the toll was expected to rise as crews reached homes in more remote hamlets. (AP Photo/Andrew Medichini)



A man cries as another injured is helped in Amatrice, central Italy, where a 6.1 earthquake struck just after 3:30 a.m., Wednesday, Aug. 24, 2016. The quake was felt across a broad section of central Italy, including the capital Rome where people in homes in the historic center felt a long swaying followed by aftershocks. (Massimo Percossi/ANSA via AP)

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