

Little damage reported from strong quake in Venezuela

August 22 2018, by Fabiola Sanchez And Scott Smith



An abandoned, unfinished skyscraper known as "The Tower of David" shows an inclination on the top floors where the columns are exposed, top center, after a powerful earthquake shook eastern Venezuela, causing buildings to be evacuated in the capital of Caracas, Venezuela, Tuesday, Aug. 21, 2018. The quake was felt as far away as Colombia's capital and in the Venezuelan capital office workers evacuated buildings and people fled homes. (AP Photo/Ariana Cubillos)

A powerful earthquake shook Venezuela's northeastern coast and parts

of the Caribbean but likely caused little damage besides knocking out power in some places and toppling supermarket shelves because of its depth, experts said.

The magnitude 7.3 quake Tuesday was the largest to strike Venezuela since 1900, according to the U.S. Geological Survey. But at a depth of some 76 miles (123 kilometers) beneath the Earth's surface it appeared to have caused only limited damage even near its epicenter a few miles off the Cariaco peninsula stretching into the eastern Caribbean.

"Shaking does die off at a distance," said seismologist Lucy Jones, a research associate with the California Institute of Technology, adding that the earthquake's considerable depth likely prevented a tragedy.

In Cumana, the biggest city near the quake's center, [supermarket shelves](#) came crashing down.

In downtown Caracas, concrete from the top floors of the unfinished Tower of David skyscraper fell to the sidewalk, forcing firefighters to close off traffic. A block away, children wearing surgical masks stretched their neck toward the 620-foot (190 meter) building after having fled a nearby foundation for poor children suffering from cancer.

"We felt something strong and they told everyone to run," said Marisela Lopez, who was at the foundation with her 7-year-old daughter when the quake struck.



Maryeli Verde holds her niece Yalin, who clutches her cat Will, as Yalin's grandfather Tonisio, who is sick, lies behind them after they evacuated their apartment on the ninth floor after a powerful earthquake shook eastern Venezuela, causing buildings to be evacuated in the capital of Caracas, Venezuela, Tuesday, Aug. 21, 2018. The quake was felt as far away as Colombia's capital and in the Venezuelan capital office workers evacuated buildings and people fled homes. (AP Photo/Ariana Cubillos)

Construction of the Tower of David began in 1990 as a symbol to the OPEC nation's ambitions of becoming a regional finance center. But it was abandoned after a banking crisis and in the past two decades of socialist rule has become a symbol of urban blight, having been occupied by squatters until 2015.

The quake was felt as far away as Colombia's capital of Bogota, where authorities briefly closed the international airport to inspect for runway damage.

The confusing moments after the quake were captured live on Venezuelan state television as Diosdado Cabello, the head of the all-powerful constitutional assembly, was delivering a speech at a march in support of the socialist government's recent package of reforms to rescue an economy beset by hyperinflation and widespread shortages.

"Quake!" people yelled as Cabello and others looked from side to side with a mixture of laughter and concern. "It's the Bolivarian revolution speaking to the world," Cabello thundered to applause.



Civil Protection workers patrol near the "Tower of David" skyscraper, which suffered an inclination after a powerful earthquake shook eastern Venezuela, causing buildings to be evacuated in the capital of Caracas, Venezuela, Tuesday, Aug. 21, 2018. The quake was felt as far away as Colombia's capital and in the Venezuelan capital office workers evacuated buildings and people fled homes. (AP Photo/Ariana Cubillos)

Experts have long warned that Venezuela's cash-strapped government is ill-prepared to deal with a major natural disaster. Hospitals have scant supplies, many ambulances are grounded and food and water are among goods that have disappeared in a country suffering from inflation estimated by the International Monetary Fund to reach 1 million percent this year.

Interior Minister Nestor Reverol said that so far there were no reports of fatalities.

Power outages were reported across nearby Trinidad, where people ran into the street and gasped as large glass panes at one supermarket shattered and falling concrete smashed several cars. The [quake](#) also cracked walls and thousands of goods fell off supermarket shelves. No injuries or deaths were immediately reported.

The earthquake also was felt in Guyana, Barbados and Grenada.



Residents stand outside after a powerful earthquake shook eastern Venezuela, causing buildings to be evacuated in the capital of Caracas, Venezuela, Tuesday, Aug. 21, 2018. The quake was felt as far away as Colombia's capital and in the Venezuelan capital office workers evacuated buildings and people fled homes. (AP Photo/Ariana Cubillos)

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