

# Powerful quake jolts Alaska towns, produces small tsunami

July 22 2020, by Mark Thiessen

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A powerful earthquake located off Alaska's southern coast jolted some coastal communities late Tuesday, and some residents briefly scrambled for higher ground over fears of a tsunami.

There were no immediate reports of damage in the sparsely populated area of the state, and tsunami warning was canceled after the magnitude 7.8 quake off the Alaska Peninsula produced a wave of a less than a foot.

According to the U.S. Geological Survey, the earthquake struck Tuesday at 10:12 p.m. local time, centered in waters 65 miles (105 kilometers) south-southeast of Perryville, Alaska at a depth of 17 miles (28 km).

Because of its location, nearby communities along the Alaska Peninsula did not experience shaking that would normally be associated with that magnitude of a quake, said Michael West, Alaska State Seismologist.

However, that doesn't mean they slept through it: West said residents in small towns within a hundred miles of the quake reported very strong shaking, and was also felt more than 500 miles away in the Anchorage area, West said.

"No reports of any damage," Kodiak Police Sgt. Mike Sorter told The Associated Press early Wednesday morning. "No injuries were reported. Everything is nominal."

Kodiak is about 200 miles northeast of where the earthquake was centered.

The tsunami warning had coastal residents evacuating for higher ground. Social media posts showed long lines of people fleeing towns like Homer and Kodiak while tsunami sirens wailed in the background.

On Kodiak Island, the local high school opened its doors for evacuees, as did the local Catholic school, the Anchorage Daily News reported.

"We've got a high school full of people," said Larry LeDoux, superintendent of the Kodiak School District. "I've been passing out masks since the first siren sounded," he told the Daily News.

"Everything's as calm as can be. We've got probably 300, 400 people all wearing masks," he said before the warning was canceled.

Tsunami warnings are commonplace for people who grew up in Kodiak.

"I've been doing these since I was a little kid," LeDoux told the newspaper. "Old news."

Officials at the National Tsunami Warning Center in Palmer, Alaska, began calling off tsunami advisories and warnings after a wave of only 25 centimeters (.8 foot) was recorded in the community of Sand Point.

"I might have expected a little bit more water, but I'm happy that there wasn't," said David Hale, the senior duty scientist at the tsunami center.

Tuesday's quake was more powerful than the magnitude 7.1 earthquake that caused damage in the Anchorage area in November 2018.

"This earthquake released about 15 times as much energy as that

earthquake, said West, the state seismologist.

More than a dozen aftershocks of magnitude 4.0 or higher were reported immediately after the earthquake, he said by telephone from the Alaska Earthquake Center at the University of Alaska Fairbanks.

"We got people here who are going to be working all night," West said early Wednesday morning. "These aftershocks will go and go and go and go."

The Alaska-Aleutian Trench was also where a magnitude 9.2 quake in 1964 was centered. That remains the second most powerful earthquake ever recorded. The temblor and ensuing tsunami caused widespread damage and killed 131 people, some as far away as Oregon and California. Alaska is the most actively seismic state. Nearly 25,000 earthquakes have been recorded in Alaska since Jan. 1, according to the center.

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