

## 7.7 magnitude earthquake causes small tsunami on South Pacific islands

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Steam billows from Lake Vui in the volcano crater of Mount Manaro on the island of Ambae, part of the Vanuatu islands chain, Dec. 8, 2005. A 7.7 magnitude earthquake Friday, May 19, 2023, in the far Pacific created small tsunami waves in Vanuatu. Credit: AP Photo/Rick Rycroft

A 7.7 magnitude earthquake caused a small tsunami to wash ashore on

South Pacific islands Friday. No damage has been reported, and the threat passed in a few hours.

Waves 60 centimeters (2 feet) above tide level were measured off Lenakel, a port town in Vanuatu, the Pacific Tsunami Warning Center said. Smaller waves were measured by coastal or deep-ocean gauges elsewhere off Vanuatu and off New Caledonia and New Zealand.

Vanuatu's National Disaster Management Office advised people to evacuate from [coastal areas](#) to higher grounds. The office said people should listen to their radios for updates and take other precautions.

New Zealand's National Emergency Management Agency said it expected coastal areas would experience strong and unusual currents, with unpredictable surges at the shoreline. The PTWC said small waves of 20 centimeters (8 inches) above tides were measured at North Cape, New Zealand.

The tsunami danger passed within a few hours, though the center said small sea level changes may continue.

The U.S. Geological Survey said the quake's epicenter was near the Loyalty Islands, a province in the French territory of New Caledonia. The quake was 37 kilometers (23 miles) deep.

The area is southwest of Fiji, north of New Zealand and east of Australia where the Coral Sea meets the Pacific.

The region is part of the "Ring of Fire," an arc of seismic faults around the Pacific Ocean where most of the world's earthquakes occur.

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