

Beat: News

6.6 earthquake strikes Panama-Costa Rica border region, no casualties

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USPA News - A strong earthquake struck the Pacific Ocean just off the coasts of western Panama and southeastern Costa Rica on early Monday, causing some people to flee their homes but there were no immediate reports of damage or casualties, seismologists and officials said. The 6.6-magnitude earthquake at 3:54 a.m. local time (0854 GMT) was centered about 39 kilometers (24 miles) south-southeast of Puerto Armuelles, a city on Panama's Pacific coast in the western province of Chiriquí, which borders Costa Rica.

It struck about 20 kilometers (12.4 miles) deep, making it a shallow earthquake, according to the U.S. Geological Survey (USGS). USGS computer models estimated that some 374,000 people in the region near the epicenter may have experienced moderate to strong shaking, while as many as 6.3 million others may have felt light shaking. Residents across western Panama and southeastern Costa Rica reported feeling the tremor, which was followed by small aftershocks. "It was a very strong earthquake. It shook the whole building," said a resident in Chiriquí, where a hospital and other buildings were evacuated as a precaution. Panama's National System for Civil Protection said there were no immediate reports of serious damage or casualties, but assessments were still underway. The Pacific Tsunami Warning Center, which initially measured the strength of the earthquake at 6.7, said there was no threat of a tsunami. Panama and Costa Rica are on the so-called 'Pacific Ring of Fire', an arc of fault lines circling the Pacific Basin that is prone to frequent and large earthquakes. A strong 6.5-magnitude earthquake struck on land just east of Puerto Armuelles in December 2003, killing two people and damaging buildings.

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