

Earthquake in New Zealand causes massive damage

By Eleanor Ainge Roy, The Guardian, adapted by Newsela staff on 11.16.16

Word Count **638**



TOP: A landslide covers a section of State Highway 1 near Kaikoura, New Zealand, November 14, 2016, after a powerful earthquake. BOTTOM: Location of the quake and aftershocks, data courtesy of New Zealand GeoNet project and its sponsors Earthquake Commission (EQC), GNS Science and Land Information New Zealand (LINZ) Photo: David Alexander/SNPA via AP

A large earthquake hit the South Island of New Zealand on Monday. The English-speaking country is in the southern Pacific Ocean. It is an island nation made up of two main islands, North Island and South Island.

The quake's center was on South Island. There, it swallowed roads and twisted train tracks. It left towns and cities smashed and deserted. Two people in the country have died in the disaster and New Zealand is struggling to recover.

Tens of thousands of people left their homes in the middle of the night on Monday. They sought higher ground following an alert along the east coast for a possible tsunami. They were worried the earthquake would cause a giant wave to hit the shore. Tsunami warnings were later lifted.

Coastal Town Is Worst Hit

John Key is New Zealand's prime minister. He said the damage from the earthquake was likely to cost at least “a couple of billion dollars” to fix.

The Red Cross said its volunteers were struggling to reach affected areas.

The worst hit area was Kaikoura, a coastal town of about 2,000 people. The town is famous for whale watching. Kaikoura was almost completely isolated by the earthquake. Roads were closed and phone lines were down.

A state of emergency was declared there. Six people with serious injuries were flown out for medical help. Police said one person died in Kaikoura and another died in Mount Lyford, a nearby ski resort.

The devastation has been linked to two significant shakes under South Island. The first was a magnitude 7.5-earthquake just after midnight. This was followed by a magnitude 6.8-aftershock during the day. Magnitude is a measure of how much energy is released in an earthquake. An earthquake between 7.0 and 7.9 is considered to be a major one. It can cause serious damage. Aftershocks, or small earthquakes, frequently follow a major quake. Tsunamis can also happen.

Flood Warnings Follow Quake

Power was lost in many small South Island towns and in parts of Wellington, New Zealand's capital. Wellington sits at the southern tip of North Island. Operations to help the city went slowly on Monday afternoon because of heavy rain and wind moving into the most affected areas. Forecasters warned of possible flooding.

A group of scientists in the United States studied the earthquake. They said it hit near Hanmer Springs, a town about 60 miles from the city of Christchurch. Christchurch is still recovering from a 2011 earthquake that killed 185 people.

On one railway, the line had moved several yards. Photos from the New Zealand Defense Force showed an entire stretch of train tracks that had slipped over a road and on to rocks by the sea.

Nick Kingstone is a 39-year-old marketing manager living in downtown Wellington. He said the repeated shakes felt like “living on a sleeping dragon who’s waking up.”

People were very nervous in the capital because there are several fault lines under the city that have not moved for a long time, he said. A fault line is a break in the Earth's crust underground. An earthquake occurs when rocks on either side of the crack slide past each other.

Rescue Helicopters Sent To Kaikoura

New Zealand is in an area in the world called the "Ring of Fire," a huge arc of volcanoes and ocean cliffs that go around the Pacific Ocean. More earthquakes happen in this ring than any other place on the planet.

There were reports of a train trapped north of Kaikoura. At least one major building collapsed in the town itself.

St. John, a charitable health-care group, sent rescue helicopters to Kaikoura. They flew in emergency medical equipment and extra paramedics. Military helicopters were sent from Christchurch to determine the damage, reach people who might be stranded and send out search-and-rescue teams.

Quiz

- 1 What are the MAIN ideas of the article?
 - (A) A large earthquake hit New Zealand and did a lot of damage. New Zealand is in a part of the world where many earthquakes happen.
 - (B) New Zealand's South Island experienced a large earthquake on Monday. The other main island that is part of the country is North Island.
 - (C) New Zealand's prime minister declared a state of emergency after the earthquake. Six people with injuries were flown out for medical help.
 - (D) A large earthquake is one that is between 7.0 and 7.9 magnitude. Aftershocks and tsunamis can often follow large earthquakes.

- 2 Which sentence from the article is MOST important to include in the summary?
 - (A) It is an island nation made up of two main islands, North Island and South Island.
 - (B) They were worried the earthquake would cause a giant wave to hit the shore.
 - (C) The devastation has been linked to two significant shakes under South Island.
 - (D) A group of scientists in the United States studied the earthquake.

- 3 What is the relationship between fault lines and earthquakes?
 - (A) Large magnitude earthquakes cause fault lines to form.
 - (B) Sliding rocks passing each other along fault lines cause earthquakes.
 - (C) Many earthquakes in an area deepen the fault lines there.
 - (D) Shifting fault lines change the places in the world where earthquakes are likely.

- 4 What effect did the weather in New Zealand have on help reaching affected cities?
 - (A) Clear skies allowed helicopters to quickly reach cities in need.
 - (B) Strong wind and rain slowed the efforts of volunteers and rescuers.
 - (C) Sun and heat dried mudslides so roads could be cleared.
 - (D) Cloudy skies limited visibility for rescue vehicles on roads.

Answer Key

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