

7.2 Magnitude Huge Earthquake Rocks Japan

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A 7.2-magnitude earthquake that struck off the coast of Japan this afternoon has triggered a small tsunami, but with no reports of damage. The quake hit at 1.54pm about 169 kilometres off the city of Sendai in northern Japan at a depth of 14 kilometres.



The Japan Meteorological Agency issued a tsunami warning of up to 50 centimetres for the east coast of the main Honshu island.

A 60-centimetre wave was first reported at Ofunato port half an hour after the quake without causing any damage.

"We have confirmed that small tsunami have come up on the shores, but we have no reports of damage at this point," said Shinobu Nagano, an emergency and disaster response official in Iwate prefecture.

"We are still trying to determine the impact of the quake."

Yoshiyuki Sato, an official at Kurihara City in Miyagi prefecture, about 300 kilometres north-east of Tokyo, told Reuters: "First I felt a jolt that pushed from underneath, then a big sideways tremor that lasted for about 20 seconds.

"The tremor was relatively big but things did not fall off the shelves in the city government building."

Australian James Hodges, who is based in Tokyo and has worked in Japan for two decades, said he was used to experiencing tremors.

"The only difference this time was that the tremor seemed to last a rather long time, without spiking to a greater intensity ... [T]here seem to be no major dramas here in western Tokyo at the moment."

Residents in the rural seaside areas where the quake was felt most strongly reported no immediate damage.

"It continued for about 30 seconds, but I don't see anything that looks different," said Yoshio Hoshi, a retired fisherman in Miyagi prefecture.

The Pacific Tsunami Warning Centre said a local tsunami might be generated as a result of the undersea jolt, although "no destructive widespread tsunami threat exists based on historical earthquake and tsunami data".

The Joint Australian Tsunami Warning Centre said there was no tsunami threat to the Australian mainland, islands or territories.

Daniel Jaksa, senior duty seismologist at Geoscience Australia, said the earthquake would have been felt in Japan, "but it's not likely to cause any great distress".

"7.2 earthquakes are quite common in the northern part of the Honshu. They get one of these every couple of years."

An official at the National Police Agency said there was no information on damage from the quake so far.

Tohoku Electric Power said its Onagawa nuclear plant was operating normally after the quake. Tokyo Electric Power also said there was no impact on its power plants in the region.

Bullet trains resumed running in north-eastern Japan after stopping briefly, Kyodo news agency reported.

Earthquakes are common in Japan, one of the world's most seismically active areas. The country accounts for about 20 per cent of the world's earthquakes of magnitude 6 or greater.

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