



Tremor shakes Delmarva

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SALISBURY -- The U.S. Geological Survey says aftershocks are highly likely following the 5.8 magnitude earthquake reported Tuesday northwest of Richmond.

Residents throughout Delmarva and as far away from the epicenter as New York City and southern Canada reported feeling the earthquake as it reverberated through the area.

"A (5.8) is certainly not a small earthquake," said Michael Scott, director of the Eastern Shore Regional GIS Cooperative at Salisbury University. "We have had earthquakes this strong in the east before, but it doesn't happen very often."

The USGS classifies magnitude 5 earthquakes as those that can cause considerable damage and magnitude 6 as any earthquake that causes severe damage.

The earthquake is the largest to originate in Virginia since May 1897 and was centered at a depth of 4.6 miles, according to the USGS.

"Here in Henson Hall on campus, we have computer monitors that were on free-standing desks and the computer monitors were actually swinging back and forth," Scott said. "But we have already talked to

people outside who haven't felt anything."

Salisbury Police Chief Barbara Duncan said there were no accidents or damages reported due to the quake. The police department building, however, did experience structural damage.

Mayor Jim Ireton said he and other city officials met with the emergency management coordinator to determine the city's plan of action. Cracks were reported in windows at the Government Office Building in Salisbury; however, staff members cannot be sure if they were caused by the earthquake.

The earthquake hit just as the Somerset County Commissioners were getting ready to convene a 2 p.m. meeting of the County Roads Board and were already seated in the meeting room.

"The chairs moved like they were on water skis," said Commissioner Jerry Boston.

Somerset County employees ran outside

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when the quake rattled windows and walls and shifted large filing cabinets.

"You could feel the whole building moving," said County Administrator Cindy Ward.

Matt Likovich, a spokesman for Delmarva Power, said no power outages were reported in the area.

Delmarva residents as far south as Cape Charles, as well as those vacationing in Ocean City, felt the tremors.

"The whole building shook," said Heather Arcos, Cape Charles town manager.

The Chesapeake Bay Bridge in Maryland underwent inspections into Tuesday night; however, it was believed there was not any damages to the bridge. The Chesapeake Bay Bridge-Tunnel in Virginia also underwent a precautionary inspection after the earthquake was reported.

"We certainly felt the quake itself but, luckily, we were not affected by it," said Tom Anderson, deputy director with the Chesapeake Bay Bridge-Tunnel.

Angel Rivera of Philadelphia was vacationing with his children on the Boardwalk in Ocean City, but didn't notice tremors. He only learned there had been an earthquake when his cellphone began ringing.

"I was like, 'Are you kidding me?' " he said while at the Jolly Roger Amusement Park on the Boardwalk. "They're still enjoying it, but if they had felt an earthquake, it might be a

different story."

Because the quake's epicenter was inland, those who live on the beach and concerned about waves had no cause to worry, said Charles Langston, a professor at the Center for Earthquake Research and Information.

"This earthquake was relatively small," he said. "The ground motion and shaking was probably amplified on the water. I wouldn't be surprised if someone felt it on a boat, but it would not create a tsunami."

Those on the beach may have felt it a little more than their neighbors a few miles inland.

Beth Barney, a Berlin resident, experienced earthquakes when she lived in California, but didn't expect to feel any after moving to Worcester County.

"When I lived in California, we would have just gone, 'Oh, it was an aftershock,' and walked away," Barney said. "We took it for granted, but here it's not normal."

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Scott said this earthquake was different than the earthquakes that are common in California and the West Coast, because the hard-rock soil common on the west coast amplifies the waves, causing them to travel farther.

The low depth of the earthquake has also made it less severe than it could have otherwise been.

"Sometimes a deep earthquake can have even more significant damage," Scott said.

The Virginia-based earthquake was not the only earthquake within the United States on Tuesday. Colorado experienced a 5.3 magnitude quake at 1:46 a.m. EST, after having a 4.6 magnitude quake Aug. 22.

While no structural damage was reported at the Salisbury-Ocean City: Wicomico Regional Airport, according to airport manager Bob Bryant, passengers flying out were delayed for about 20 minutes while airport personnel in Philadelphia finished airfield inspections.

» Staff Writers Sharahn Boykin, Gloria Bradley, Liz Holland, Sarah Lake, Calum McKinney, Scott Muska and Ethan Rothstein, as well as The Associated Press contributed to this report.

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