

## International

### 7.1 Earthquake Topples Homes in Honduras, Belize

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TEGUCIGALPA, Honduras -- A strong earthquake struck early Thursday off the coast of Honduras, collapsing shacks in Honduras and Belize and sending people running into the streets in their pajamas as far away as Guatemala City. No injuries or deaths were immediately reported.

The magnitude-7.1 quake struck at 3:24 a.m. (0824 GMT) at the relatively shallow depth of 6 miles (10 kilometers), according to the U.S. Geological Survey in Golden, Colorado. The epicenter was 80 miles (130 kilometers) northeast of La Ceiba, Honduras, and 200 miles (320 kilometers) from the capital, Tegucigalpa.

Ana Maria Rivera, spokeswoman for Honduras' Permanent Emergency Commission, said it was felt strongly across Honduras' Caribbean coast.

"People ran from their homes in alarm," she said. "The quake was felt in almost the entire country."

Juan Sevilla, a spokesman for Honduras' firefighters, said wooden homes collapsed in Puerto Cortes, 120 miles (200 kilometers) north of Tegucigalpa, as did a stadium wall in Comayagua, 60 miles (100 kilometers) north of the capital.

Osman Hernandez, a spokesman for the mayor of El Progreso, told Radio Satellite that a major bridge across the Uluá River suffered major damage.

In Belize, people rushed from their homes as glasses and framed pictures crashed off of shelves. At least five wooden houses on stilts collapsed in three towns and a water tower toppled in the town of Independence, local officials said. Electricity was out all the way to the Mexican border.

"I urge you not to panic, but to remain calm," National Emergency Minister Melvin Hulse said on the radio. "Your government is monitoring the situation and will be keeping you informed."

A tsunami watch was discontinued for Honduras, Belize and Guatemala.

Raul Gonzalez, a receptionist at the Gran Hotel Sula in the northern Honduran city of San Pedro Sula, said guests ran into the streets in their pajamas.

"I ran out of the building and kept going for about a block before I looked back and everything had calmed," he said. "It was really strong. I have never felt anything like that."

He said the hotel did not suffer damage.

People ran into the streets as far away as Guatemala City, but firefighter Byron Juarez said a survey of firefighting offices throughout Guatemala revealed no reports of major damage.

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Associated Press writers Juan Carlos Llorca in Guatemala City and Patrick Jones in Belize City contributed to this report.

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