

Powerful Chile quake kills two, sparks tsunami alert

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Santiago: At least five people were killed and a million people evacuated after a massive earthquake jolted Chile, shattering window panes, forcing people to run onto the streets in panic and triggering a tsunami alert for the country's coastline.

The quake was felt as far away as Argentina, where buildings also swayed.

In coastal La Serena, in the north of Chile, "people were running in all directions," said resident Gloria Navarro. A similar fear seized residents in Argentina, while El Salvador, in Central America, was also on the lookout for destructive waves.

The epicentre was out at sea, 246 km from Santiago, Xinhua reported, citing the United States Geological Service.

Early reports indicate the earthquake occurred shortly at 7.55 p.m. local time at a depth of 10 km.

A tsunami alert was immediately issued by the Chilean interior ministry and by the US' Pacific Tsunami Warning Center.

Chile and Peru are on high alert, although the alert was spread across a wide area reaching as far as Hawaii.

The magnitude of the earthquake was first reported at 7.2 by the University of Chile's Seismological Service and later revised up to 7.7.

The USGS first reported the magnitude of the quake at 7.9 and revised it up to 8.3.

There have been no reports of damage or injuries in the minutes following the earthquake but Chile has dispatched its Minister of the Interior Jorge Burgos to the zone to investigate.

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