

Tsunami hits New Zealand after 7.8 magnitude earthquake

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Wellington: Soon after a powerful earthquake measuring 7.8 jolted central New Zealand, tsunami waves hit the northeast coast of the South Island, the Ministry of Civil Defence and Emergency Management of the country said today.

People evacuated from buildings along Dixon Street stand on the street

As per reports, a tsunami wave struck at about 1:50 a.m. and the residents living in low-lying areas anywhere along the country's east coast were warned to move to higher ground.

The ministry had earlier sent out a message on Twitter saying there was no tsunami threat to the country. But then it sent out another message "situation has changed - tsunami is possible" before reporting that a tsunami had, in fact, hit.

There were no immediate reports of any major damage or injuries in Christchurch.

The magnitude-7.8 earthquake struck in a mostly rural area close to the city of Christchurch but appeared to be more strongly felt in the capital, Wellington, more than 200 kilometers (120 miles) away. The quake was followed by a number of strong aftershocks.

The quake knocked out New Zealand's emergency call number, 111, for about 10 minutes, police reported. It caused items to fall from shelves and windows to break in Wellington, and forced hundreds of tourists onto the streets as hotels were evacuated.

The quake, which struck just after midnight Sunday, was centered 93 kilometers (57 miles) northeast of Christchurch, according to the U.S. Geological Survey. It was at a relatively shallow depth of 10 kilometers (6 miles). Earthquakes tend to be more strongly felt on the surface when they're shallow.

New Zealand sits on the "Ring of Fire," an arc of seismic faults around the Pacific Ocean where earthquakes are common.

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