

Earthquake in Haiti



THE 2010 HAITI EARTHQUAKE WAS A CATASTROPHIC MAGNITUDE 7.0 MW EARTHQUAKE, WITH AN EPICENTER NEAR THE TOWN OF LÉOGÂNE, APPROXIMATELY 25 KM (16 MILES) WEST OF PORT-AU-PRINCE, HAITI'S CAPITAL. THE EARTHQUAKE OCCURRED AT 16:53 LOCAL TIME (21:53 UTC) ON TUESDAY, 12 JANUARY 2010.[5][6]





By 24 January, at least 52 aftershocks measuring 4.5 or greater had been recorded. An estimated three million people were affected by the quake.



The Haitian government reported that an estimated 316,000 people had died, 300,000 had been injured and 1,000,000 made homeless.



The government of Haiti also estimated that 250,000 residences and 30,000 commercial buildings had collapsed or were severely damaged.

The earthquake caused major damage in Port-au-Prince, Jacmel and other settlements in the region. Many notable landmark buildings were significantly damaged or destroyed, including the Presidential Palace, the National Assembly building, the Port-au-Prince Cathedral, and the main jail.



Among those killed were Archbishop of Port-au-Prince Joseph Serge Miot and opposition leader Micha Gaillard. The headquarters of the United Nations Stabilization Mission in Haiti (MINUSTAH), located in the capital, collapsed, killing many, including the Mission's Chief, Hédi Annabi.



Many countries responded to appeals for humanitarian aid, pledging funds and dispatching rescue and medical teams, engineers and support personnel.



Communication systems, air, land, and sea transport facilities, hospitals, and electrical networks had been damaged by the earthquake, which hampered rescue and aid efforts; confusion over who was in charge, air traffic congestion, and problems with prioritisation of flights further complicated early relief work.



Port-au-Prince's morgues were overwhelmed with tens of thousands of bodies. These had to be buried in mass graves.

As rescues tailed off, supplies, medical care and sanitation became priorities. Delays in aid distribution led to angry appeals from aid workers and survivors, and looting and sporadic violence were observed.

On 22 January the United Nations noted that the emergency phase of the relief operation was drawing to a close, and on the following day the Haitian government officially called off the search for survivors.





The island of Hispaniola, shared by Haiti and the Dominican Republic, is seismically active and has a history of destructive earthquakes. During Haiti's time as a French colony, earthquakes were recorded by French historian Moreau de Saint-Méry (1750–1819)

He described damage done by an earthquake in 1751, writing that "only one masonry building had not collapsed" in Port-au-Prince; he also wrote that the "whole city collapsed" in the 1770 Port-au-Prince earthquake. Cap-Haïtien, other towns in the north of Haiti and the Dominican Republic, and the Sans-Souci Palace were destroyed during an earthquake on 7 May 1842. A magnitude 8.0 earthquake struck the Dominican Republic and shook Haiti on 4 August 1946, producing a tsunami that killed 1,790 people and injured many others.



Haiti is the poorest country in the Western Hemisphere, and is ranked 149th of 182 countries on the Human Development Index. The Australian government's travel advisory site had previously expressed concerns that Haitian emergency services would be unable to cope in the event of a major disaster, and the country is considered "economically vulnerable" by the Food and Agriculture Organization. Haiti is no stranger to natural disasters. In addition to earthquakes, it has been struck frequently by tropical cyclones, which have caused flooding and widespread damage. The most recent cyclones to hit the island before the earthquake were Tropical Storm Fay and Hurricanes Gustav, Hanna and Ike, all in the summer of 2008, causing nearly 800 deaths.

Amongst the widespread devastation and damage throughout Port-au-Prince and elsewhere, vital infrastructure necessary to respond to the disaster was severely damaged or destroyed. This included all hospitals in the capital; air, sea, and land transport facilities; and communication systems.





The quake affected the three Médecins Sans Frontières (Doctors Without Borders) medical facilities around Port-au-Prince, causing one to collapse completely. A hospital in Pétionville, a wealthy suburb of Port-au-Prince, also collapsed, as did the St. Michel District Hospital in the southern town of Jacmel, which was the largest referral hospital in south-east Haiti.

The quake seriously damaged the control tower at Toussaint L'Ouverture International Airport. Damage to the Port-au-Prince seaport rendered the harbor unusable for immediate rescue operations, although Gonaïves sea port in northern Haiti remained operational.



Roads were blocked with road debris or the surfaces broken. The main road linking Port-au-Prince with Jacmel remained blocked ten days after the earthquake, hampering delivery of aid to Jacmel. When asked why the road had not been opened, Hazem el-Zein, head of the south-east division of the UN World Food Programme said that "We ask the same questions to the people in charge...They promise rapid response. To be honest, I don't know why it hasn't been done. I can only think that their priority must be somewhere else."



There was considerable damage to communications infrastructure. The public telephone system was not available, and two of Haiti's largest cellular telephone providers, Digicel and Comcel Haiti, both reported that their services had been affected by the earthquake. Fibre-optic connectivity was also disrupted.



According to Reporters Sans Frontières (RSF), Radio Lumière, which broadcasts out of Port-au-Prince and reaches 90 percent of Haiti, was initially knocked off the air, but it was able to resume broadcasting across most of its network within a week. According to RSF, some 20 of about 50 stations that were active in the capital region prior to the earthquake were back on air a week after the quake.