Quake rocks Japan, tsunami dissipates

(TOKYO, JAPAN) - A powerful earthquake measuring 7.3 on the open-ended Richter scale rocked northern Japan Sunday, injuring more than 20 people, collapsing buildings and triggering a 6-foot tidal wave offshore.

The tremor split open streets and wrecked walls in Urayasu, the hardest hit area, and the townspeople cautiously walked over cracks in the road surface in a drizzling rain.

(According to the Civil Defense office in HILO, the earthquake was not of sufficient magnitude to generate a Pacific-wide tsunami.)

"Zoom, and everything began rolling from east to west," said Juni Hisaoku of the Urayasu Town office. "Glass cups and windows broke one after another and I thought the house was going to fall down." Urayasu police said more than 20 people were treated at the Red Cross Hospital in Urayasu, a town of 15,000 people frequently hit by quakes.

The victims included an old man whose shoulder bone was broken by a falling restaurant wall.

Police said preliminary reports indicated many homes had collapsed and there was considerable damage to windows and furniture.

In Sapporo, 80 miles northeast of Urayasu, there were reports of gas leaks, apparently caused by the battering of the tremor.

At a downtown street, gas grated out from underground and police sealed off the traffic from the area.

The Meteorological Agency said the quake occurred at 9:32 p.m. EST Saturday — 11:32 a.m. Sunday local time — and the epicenter was estimated to be at the sea bottom offshore of Urayasu in Hokkaido.

The Japanese government spokesman said the quake measured 7.3 on the Richter scale.

In Hong Kong, the government information service said the Royal Observatory measured the quake at 6.8 on the Richter scale. The U.S. Geophysical Survey in Golden, Colo., measured the earthquake at 6.6.

A tidal warning was issued after the Maritime safety agency reported that it had observed a 6-foot high tidal wave offshore of Urayasu. But the huge wave apparently did not reach the shores and the warning was lifted about an hour and half after the quake hit.

In Manila, the Philippine Weather Agency said a mild earthquake lasting 10 seconds shook Camarines Sur Province, 170 miles southwest of the capital, at 7:30 p.m. EST Saturday, about 40 minutes before the Japanese quake.

The weak tremor was also felt in Davao, capital of the adjoining Davao Norte Province. No casualties or damages were reported.

By CHERYL CLARK

A medium-sized earthquake startled residents of Borrego Springs and parts of Imperial County shortly before 1 a.m. yesterday, rattling a few dishes and sending a few dogs barking into the night.

But the tiny tremble, whose epicenter was about 16 miles southeast of Borrego Springs at 12:53 a.m., only registered 4.5 on the Richter scale.

Almost everyone who felt the brief quaking simply went back to sleep.

According to Kate Hutton, staff seismologist for the National Institute of Technology at Pasadena, yesterday's earthquake was an average, routine California incident, "a good window rattle" that came nowhere near the scale of the desert's 1989 quake that registered 6.4 along the area's Coyote Creek fault.

But Hutton said it is still too early to know on which faults the earthquake occurred. She said it was so small that it probably did not break the desert's surface. She said it was still too early to know on which faults the earthquake occurred.

Mark Legg, a research assistant at UCSD's Institute of Geophysics and Planetary Physics, said the quake probably startled the San Jacinto or Agua Caliente faults in an area generally known as "Earthquake Valley," near Borrego Hot Springs.

He said he felt a slight trembling in his home in Santee.

Hank Roloff, resident manager of the Borrego Roadrunner Club, also took yesterday's tremor in stride.

"This was just a sharp shock," he said. "I've had a long history of being in earthquakes, and when you start to roll, that's when you start heading for the trees."

Roloff said he was in Anchorage, Alaska, during the 1964 earthquake that sent the Richter needle to 8.2.

"That was a good one," he said. "The bluffs and the city caved in.""Sheriff's deputies in Borrego and fire officials reported no damage or injuries from the Borrego quake, which lasted only a few seconds.

Borrego teacher Lynne Creynn turned the incident into a field trip for her 8th graders, about half of whom had felt their beds rocking and windows rattling the night before.

The class went hunting for signs of surface rupture, climbed atop boulders and hiked all over Shelter Valley. "But there wasn't any sign," Creynn said. "We just couldn't see anything."

James Clavell of Borrego said his dog let out a little bark when the tremor began, but he was not concerned.

"We could hear the lamp shaking," he said. "We could hear the lamp shaking." "We could hear the lamp shaking." "We could hear the lamp shaking."

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Quake Shakes Japan

As many as 31 aftershocks rattled northeastern Japan today in the wake of a major earthquake that struck Hokkaido, the country's northermost island. Meanwhile, on the island of Honshu, spring rains were blamed for a series of avalanches that killed 15 mountain climbers. In Hokkaido, more than 100 people were injured and 80 buildings toppled in Sunday's quake, which registered 7.3 on the Richter scale.