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‘God Help Me’: Kamchatka Residents Recount Massive 8.8 Magnitude Earthquake

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Valeria Kosilova / TASS

Russia’s Kamchatka region has been rattled by one of the strongest earthquakes ever recorded, with residents describing feelings of shock and fear as buildings shook around them.

The 8.8 magnitude earthquake struck near the Kamchatka peninsula early Wednesday, generating tsunamis of up to four meters (12 feet) across the Pacific and sparking evacuations from Hawaii to Japan.

Several people were injured in Russia by the quake, state media reported, but none of them suffered serious injuries.

Residents of Petropavlovsk-Kamchatsky, a city 149 kilometers (93 miles) away from the earthquake epicenter, described swaying buildings, falling furniture, “dancing” cars and even

shaking harbor cranes.

Petropavlovsk-Kamchatsky Mayor Yevgeny Belyaev said public services were on high alert and damage inspections were underway. Though part of a kindergarten facade collapsed, no injuries were reported.

“Everything’s fine, but everyone is absolutely freaked out. It was the strongest earthquake in decades,” a Kamchatka native with family in the region told The Moscow Times.

“It’s honestly surprising there wasn’t more damage, apart from one school,” he added, asking to remain anonymous. “Good thing no one was inside.”

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He said his relatives in Petropavlovsk-Kamchatsky planned to leave the city for their dacha due to the recent seismic activity in the region, and that many others appeared to be doing the same.

“For now, they’ll be staying at the dacha,” he said. “It’s been shaking there for a while. The ground’s been shifting for months.”

Other Kamchatka residents took to social media to describe their experiences.

“People gathered near our house. Everyone came out, one woman in curlers, another in one sock, but in slippers,” one person wrote. “They were also in pajamas. Someone later ventured out to get a thermos. Everyone drank tea.”

“I have been living in Kamchatka for 42 years, but it was the first time I felt such an earthquake. I screamed so much: ‘God help me,’ although I am generally calm during earthquakes. Everything at home was smashed,” said another.

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Some business owners even appeared to be trying to capitalize on the situation, with one resident describing skyrocketing prices at resorts as people moved to safer areas.

“My neighbors were focused on stuffing the trunk of the car with clothes and provisions in a hurry,” they said. “They say that the price for a place at resorts has increased tenfold.”

According to the local edition of the Argumenti i Fakti newspaper, ambulance crews in the city reported a spike in calls after the earthquake hit, with residents complaining of high blood pressure, arrhythmia and epilepsy.

“I’ve never seen an earthquake on the street, and today I saw one,” another person said. “It's horrible! The bushes and cars were swaying! You could see the windows vibrating in houses.”

Even some children posted their reactions on social media.

“I am 10 years old. I was home alone, my mom was at work,” one child wrote. “I was sleeping, and I felt a strong shaking! I ran out into the corridor. About 30-40 minutes later, my mom came running from work, she hugged me in tears. We were really scared!”

Mack Tubridy contributed reporting.

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