Beat: News

BREAKING NEWS: UPDATE 4 -- Small tsunami waves hit B.C., Alaska after 7.7 quake

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USPA News - A powerful and shallow earthquake struck the Queen Charlotte Islands of British Columbia on Saturday evening, generating small tsunami waves which hit coastlines in Canada and the U.S. state of Alaska, officials said. A tsunami warning is also in effect for Hawaii.

The 7.7-magnitude earthquake at 8:04 p.m. local time (0304 GMT Sunday) was centered on Moresby Island in the Queen Charlotte Islands, or about 202 kilometers (126 miles) south-southwest of the Canadian port city of Prince Rupert. It struck about 17.5 kilometers (10.9 miles) deep, making it a shallow earthquake, according to the United States Geological Survey (USGS). The agency estimated some 9,000 people near the epicenter may have experienced "moderate" to "strong" shaking which could result in light to moderate damage while around 103,000 others may have felt "light" tremors. Computer models showed some damage is possible but the impact is likely to remain localized. "A major earthquake occurred in the Haida Gwaii region," the Geological Survey of Canada (GSC) said on its website. "It was felt across much of north-central BC, including Haida Gwaii, Prince Rupert, Quesnel, and Houston. There have been no reports of damage at this time." A tsunami warning was immediately issued for nearby coastal areas, but additional warnings and advisories were issued nearly three hours later after small tsunami waves were recorded. The largest tsunami wave, relative to normal sea level, was a 50-centimeter (19.6-inch) wave off the coast of Langara Island in British Columbia. As of 0600 GMT, tsunami warnings remained in effect for the coastal areas of British Columbia and Alaska from the northern tip of Vancouver Island, B.C. to Cape Decision, Alaska. The Pacific Tsunami Warning Center also issued a tsunami warning for Hawaii, warning that damaging waves could arrive after 10:28 p.m. HST. Tsunami advisories were also issued for the coastal areas of British Columbia, from the Washington-British Columbia border to the northern tip of Vancouver Island, and for coastal areas of northern California and southern Oregon, from Gualala Point, California to the Douglas-Lane County Line, Oregon. "Tsunami warnings mean that a tsunami with significant widespread inundation is imminent, expected or occurring," the center said in a bulletin. "Warnings indicate that widespread dangerous coastal flooding accompanied by powerful currents is possible and may continue for several hours after the initial wave arrival." Environment Canada also issued tsunami warnings and advisories for the same region, and the British Columbia Provincial Emergency Program warned people in the region to move to higher ground. "If you are in a low lying coastal area you are at risk and must move to higher ground or inland now," a bulletin said. "Do not return until directed to do so." The initial earthquake was followed by an aftershock about ten minutes later, at 8:14 p.m. local time (0314 GMT Sunday), according to the USGS. It said the aftershock, which had a preliminary magnitude of 5.8, was centered just off Moresby Island. It struck at a depth of approximately 10 kilometers (6.2 miles).

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