Mexico earthquake: Death toll rises, rescue attempts continue

By Nicole Chavez, CNN

Story highlights
- Death toll rises to 225, including 21 kids in Coapa district school
- Strong earthquake comes on anniversary of devastating 1985 quake

(CNN) Rescuers in hard hats and masks descended Wednesday on Mexico City in search of survivors after a deadly earthquake struck the region.

"The priority now is continue rescuing those who are still trapped and provide medical attention to the injured," President Enrique Peña Nieto said, calling the quake -- the second to shake Mexico in 12 days -- "a new national emergency."

The 7.1 magnitude quake turned dozens of buildings in central Mexico into dust and debris, killing at least 225 people.

According to Luis Felipe Puente, national coordinator of civil protection for the Interior Ministry, 94 of the deaths came in Mexico City -- which, with an urban area of more than 21 million people, is one of the most populous cities in the Western Hemisphere.

There were also 71 deaths in Morelos state, 43 in Puebla state, 12 in the state of Mexico, four in Guerrero state and one in Oaxaca state, according to Puente's tally. To provide some scope of the affected area, Oaxaca de Juarez, the capital of Oaxaca state, is almost 300 miles (480 kilometers) from Mexico City.

The country has declared three days of mourning for those killed in the quake, according to Mexico's Secretary of Public Function.
Volunteers and rescue workers search for children trapped inside at collapsed Enrique Rebsamen school in Mexico City.

Twenty-five bodies, 21 of them children, were found in the debris of the Enrique Rebsamen school in Mexico City's Coapa district, Puente said in a tweet. At least 30 children were missing as of Tuesday night, according to Peña Nieto.

"Unfortunately many people have lost their lives, including girls and boys in schools, buildings and houses. I want to express my condolences to those who lost a family member or a loved one. Mexico shares your grief," the President said.

Photos of missing students circulated on social media, while dozens of parents waited outside the school hoping to find them. The family of 7-year-old Jose Eduardo Huerta Rodriguez looked for hours through handwritten lists with names of those who had been rescued. They also visited the city's hospitals.

Late Tuesday night, a family member who had stayed outside the school called Jose's mother.

"He was still inside the school, and he was dead when they rescued him," his aunt Paola Rodriguez told CNN.

About a mile away, four people were killed and 40 more injured at the Monterrey Institute of Technology campus in Mexico City, the school said.

An unaccounted number of people are staying at shelters around the city after losing their homes. Schools have closed indefinitely, and millions remain without power.

Peña Nieto asked people to stay indoors and stay away from the streets while the rescue attempts continue. Still, residents are joining forces with rescue workers to search for survivors.

Mexico's soccer teams are also helping in the relief effort, with C.F. Monterrey, Tiburones Rojos de Veracruz, C.F. Pachuca, Santos Laguna, Puebla F.C. and Club Atlas urging people to bring water and nonperishables to stadiums and other facilities.

Photos: Deadly earthquake rocks central Mexico
Rescue workers remove rubble from a Mexico City building flattened by a magnitude 7.1 earthquake that struck the region Tuesday, September 19. For the second time in two weeks, a powerful temblor hit Mexico. A magnitude 8.1 quake struck off the country's southern coast on September

We all need to come together'
In the upscale district of Roma, one of the hardest-hit areas of Mexico City, Violeta Gaytan, was among many who fled the area Tuesday to get away from damaged buildings and a strong smell of gas. "There was a lot of people screaming, children everywhere. I saw people calling out for doctors and a lot of dust," the publicist said. Like others, Gaytan began to walk home. She expected it would take hours, but a man was driving around offering people rides to metro stations across the city.

Hours before Tuesday's earthquake, authorities held a citywide drill on the anniversary of an earthquake that killed an estimated 9,500 people in and around Mexico City in 1985, one the country's worst natural disasters. "This is one of those moments where we all need to come together," said Dorothy Munoz after she grabbed her dogs and raced to the street when the quake shook her apartment. Less than two weeks ago, a magnitude 8.1 earthquake struck off Mexico's southern coast, killing at least 90 people, according to the governor of the state of Oaxaca.

CNN's Eliott C. McLaughlin, AnneClaire Stapleton, Jennifer Hauser, Darran Simon, Artemis Mostaghian, Gustavo Ramirez, Elwyn Lopez, Catherine E. Shoichet, Amanda Jackson and Phil Gast contributed to this report.
More than 200 dead after magnitude-7.1 quake strikes Mexico; 'death toll will rise'

ABC News
8-10 minutes

More than 200 people are dead after a magnitude-7.1 earthquake rocked central Mexico Tuesday afternoon, hitting on the 32nd anniversary of the biggest quake to ever strike the country's capital.

SLIDESHOW: Pictures from the Mexico earthquake and the race for survival

The earthquake struck about 75 miles southeast of Mexico City but caused extensive damage there, leveling at least 44 buildings, including homes, schools and office buildings, according to Mexican President Enrique Pena Nieto, who did a
flyover of the city Tuesday afternoon.

Among the dead are at least 22 people, including students and at least two adults, from a collapsed primary school in the south of the city. Pena Nieto visited the school late Tuesday. He said the 22 bodies have been recovered but that 30 children and eight adults are still missing.

Rescuers were clawing at the wreckage looking for survivors late Tuesday, pausing to listen for voices. Relatives told The Associated Press they had received WhatsApp messages from two girls inside.

"Children are often the most vulnerable in emergencies such as this and we are particularly concerned because schools across the region were in session and filled with students," said Jorge Vidal, director of operations at Save the Children in Mexico.

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**Earthquake strikes Mexico**

A magnitude 7.1 earthquake struck near Mexico City less than two weeks after another powerful quake killed at least 98 people in southern Mexico.

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*Map locating earthquake that struck Mexico on September 19, 2017.*
Hanna Monsivais, programs coordinator at Save the Children in Mexico, said she has been out on the streets in Mexico City with hundreds of other people trying to help their neighbors. But entire street blocks have been cordoned off and numerous buildings are still too dangerous to enter because of the damage.

"Volunteers are bringing water, food, clothes, and face masks, so that they can help the official authorities move all the debris and rocks, because there are still people trapped under buildings," Monsivais said. "Every once in a while authorities ask for silence so they can hear the people who are still trapped. It's amazing what people are doing for others, but some people are clearly still in complete shock."

Many areas were still without power today and communications remained limited, Monsivais said.

"This night is going to be tough," she said. "For sure, tomorrow the death toll will rise."
Jose Garcia/AFP/Getty Images

Rescue teams work at the Rebsamen school in Mexico City, Sep. 20, 2017.

Mexico City's airport descended into chaos as the ground rippled and chunks of plaster fell from the walls when the earthquake hit, Dallas resident George Smallwood told ABC News.

"I felt the ground shaking, and I heard everyone screaming and starting to run," he said, adding that he initially thought he was in the middle of a terror attack.

Smallwood had stopped in Mexico City for a long layover after a vacation in Medellin, Colombia, and had spent the day exploring the capital. He was getting ready to go through security at Mexico City International Airport for his 3:35 p.m. flight back to Dallas when the earthquake struck.
The Associated Press

Volunteers and rescue workers search for children trapped inside at the collapsed Enrique Rebsamen school in Mexico City, Tuesday, Sept. 19, 2017.

The 7.1 earthquake stunned central Mexico, killing more than 100 people as buildings collapsed in plumemore +

Parts of the ceiling were "swinging back and forth," he said, and the panicked crowd took off "running in every different direction."

The tremors lasted for about six to seven minutes, he estimated. After the shaking subsided, first responders swooped in to help the injured and a fleet of military and police helicopters buzzed overhead, he said.

Smallwood's flight was rescheduled for 8:30 a.m. today, so he needed to find somewhere to stay for the night, he said.

Sashenka Guiterrez/EPA
Rescuers known as 'Los Topos' perform an honor guard to commemorate the 32nd anniversary of the 8.0 magnitude earthquake that occurred on September 19, 1985, in Mexico City, Mexico. Moments later a 7.1 magnitude earthquake shook the area.

Ronaldo Schemidt/AFP/Getty Images

People react as a 7.1 magnitude earthquake rattles Mexico City on September 19, 2017. An earthquake drill was being held in the capital at the time that today's quake struck.
More than 200 dead after magnitude-7.1 quake strikes Mexico; ‘death ... about:reader?url=http://abcnews.go.com/International/200-dead-magn...

Thousands of people on the capital’s main boulevard streamed out of buildings and into the street in panic after the quake struck.

"I was just paying at the supermarket and suddenly the floor went 'boom boom,'" Mexico City resident Lara Rodriguez told ABC News Tuesday. "People were obviously panicking."

Rodriguez added, "So I rushed out and I went to get my kid from school to make sure he was okay. Luckily everything was fine, but on the way there was a lot of debris. There were clouds of sort of dust flowing up as if a bomb had hit or something."

Dramatic images and footage depicted the destruction in Mexico City.

Flames and a large explosion could be seen in a video posted on Twitter, while a window panel was spotted falling from an office building in Mexico City in footage posted on Instagram.

Video filmed inside an office building showed the overhead lights swinging violently as the ground shook.

Meanwhile, chaos broke out in the newsroom of Milenio, a Mexican news site.

Several cars were damaged by falling debris.

Mexico City, built on a former lake bed, is one of the worst possible places for an earthquake to strike because of its soil, which can amplify shaking by factors of 100 or more, California-based seismologist Lucy Jones told ABC Los Angeles station KABC-TV. By comparison, the worst condition seen in Los
Angeles during an earthquake is shaking amplified by a factor of five, Jones said.

Alfredo Estrella/AFP/Getty Images

A car parked on the street in Mexico City sits under debris from a damaged building after a 7.1 earthquake rattled Mexico City on September 19, 2017. more +

Earlier in the day, earthquake drills were held in Mexico City to mark the anniversary of the Michoacán earthquake of 1985, which caused widespread death and injuries as well as catastrophic damage in Mexico City.

At the Instituto Morelos secondary school, which partly collapsed, school director Adelina Anzures told The Associated Press that the school conducted an earthquake drill in the morning, just two hours before the quake struck.
"I told them that it was not a game, that we should be prepared," Anzures said of the drill. When the quake came, she said the children and teachers rapidly filed out.

"It fell and everything inside was damaged," she said, adding that nobody was hurt.

ABC News


Narciso Suarez of Mexico City said he was attending a meeting on the ninth floor of a high-rise building when he first felt the quake's tremble. He said authorities in the building ordered those inside to shelter in place "at least until the shaking passed."

Suarez, who was also in the area Sept. 7 when the last earthquake struck, said Tuesday's tremble was "a lot worse."
With the pervious earthquake, "we immediately evacuated the building and we saw no damage," he said. "But today ... there are a lot of buildings that have collapsed in this neighborhood. It's really sad."

U.S. President Donald Trump tweeted Tuesday afternoon, "God bless the people of Mexico City. We are with you and will be there for you."

U.S. Vice President Mike Pence echoed the commander in chief's comments, tweeting, "Our hearts are with the people of Mexico City. We're thinking of you and, as @POTUS said, we are with you."

The U.S. State Department said in a statement, "We stand ready to provide assistance should our neighbors request our help. Our embassy in Mexico City has sent out public messages to U.S. citizens in Mexico, and the embassy stands ready to provide consular assistance to any U.S. citizens who may have been affected. We offer our condolences to any who were injured or lost loved ones."

ABC News' Fergal Gallagher, Benjamin Gittleson, Matt Gutman Joshua Hoyos, Bonnie Mclean, Kirit Radia and Robert Zepeda contributed to this report.
Mexico Earthquake, Strongest in a Century, Kills Dozens

By PAULINA VILLEGAS, ELISABETH MALKIN and KIRK SEMPLE  SEPT. 8, 2017

JUCHITÁN DE ZARAGOZA, Mexico — Thousands of homes in this city were severely damaged. Half of the 19th-century city hall, with its 30 arches, collapsed. The main hospital here was so devastated that staff members evacuated patients to an empty lot and worked by the light of their cellphones.

By the time the earthquake’s tremors finally faded, at least 36 people in Juchitán de Zaragoza were dead.

“It’s a truly critical situation,” Óscar Cruz López, the city’s municipal secretary, said Friday. “The city,” he said, and then paused. “It’s as if it had been bombed.”

Over all, the earthquake — the most powerful to hit the country in a century — killed at least 61 people in Mexico, all of them in the southern part of the country that was closer to the quake’s epicenter off the Pacific Coast.

The earthquake, which had a magnitude of 8.2 and struck shortly before midnight on Thursday, was felt by tens of millions of people in Mexico and in Guatemala, where at least one person died as well.

El municipio de #Juchitán en #Oaxaca, de los más afectados tras el fuerte sismo https://t.co/qWDrnJZaWZw pic.twitter.com/3NEEovzqvL
In Mexico City, the capital, which still bears the physical and psychological scars of a devastating earthquake in 1985 that killed as many as 10,000 people, alarms sounding over loudspeakers spurred residents to flee into the streets in their pajamas.

The city seemed to convulse in terrifying waves, making street lamps and the Angel of Independence monument, the capital’s signature landmark, sway like a metronome’s pendulum.

But this time, the megalopolis emerged largely unscathed, with minor structural damage and only two of its nearly nine million people reporting injuries, neither serious, officials said.

Lo dejaron bien amarrado en 1957
pic.twitter.com/ylk9yZSE51

— Alexis Milo Caraza (@alexismilo) Sept. 8, 2017

In the southern part of the country, however, at least 12 people died in Chiapas State and four died in neighboring Tabasco, including two children: one when a wall collapsed and the other after a respirator lost power in a hospital, officials said.

Chiapas officials said that more than 400 houses had been destroyed and about 1,700 others damaged.

In Oaxaca State, at least 45 people were killed, including the 36 in here in Juchitán, a provincial city of 100,000.

“A total disaster,” the mayor, Gloria Sánchez López, declared in a telephone interview in which she appealed for help. “Don’t leave us alone.”

President Enrique Peña Nieto flew to the region on Friday afternoon to assess the damage. And several leaders in Latin America and elsewhere offered assistance to Mexico, including the presidents of Colombia, Chile, Ecuador, Bolivia, Venezuela and Spain.

Mexico is also facing the additional threat of Hurricane Katia, which is gathering strength in the Gulf of Mexico and expected to make landfall in Veracruz State early Saturday.
“You can count on us,” President Juan Manuel Santos of Colombia said on Twitter.

Residents in Juchitán spent the morning using backhoes and their bare hands to dig through the wreckage of collapsed buildings and pull the injured, and the dead, from the rubble.

By early afternoon, the efforts had mostly turned from rescues to a cleanup operation, though the municipal secretary, Mr. Cruz, said that workers were still trying to claw through the mounds of debris left by the collapse of the city hall to reach one last victim, a police officer. Nobody knew if he was still alive.

“It is a nightmare we weren’t prepared for,” said a member of the City Council, Pamela Teran, in an interview with a local radio station. She estimated that 20 to 30 percent of the houses in the city were destroyed.

“A lot of people have lost everything, and it just breaks your heart,” she added, bursting into tears.

With the hospital — the region’s main medical center — destroyed, officials converted a grade school into a makeshift clinic and moved the hospital’s patients and the hundreds of injured survivors there.

Local officials appealed to state and federal governments for aid to help with the recovery.

“It’s impossible to resolve this catastrophe, to respond to something of this magnitude, by ourselves,” Mr. Cruz said.

Aftershocks continued through the day Friday, unnerving the city’s residents, many of whom spent much of the day out in the street rather than return to their homes, said Juan Antonio García, the director of the Juchitán news website Cortamortaja.

Reports of damage elsewhere in the region continued to emerge throughout the afternoon. In Union Hidalgo, just to the east of Juchitán, the mayor reported that about 500 houses had been destroyed.

Schools in at least 10 Mexican states and in Mexico City were closed on Friday as the president sought to determine the toll nationwide.

“We are assessing the damage, which will probably take hours, if not days,” President
Peña Nieto said in televised comments to the nation two hours after the quake.

Throughout the day Mexicans lined up at emergency collection centers around the country to donate food, water and other supplies for delivery to the earthquake victims.

Mexico is situated near the colliding boundaries of several sections of the earth’s crust.

The quake on Thursday was more powerful than the one in 1985 that flattened or seriously damaged thousands of buildings in Mexico City.

While this week’s quake struck nearly 450 miles from the capital, off the coast of Chiapas State, the one in 1985 was much closer to the capital, so the shaking proved much more deadly.

After the 1985 disaster, construction codes were reviewed and stiffened. Today, Mexico’s construction laws are considered as strict as those in the United States or Japan.

Though many Mexicans have grown accustomed to earthquakes, taking them as an immutable fact of life, Thursday’s left an impression on residents of the capital for both its force and duration.

“The scariest part of it all is that if you are an adult, and you’ve lived in this city your adult life, you remember 1985 very vividly,” said Alberto Briseño, a 58-year-old bar manager. “This felt as strong and as bad.”

“Now we will do what us Mexicans do so well: Take the bitter taste of this night and move on,” he added.

The quake occurred near the Middle America Trench, a zone in the eastern Pacific where one slab of the earth’s crust, called the Cocos Plate, is sliding under another, the North American, in a process called subduction.

The movement is very slow — about three inches a year — and over time stress builds because of friction between the slabs. At some point, the strain becomes so great that the rock breaks and slips along a fault. This releases vast amounts of energy and, if the slip occurs under the ocean, can move a lot of water suddenly, causing a tsunami.

Subduction zones ring the Pacific Ocean and are also found in other regions. They are responsible for the world’s largest earthquakes and most devastating tsunamis.

The magnitude-9 earthquake off Japan in 2011, which led to the Fukushima nuclear
disaster, and the magnitude-9.1 quake in Indonesia in 2004, which spawned tsunamis that killed a quarter of a million people around the Indian Ocean, are recent examples.

Those quakes each released about 30 times as much energy as the one in Mexico.

Mexico’s government issued a tsunami warning off the coast of Oaxaca and Chiapas after Thursday’s quake, but neither state appeared to have been adversely affected by waves.

In Guatemala, the military was out Friday morning assessing the damage, found mainly in the western part of the country.

In Huehuetenango, bricks and glass were strewn on the ground as walls in the city collapsed. Quetzaltenango, Guatemala’s second-largest city, which was beginning to recover from a tremor in June, had more damage to its historic center.

Paulina Villegas reported from Juchitán de Zaragoza, and Elisabeth Malkin and Kirk Semple from Mexico City. Reporting was contributed by Azam Ahmed from Santo Domingo, Dominican Republic; Paulina Chavira, Marina Franco, Natalia Gutiérrez Ávila, Michel Vega and Joel Petterson from Mexico City; Henry Fountain from Bonita Springs, Fla.; and Nic Wirtz from Antigua, Guatemala.

A version of this article appears in print on September 9, 2017, on Page A4 of the New York edition with the headline: Strongest Quake to Shake Mexico in a Century Leaves Dozens Dead.
Powerful Earthquake Off Southern Mexico Kills More Than 60 People

September 8, 2017 - 4:02 AM ET

Soldiers remove debris from a partly collapsed municipal building, which was felled by a massive earthquake, in Juchitan, Oaxaca state, Mexico, on Friday.

Luis Alberto Cruz/AP

Updated at 11 p.m. ET

The most powerful earthquake to hit Mexico in decades struck late Thursday off the country's southern coast and could be felt hundreds of miles away in the capital. The 8.1 magnitude temblor is blamed for killing at least 60 people.
Evacuated patients lie on their hospital beds under a tree in Juchitan. At least 20 aftershocks followed the massive quake.

*Luis Alberto Cruz/AP*

The quake triggered fears of a tsunami, although no major damage was reported. The event came as the country already was bracing for Hurricane Katia, which made landfall Saturday night in the state of Veracruz as a Category 2 storm.

The U.S. Geological Survey said the quake's epicenter was located 102 miles west of Tapachula in Chiapas, not far from Guatemala, at a depth of about 43 miles. Authorities in Chiapas report 12 deaths.

At least 45 people were killed in the state of Oaxaca, according to civil defense officials.

The Associated Press reports that "the worst-hit city appeared to be Juchitan, on the narrow waist of Oaxaca known as the Isthmus. About half of the city hall collapsed in a pile of rubble, and streets were littered with the debris of ruined houses."
"President Enrique Peña Nieto toured the area, where he met with residents amid the debris of crumbled buildings.

"The priority in Juchitan is re-establishing supply of water and food, as well as medical attention for those affected,' Pena Nieto said via Twitter."

Reuters notes that among 100 buildings "reduced to rubble" in Juchitan were a church and a hotel. The service quotes the mayor, Gloria Sanchez, as saying, "the situation in Juchitan is critical; this is the most terrible moment in its history."

Three people, including two children, were reportedly killed in Tabasco state. One was a baby on a ventilator who died when a children's hospital lost power, the AP says.

Peña Nieto said 1.85 million users in affected areas had lost electricity, but that 1.38 million had had their power restored.

"We are assessing the damage, which will probably take hours, if not days," Peña Nieto told the nation hours after the quake struck, adding that the population was safe and there was no need for panic.

Reporter Emily Green in Mexico City, 650 miles from the epicenter, tells Morning Edition that she was on the street when she heard an earthquake warning klaxon and felt the ground shake.

"It lasted a long time," she says. "It felt like more than a minute, but it was probably a minute."
Rodrigo Soberanes, who lives near the city of San Cristobal de las Casas in Chiapas state, was quoted by The Associated Press as saying his house "moved like chewing gum, and the light and Internet went out momentarily."

In Mexico City power went out in several neighborhoods and windows were shattered at the main airport, according to Reuters. However, the capital appeared to have escaped any major damage.

The governor of Chiapas, Manuel Velasco Coello, said three people were killed in the state in San Cristobal, including two women in a house collapse.

"There is damage to hospitals that have lost energy," he said, according to the AP. "Homes, schools and hospitals have been damaged."

Reuters reports that a number of buildings in parts of southern Mexico were severely damaged.
The USGS put the magnitude at 8.1, matching or exceeding the strength of a powerful earthquake that struck Mexico City in 1985, killing thousands of people. That could make it the strongest to hit Mexico in well over a century.

The U.S. Tsunami Warning System said waves of 3.3 feet above tide level were measured off Salina Cruz, Mexico, with smaller increases elsewhere. Hazardous tsunami waves also were a concern on the Pacific coasts of several Central American countries, including Guatemala, El Salvador, Costa Rica, Nicaragua, Panama and Honduras, but didn’t materialize.
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