

# More than 140 dead and counting as a magnitude 7.1 earthquake rocks Mexico City

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A 7.1 magnitude earthquake shook the Mexico City megalopolis at 1:14 in the afternoon on Tuesday, knocking down dozens buildings, leaving large clouds of dust and smoke across the horizon. The scenes of solidarity were immediate, as thousands rushed to join rescue efforts and other disaster management tasks, such as directing appeals for aid and rescue on social media, organizing traffic, sharing transport and food, and helping the evacuation of hospitals.

Preliminary reports from the different municipalities indicated a total of 140 dead and dozens more injured at the time of writing, with victims largely concentrated in the impoverished central states of Morelos, Puebla and the state of Mexico. Hundreds of buildings and houses collapsed, including schools, and roads and airports were severely affected, with the damage extending across into Guerrero, Tlaxcala, and Michoacán.

The death toll is rapidly increasing as rescuers drag bodies out of the rubble in what constitutes the largest urban agglomeration in the hemisphere. Those dead, including many workers who died in their poorly constructed apartment buildings, are the victims of social murder carried out by a government and its US backers who have neglected spending on infrastructure and social programs for decades.

Rescues continued throughout Tuesday night, and the smaller cities and towns closer to the epicenter continue to regain communication and road connections. The National Seismological Service of Mexico announced that the epicenter was near the city of Axochiapan in the state of Morelos, about 75 miles (120 km) from the country's capital, at a depth of 32 miles (51 km). The chief of the National Seismological Service of Mexico estimated that over 12 million people felt the earthquake.

Despite the fact that earthquakes in Mexico City are

far from unexpected, the government has done next to nothing to prepare the population or the city's buildings from a major quake. Mexico dedicates the least of its GDP to social infrastructure among Latin American countries, according to a 2015 Inter-American Development Bank study.

Only two hours earlier, about four million public and private workers, as well as students, participated in drills commemorating the exact anniversary of the 1985 earthquake that killed tens of thousands in Mexico City. Many residents compared yesterday's tremor to the "nightmare of 1985."

The difficulties of managing the continued dangers were vast, with many not willing to enter their homes for fear of the frequent aftershocks. Officials warned people not to smoke, fearing explosions from gas leaks. The Mexico City governor said many were trapped in buildings in flames, while the newspaper *El Debate* reported explosions.

Moreover, 3.8 million people in the country lost power. Social media reports and videos of the devastation and massive evacuations suggest that the extent of the disaster will only become clear in the next days.

Authorities have yet to clear the rubble from the September 7 earthquake that hit the southern states of Oaxaca and Chiapas. The 8.2 magnitude quake less than two weeks ago—the strongest in a century—left 98 dead and entire areas devastated, particularly Juchitán, the poorest city in Oaxaca.

Mexican President Enrique Peña Nieto, who decided to turn his flight initially headed towards the affected areas in Oaxaca back to Mexico City, quickly activated a state of emergency under Plan MX, tied to the deployment of Plan DN-III of Army and Marine officials for "public order." Fearing the prospect that

the earthquakes could trigger a social explosion, Peña Nieto later announced that 3,000 soldiers were going to be sent into the capital.

On Monday night, Peña Nieto spoke on Telefórmula ahead of his trip. He summarized the infrastructural damage of the September 7 disaster: 2,600 schools, 100,000 houses, 5,000 businesses, and 500 large public and cultural installations.

With these estimates, Nieto refused to give a calculated economic cost or budget, simply declaring that “we’ll define the mechanisms for that.” This evasion suggests that the funds that will be dedicated to those affected in these two devastating disasters will not go beyond the meager natural disaster fund, Fonden.

“Mexican society needs to put into dimensions what happened,” said Nieto on Monday, suggesting that the country is much better prepared than during the 8.1 magnitude earthquake of 1985. However, just hours later, his negligence and that of the Mexican ruling class he speaks for were exposed with the vast destruction and untold suffering in the greater Mexico City area.

Finally, Nieto finished his remarks by calling for the suppression of mounting social opposition against his government, escalated by the clear exposure of official indifference and ineptitude. “Let’s disregard any intervention of political actors wanting to take advantage of the tragedy,” he stressed.



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