

Papua New Guinea earthquake: Huge quake hits just 9 days after 55 dead in gigantic tremor

AT LEAST 18 people have been killed after a strong earthquake aftershock hit Papua New Guinea's mainland, it has been reported.



AFP/GETTY

At least 18 people have been killed after a strong earthquake aftershock hit Papua New Guinea.

An official said a magnitude 6.7 quake that struck Papua New Guinea's mountainous Southern Highlands early today, adding to the death toll from a larger quake nine days ago.

The larger earthquake killed at least 67 people.

The latest quake, which struck shortly after midnight local time, was a severe aftershock.

It was also in an area badly damaged by a magnitude 7.5 quake that flattened

villages and caused landslides, killing at least 55 people.

William Bando, Hela Province administrator, said: "I have just received reports that 18 people were killed last night.

"It appears Hides was hardest hit.

"We haven't heard about potential casualties there yet, but it is a big village with many people."

Authorities and aid workers have struggled to reach the rugged highland area to assess the extent of the damage of February 26th's first earthquake and deliver aid to locals.

Landslides, blocked roads, cracked airstrips and damaged telecommunication links have hampered efforts by authorities to offer an exact death toll and deliver supplies to more than 150,000 people that agencies estimate are in need of aid. Today, Prime Minister Peter O'Neill said critical relief supplies were finally flowing into devastated areas of Papua New Guinea.

Aid had yet to reach isolated parts of the Southern Highlands, Western, Enga and Hela provinces.

Prior to the latest aftershock, Mr O'Neill seemed pleased to report food, water and medicine were starting to get through, with aircraft ferrying supplies to Moro and Mendi airports in the Southern Highlands.



AFP/GETTY

The Red Cross have made a huge effort to reach all earthquake victims in Papua New Guinea

He said: "We are now in the process of delivering emergency supplies. "Over the last few days, we've been working with the Australian Government, with Exxon(Mobil), with Oil Search and Ok Tedi in particular, in making sure that immediate assistance required by the communities is delivered."

Australia and New Zealand have pledged aid, while Israel has delivered 40 generators to help restore power.

Red Cross' PNG secretary general, Uvenama Rova, said the rugged terrain has made delivering relief supplies difficult with the Red Cross working to reach the Nipa-Kutubu district near the epicentre to assess damage and needs.



AFP/GETTY

Communities and charities are banding together on relief efforts for Papua New Guinea

Last month's earthquake was the largest to hit the seismically-active highlands in nearly a century.

Papua New Guinea was hit just moments after a smaller seismic event struck Japan, increasing fears of a natural disaster impacting the dangerous region dubbed the 'Ring of Fire'.

A further 26 quakes, all with an average magnitude of five, rocked the island in the aftermath of the initial hit.

Papua New Guinea rests on the so-called 'Ring of Fire' - a hotbed of seismic activity surrounding a tectonic plate that spans the Pacific.

The 'Ring' is responsible for 90 per cent of the world's earthquakes.

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