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Earthquake measuring 8.5 magnitude shakes most of Japan

No reports of deaths or major damage after strong quake strikes deep beneath Earth's surface off the Ogasawara islands



Soccer fans react to a strong earthquake as they watch the J-League first division soccer game between Shonan Bellmare and Sanfrecce Hiroshima in Hiratsuka, near Tokyo, Photograph: Kyodo/Reuters

Associated Press

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A powerful 8.5 magnitude earthquake struck near remote Japanese islands and shook most of the country on Saturday evening local time, although it occurred well beneath the earth's surface and did not trigger a tsunami warning. Several people suffered non-life-threatening injuries, and there were no reports of deaths or major damage.

The quake struck off the Ogasawara islands at a depth of 370 miles (590 km), the Japan Meteorological Agency said.

The quake was powerful enough to rattle most of Japan, from the southern islands of Okinawa to Hokkaido in the north. It caused buildings to sway in Tokyo about 620 miles north of the Ogasawara islands and temporarily disrupted some train services in the city. About 400 houses in Saitama prefecture, just north of the capital, were without power, according to the Tokyo Electric Power Company.

On Sunday morning, a second earthquake of magnitude 6.4 struck off Japan's Izu islands, which are north of the Ogasawara islands, the US Geological Survey said. It struck at a depth of eight miles with its epicenter 390 miles south-east of Tokyo.

The earthquake was not strong enough to generate a tsunami warning or close enough to the islands to cause any significant damage or injuries, said John Bellini, a geophysicist with the USGS in Golden, Colorado. He said it was considered a separate seismic event and not an aftershock to the magnitude 8.5 quake that had struck hours earlier.

As the crisis escalates...

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