

Beat: Travel

Quakes cause widespread damage, injure 260 in western Iran

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USPA News - A strong earthquake struck near the city of Abdanan in western Iran on early Monday morning, injuring at least 260 people and causing widespread damage in rural communities, authorities said late at night as a third tremor struck the region. There were no reports of fatalities. The 6.2-magnitude earthquake at 07:02 a.m. local time (02:32 GMT) on Monday was centered about 4 kilometers (2.4 miles) from the town of Murmuri in Ilam Province, or about 35 kilometers (22 miles) southeast of Abdanan.

It struck about 10 kilometers (6.2 miles) deep, making it a shallow earthquake, according to Iran's Seismological Center. The initial earthquake was followed by a series of dozens of aftershocks, including a 5.8-magnitude earthquake which struck the same area at 9:55 a.m. (0525 GMT), nearly three hours after the first quake. A third earthquake - also measuring 5.8 - struck late in the evening at 10:38 p.m. (1808 GMT). The United States Geological Survey (USGS) estimated that some 4,000 people near the epicenter could have experienced "very strong" shaking from the initial earthquake, while some 292,000 others may have felt moderate to strong shaking. People in areas further away - including the provinces of Lorestan and Khuzestan - felt light shaking. The Iranian Red Crescent Society (IRCS) said the villages of Murmuri, Tape Hamame Oliya and Tape Hamame Sofla were the worst-hit areas, with up to 80 percent of houses damaged in some parts. At least 260 people were reported injured by late Monday, of which at least 12 required further treatment and were airlifted to hospitals in neighboring provinces. "Relief and rescue organization backed by air relief, search and rescue dogs, ambulances and all necessary rescue tools were deployed to the affected areas and continued the relief and rescue operation," the Red Crescent Society said in a situation report. "The operation is underway with providing search and rescue, health, sanitation, food and hygiene by IRCS staff and volunteers." It was not immediately clear if Monday night's earthquake had caused additional damage or injuries. Earthquakes, even those which have a low or moderate magnitude, often cause heavy damage and large numbers of casualties in certain parts of the country due to poor construction. Tremors which strike during the night are especially deadly as most residents are sleeping in their homes at that time. In August 2012, at least 306 people were killed and more than 3,000 others were injured when a 6.2-magnitude earthquake struck about 17 kilometers (10 miles) from the city of Ahar in East Azerbaijan Province. It was estimated that more than 5,000 buildings were seriously damaged. Before that, in December 2003, around 31,000 people were killed and more than 30,000 others were injured when a strong 6.6-magnitude earthquake struck near Bam in southeastern Iran, devastating the area with up to 85 percent of buildings destroyed. The country's worst ever earthquake happened in the year 856, killing an estimated 200,000 people.

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