

Mexico City earthquake: 7.1 magnitude quake hits DAYS after biggest in century - 237 dead

AT LEAST 237 people have been killed after a huge 7.1 magnitude earthquake rocked central Mexico, causing hundreds of buildings to collapse in the capital, Mexico City.

The quake struck at 1.15pm local time (7.15pm BST) and of the 217 people confirmed dead so far, half of them were in the capital, Mexico City.

Mexican president Enrique Pena Nieto later confirmed 22 bodies had been recovered from a collapsed school in Mexico City where 48 people remain missing.

One woman, a 32-year-old mother, told reporters: "They keep pulling kids out, but we know nothing of my daughter."

Mexican rescuers have been racing against the clock to save a 12-year-old girl trapped beneath a collapsed school.

David Porrás, one of scores of volunteers helping the search at the school for children aged 3 to 14, said: "We have a lot of hope that some will still be rescued."

The governor of the neighbouring state of Morelos said at least 42 people had been killed there.

However a number of people trapped in the school are believed to be alive with many texting their parents.

Five more people died in the State of Mexico, governor Alfredo Del Mazo told local TV.

Relief efforts have continued throughout the night as volunteer rescue teams, known as 'moles', crawled under the rubble to locate and rescue those trapped by falling debris.

Some Mexico City residents slept in the street while authorities and volunteers set up tented collection centers to distribute food and water.

Volunteers, soldiers and firefighters formed human chains and dug with hammers and picks to find dust-covered survivors and dead bodies in the remains of apartment buildings, schools and a factory.

Del Valle, a middle-class neighbourhood in the capital, was among those hit hardest by the quake and all but a few buildings on one street were reduced to rubble.

With power failures still affecting large swathes of the city, much of the rescue efforts were conducted in the dark with only torches and the odd generator providing power.

In Obrera, central Mexico City, people applauded when rescuers managed to retrieve four people alive, with cheers of “si se puede” - “yes we can” - ringing out.

Dozens of buildings have been reduced to rubble across the capital, including a number of historic points of interest, while broken gas mains have sparked fires in the city.

The US Geological Survey said the quake hit five miles southeast of Atencingo in the state of Puebla, about 100 miles south of Mexico City, at a depth of 32 miles.

The quake prompted a small eruption of Mexico’s Popocatepetl volcano, which is visible from Mexico City.

On its slopes a small church collapsed, killing 15 people.

Video has emerged showing a huge explosion over the city following the quake, the cause of which is not yet clear.

A large number of hospital patients have been photographed receiving treatment outside the facility for fear the building may collapse.

Dentist Claudia Meneses said she was in her clinic in Mexico City’s Lindavista neighbourhood when the earthquake struck.

“People are really scared right now,” she said.

“We’re going to go to a building that fell to see if we can help.”

Rescuers frantically worked to dig a young girl out from under the rubble of a partially collapsed school in Mexico City on Wednesday, offering a small glimmer of hope amid devastation from a major earthquake that killed at least 224 people.

Television network Televisa broadcast the nailbiting rescue attempt live after crews at the school in the south of the city reported finding the girl, seeing her move her hand and threading a hose through debris to get her water 24 hours after the quake.

The girl’s name was not made public. Rescuers moved slowly, erecting makeshift wooden scaffolding to prevent the remains of the teetering structure from crumbling. They implored bystanders to be quiet to better hear calls for help.

It was part of a search for dozens of victims feared buried beneath the Enrique Rebsamen school, where local officials reported 21 children and 4 adults dead after Tuesday’s quake. The school was one of hundreds of buildings destroyed by the country.

The quake was recorded at 1.15pm local time and comes days after the country was hit by an 8.1 magnitude tremor, the biggest to hit Mexico in a century, killing at least 98 people.

President Nieto was on a flight to Oaxaca, one of the hardest hit areas by that quake, but has since tweeted that he was immediately returning to attend to the quake in Mexico City.

Just two hours before the quake struck, people had been taking part in evacuation drills on the anniversary of one of Mexico’s deadliest earthquakes which struck in 1985.

Video footage shows a huge cloud of thick dust and smoke filling the streets as people try to make their way to safety.

One clip shows the side of a National Secretariat building crumbling as onlookers scream in horror.

In Puebla, where the U.S. Geological Survey said the epicenter lay some 100 miles (158 km) southwest of the capital, parts of colonial-era churches crumbled.

In the town of Atzala, a row of coffins lined the street outside a church where the roof collapsed, killing 11 worshipers inside.

Around the same time that the earth shook, Mexico's Popocatepetl volcano, visible from the capital on a clear day, had a small eruption. On its slopes, a church in Atzitzihuacan collapsed during Mass, killing 15 people.

Separate footage shows huge storm-like waves rocking gondoliers in Mexico city's famous Xochimilco canals.

Adrian Wilson, a photographer from New York City, was in Mexico City when the quake hit.

He told CNN: "I was having lunch when the floor gently rocked as if a big truck went by.

US President Donald Trump and Mexican President Pena Nieto spoke at length today, according to the White House.

White House spokeswoman Sarah Sanders gave no other details but said more information would come soon about the call. The two leaders also spoke last week.

"It then amplified in waves and the whole room started shaking.

"The building is from the 1930s and just survived a big earthquake, so I knew I would be OK."

In Cuernavaca, a city south of Mexico City, there were unconfirmed reports on local radio of people trapped beneath collapsed buildings.

Mexican TV and social media showed cars crushed by debris.

Many people fled into the streets, and electricity and phone lines were down in parts of the capital.

"We got out really fast, leaving everything as it was and just left," said Rosaura Suarez, as she stood with a crowd on the street.

The Mexican stock exchange has suspended trading following the quake.

Mexico airport has also suspended all operations.

US President Donald Trump said on Twitter: "God bless the people of Mexico City. We are with you and will be there for you."

The city and its surrounding area are home to about 20 million people.

Fears that the quake could cause a tsunami in the Pacific ocean have been dismissed by officials from the Pacific Tsunami Warning Center, who said it was too far inland to generate such a wave.

It also comes on the 32nd anniversary of a 1985 quake which killed 5,000 people and caused serious damage to the Greater Mexico City area

Following the quake the Mexican government brought in sweeping changes to safety rules and disaster preparation.

Additional reporting by Matt Drake and Nicole Stinson.

Source: <http://www.express.co.uk/news/world/856237/mexico-earthquake-city-2017-today-strikes-south-country>

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