

Highlight

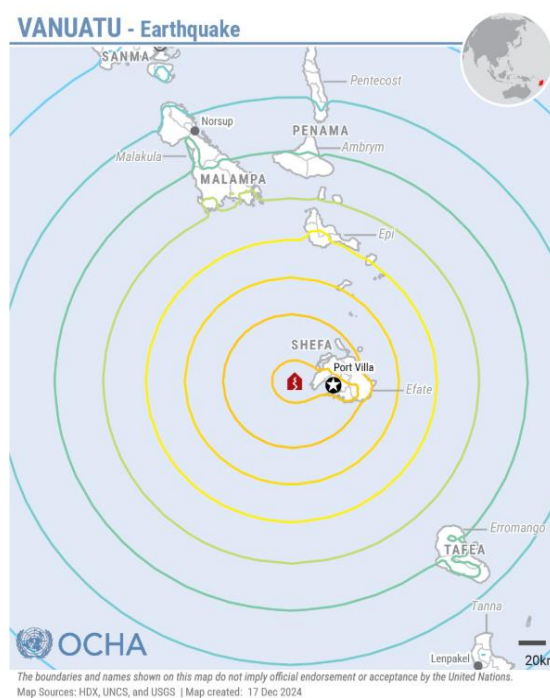
- A **7.3** magnitude earthquake struck 30 km west of Port Vila, Vanuatu, on 17 December 2024, at 12:47 PM local time. A tsunami warning was issued but has since been lifted. Search and rescue operations are ongoing at the time of reporting.
- Preliminary reports indicate observed damages to buildings and infrastructure in Port Vila, with **6** unconfirmed casualties and injuries reported.
- According to UNOSAT initial exposure analysis, an estimate of **116,000** people could be affected by the worst impacts of the earthquake.
- Telecommunications remain disrupted and is affecting the timeliness of field reports from remote areas. Access to the airport and water port is severely limited due to road damage.
- Key immediate needs include healthcare support, shelter, access to clean water, and the restoration of emergency communications. Emergency response efforts are underway, and humanitarian partners are mobilizing to assist the affected population.
- In Port Vila, the general hospital's structure has been affected, with triage tents set up outside to manage the influx of patients.
- The National Security Task Force convened earlier this afternoon to address the emergency, while assessments have identified damage to two main water reservoirs in Vanuatu.
- The Pacific Humanitarian Team (PHT) convened the first meeting to coordinate support to the government-led response. OCHA staff are already on the ground in Vanuatu and in Fiji.

Situation Overview

A magnitude 7.3 earthquake struck near Port Vila, Vanuatu, on December 17, 2024, at approximately 12:47 PM local time. The epicenter was located about 30 kilometers west of Port Vila at a depth of 57 kilometers. Reports indicate at least **6 unconfirmed deaths**, with significant disruptions to **telecommunications**, leaving authorities unable to establish communication

with the National Disaster Management Office (NDMO) and Government officials, until around 6.30 PM local time after Starlink was made available to the NDMO.

A **commercial flight from Fiji** headed to Vanuatu earlier today was turned back, and **airport runways** are currently being assessed by New Zealand authorities. Access to and from the airport may be severely restricted due to damaged roads. In Port Vila, the **hospital's structural integrity** has been compromised, with **triage tents** set up outside to manage the influx of patients. The **operating theatre** is non-functional, and overall healthcare capacity is overwhelmed.



The **National Security Task Force** convened earlier this afternoon to address the emergency, while assessments have identified damage to **two main water reservoirs**, raising concerns over water supply for affected communities. Immediate response efforts are ongoing as humanitarian partners and authorities work to overcome access and communication challenges.

A **tsunami warning** was initially issued, predicting waves up to **one meter** along parts of Vanuatu's coastline. This warning was lifted less than two hours after the quake. Neighboring countries, including **Fiji, Kiribati, New Caledonia, Solomon Islands, and Tuvalu**, were also alerted but reported no significant threats.

As of now, emergency teams are conducting rescue operations, and efforts are underway to restore communications and assess the full impact of the earthquake. Authorities are urging residents to remain vigilant due to the possibility of aftershocks.

Impact and Needs

The 7.3 magnitude earthquake has caused significant damage to infrastructure in and around Port Vila, with initial reports confirming at least six fatalities, and expected to increase and numerous injuries. Hospitals are overwhelmed, with medical teams conducting triage outside facilities due to the influx of patients. Many residential and public buildings, including government offices and embassies, have sustained severe structural damage. Landslides have further disrupted road access and access to the port has been damaged. The Port Vila International Airport is experiencing operational delays.

Displacement has been reported, with residents moving to higher ground and open spaces for safety. Immediate needs include emergency health services, shelter, and access to clean water. Humanitarian partners and local authorities are prioritizing efforts to clear roads, restore essential infrastructure, and ensure aid delivery to the affected population. Rapid assessments are ongoing to determine the full scale of the impact and address critical needs.

Response efforts

The Pacific Humanitarian Team (PHT) and regional partners remain on standby to support the Government of Vanuatu with emergency response efforts.

The UNOSAT Charter has been activated to provide satellite imagery for rapid damage assessment. The Virtual OSOCC discussion has been opened to facilitate communication and information sharing among international response teams. So far, 12 international Urban Search and Rescue (USAR) teams from 10 countries are monitoring the situation, using Virtual OSOCC. OCHA is issuing M0, informing of a major disaster, to the United Nations Disaster and Assessment (UNDAC) team and UNDAC Operational Partners.

PHT clusters (Coordination, WASH, Education, Evacuation Centre Management, Health, Early Recovery, Shelter and Protection) are on the ground. PHT Clusters are ready to deploy further personnel, along with emergency communications equipment to restore critical connectivity.

The National Health Cluster will conduct rapid assessments on outlying islands near the epicenter, and Fiji's Emergency Medical Team (EMT) is on standby to provide additional health support.

Following joint preparedness efforts with PHT partners, Government counterparts, and frontline responders' coordination mechanisms are in place to ensure the timely and effective delivery of life-saving assistance.

Key Humanitarian Priorities

- **Search and Rescue:** Support ongoing efforts to locate survivors in affected and hard-to-reach areas.
- **Health Services:** Strengthen medical response and triage support for injured individuals.
- **Shelter and Protection:** Identify and establish safe spaces for displaced families.
- **Water, Sanitation, and Hygiene (WASH):** Ensure access to clean drinking water and sanitation facilities.
- **Logistics:** Clear blocked roads and restore access to critical infrastructure, including airports and ports, to enable the timely delivery of assistance.
- **Emergency Telecommunication (ETC):** restore ETC to enable coordination of assistance and contact with affected population.

Contact Information

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