

Ecuador earthquake kills at least 12, causes widespread damage

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Magnitude 6.7 tremor shakes coastal Guayas region, damaging homes and buildings.

Quito, March 18 (RHC)-- A strong earthquake has shaken the region around Ecuador's second-largest city, killing at least twelve people, damaging homes and buildings, and sending panicked residents into the streets.

The U.S. Geological Survey reported an earthquake on Saturday with a magnitude of 6.7 in the country's coastal Guayas region. It was centred about 80 km (50 miles) south of Guayaquil, which anchors a metro

area of more than 3 million people.

The South American country's emergency response agency, the Risk Management Secretariat, reported one person died in the Andean community of Cuenca. The victim was a passenger in a car trapped under the rubble of a house. At least three other people died in the coastal state of El Oro, the agency said.

In Guayaquil, about 270 km (170 miles) southwest of the capital, Quito, authorities reported cracks in houses and other buildings as well as some collapsed walls. Authorities ordered the closure of three road tunnels.

Videos shared on social media show people gathered on the streets of Guayaquil and nearby communities. People reported objects falling inside their homes. One video posted online showed three presenters of a television show dart from their studio desk as the set shook.

They initially tried to shake it off as a minor quake but soon fled off camera. One presenter indicated the show would go on a commercial break while another repeated, "My God. My God." A pier sank in the city of Machala. The earthquake was also felt in northern Peru.

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