

Powerful Earthquake Hits Greece and Turkey



Athens, July 21 (RHC)-- A powerful earthquake shook the Greek island of Kos early Friday morning, damaging several buildings and the main port, killing at least two people and causing more than 120 injuries, authorities said.

The 6.5-magnitude quake also rattled Turkey's Aegean coast, but Kos was nearest to the epicenter and appeared to be the worst-hit, with all of the deaths and injuries reported there. Buildings with damage included the old mosque and a 14th-century fortress at the entrance to the main port.

Rescuers were checking for trapped people inside houses after the quake struck in the middle of the night and were heading to outlying villages to check for damage.

Kos Mayor Giorgos Kyritsis said the army was mobilized along with emergency services. The island's port was among structures that sustained damaged and a ferry en route there was not docking, the coast guard said.

"The buildings affected were mostly old, and were built before the earthquake building codes were introduced," Kyritsis told state-run Greek media.

Giorgos Halkidios, a Kos regional government official, said the injured included people who were

underneath a building that collapsed. Ferry services were suspended due to damage at Kos' main port, and coastal roads were flooded.

Greek officials said the quake was 6.5-magnitude in scale. It was centered 10 kilometers south of Bodrum, Turkey, and 16 kilometers east-northeast of Kos with a depth of 10 kilometers, according to the US Geological Survey.

According to Turkish disaster officials, the earthquake had a magnitude of 6.3, and more than 20 aftershocks have been recorded.

Esengul Civelek, the governor of Mugla Province, said there were no casualties according to initial assessments. She said "there were minor injuries due to fear and panic."

In Bitez, a resort town about 6 kilometers west of Bodrum, the quake sent frightened residents running into the streets.

Hotel guests briefly returned to their rooms to pick up their belongings but chose to spend the rest of the night outside, with some using sheets and cushions borrowed from nearby lounge chairs to build makeshift beds, according to an AP reporter on the scene.

Greece and Turkey lie in an especially earthquake-prone zone.

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