

Seismologist predicts major earthquake for the Caribbean

The Acting Director of the Seismic Research Centre of the University of the West Indies (UWI), Dr Joan Latchman, has warned Caribbean countries to be prepared for an earthquake with a magnitude of 8.0 after Trinidad and Tobago was rocked by a 5.1 magnitude quake on Sunday night.

The Office of Disaster Preparedness and Management (DPM) said there were no reports of damage or injury from the quake that the National Earthquake Information Center at the United States Geological Survey registered at 5.1 magnitude and located 15 miles west of Port of Spain in Trinidad and 70 miles west of Scarborough in Tobago. It was also felt in some sections of Venezuela.

The CMC reported that Latchman said while the region has not had a severe earthquake for the last 100 years, she is predicting that one with a magnitude of 8.0 could hit the Caribbean any day.

"Our largest earthquake close to Trinidad occurred in 1756 which is more than 200 years ago. The largest one in the Eastern Caribbean occurred in 1843 which is more than 100 years ago, the region is posed for a larger earthquake," she said on a radio programme in Port of Spain.

On January 12 this year, an earthquake with a magnitude of 7.0 hit Haiti, killing an estimated 300,000 people and leaving more than one million homeless.

Latchman said that, while the Caribbean has recorded earthquakes in the magnitude 7.1 to 7.5 range in the Eastern Caribbean, "every 20 to 30 years we have not had that one in the magnitude eight range, that we expect every 100 years.

"So that is what we are saying and we have been saying it now for many years, that the region is posed to experience one of the great earthquakes and as a region and as a country we need to be prepared.

"We need to take it seriously ... we need to take the earthquake hazard very seriously," she said.