

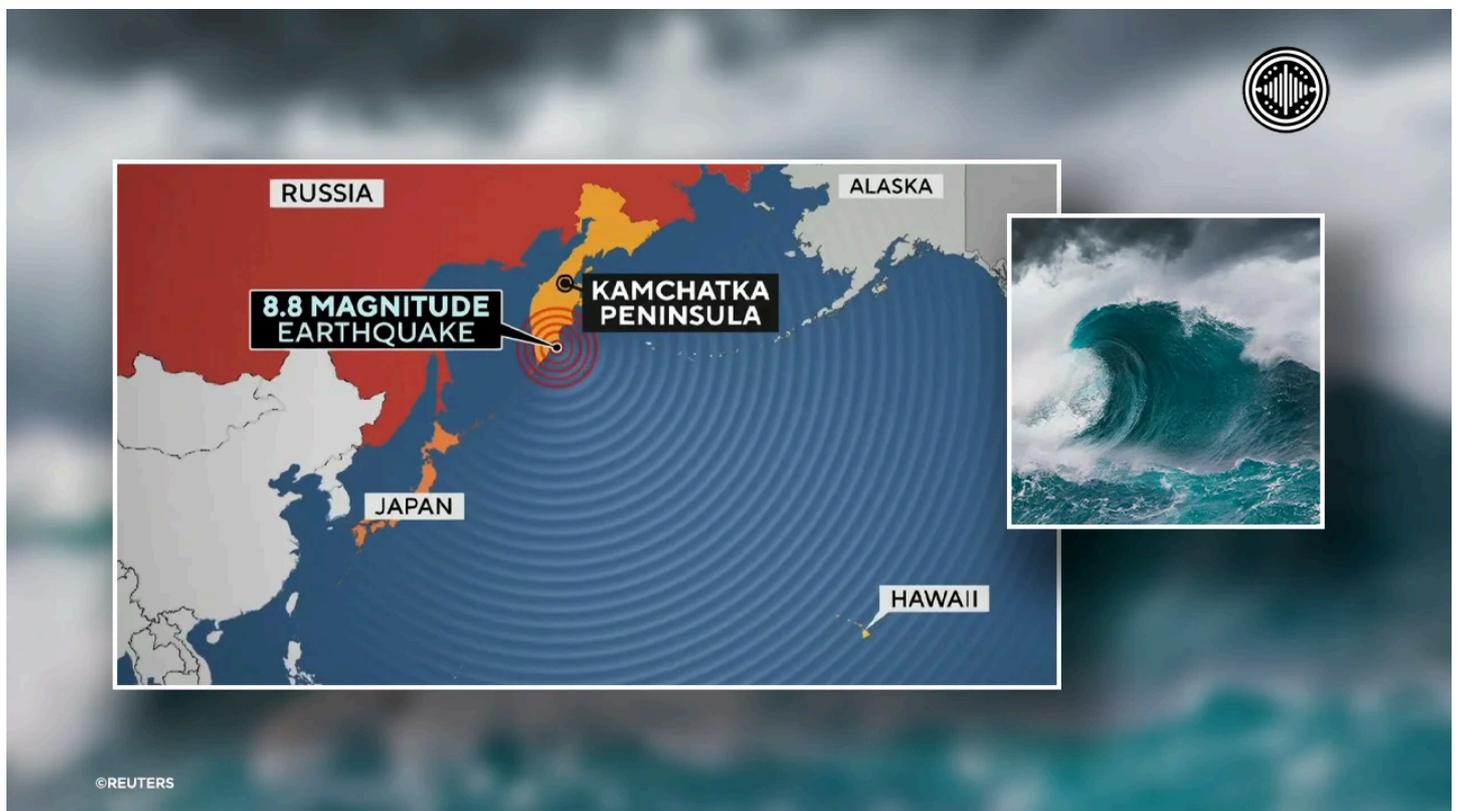
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Tsunami Risk Recedes for United States After Powerful Earthquake off Russian Coast

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A major tsunami threat to the United States and Japan eased on Wednesday following one of the strongest earthquakes recorded in recent history. The 8.8 magnitude quake, which struck off Russia’s Kamchatka Peninsula, initially triggered widespread evacuation orders and tsunami alerts across the Pacific region, including the U.S. West Coast, Japan, and several nations in South America.

The quake, which occurred at 11:24 a.m. local time, was centred roughly 75 miles off the coast of Petropavlovsk-Kamchatsky and had a depth of approximately 13 miles, according to the United States Geological Survey (USGS). Several aftershocks, including one measuring 6.9 in magnitude, followed the initial tremor. The earthquake occurred

along the Pacific “Ring of Fire,” a zone of high seismic activity responsible for the majority of the world’s earthquakes.

Although tsunami waves did reach coastal areas of Japan, Hawaii, and parts of the U.S. mainland, there have been no reports of widespread damage or fatalities directly linked to the quake. U.S. Secretary of Homeland Security Kristi Noem stated from Chile that, while authorities were prepared for a major response, the most severe outcomes were ultimately avoided. “We were fully deployed and ready to respond if necessary but grateful that we didn’t have to deal with the situation that this could have been,” she said.

In Hawaii, evacuation orders were lifted early Wednesday after tsunami warnings were downgraded to advisories. The Hawaii Emergency Management Agency urged residents to remain cautious and stay off beaches. On the U.S. mainland, the National Weather Service advised that strong currents and dangerous waves could still pose risks in places like the San Francisco Bay Area and Oregon’s coastline.

In Japan, authorities also downgraded their tsunami warnings by late Wednesday but maintained advisories along parts of the Pacific coast. Residents in towns such as Iwaki and Fukushima sought refuge on higher ground, with some recalling the deadly 2011 tsunami that followed a 9.0 magnitude quake. That disaster claimed over 15,000 lives and caused a nuclear meltdown at the Fukushima Daiichi power plant. Initial reports from the International Atomic Energy Agency confirmed that no nuclear facilities were affected by Wednesday’s event.

Russia reported limited structural damage and no significant casualties. In Petropavlovsk-Kamchatsky, a kindergarten under renovation suffered damage. A few individuals were injured while attempting to evacuate buildings, including one hospital patient who jumped from a window. In the nearby Kuril Islands, waves flooded the fishing port of Severo-Kurilsk and caused a temporary power outage, prompting a state of emergency, though no major damage was recorded.

The Kamchatka region also saw volcanic activity following the quake. The Klyuchevskaya Sopka volcano, the largest active volcano in the Northern Hemisphere, began erupting with visible lava flows and explosive activity, according to Russia’s geophysical service.

Elsewhere in the Pacific, Chile issued high-level tsunami warnings for much of its coast and began evacuating hundreds of residents. Chilean President Gabriel Boric reminded the public that the first wave is not always the strongest and urged citizens to remain calm and follow official guidance. Colombia closed all beaches and restricted maritime

activity, while Ecuador suspended classes in coastal regions and on the Galapagos Islands.

Small tsunami waves were also recorded in Alaska's Aleutian Islands, British Columbia's Vancouver Island, and northern California, where waves reached up to 3.6 feet in Crescent City. Authorities in Oregon noted that, while not a major tsunami, strong waves and currents could endanger people near the water.

Warnings were also issued in the Philippines, Mexico, New Zealand, and several Pacific Island nations, including Fiji, Samoa, and Tonga, advising residents to remain alert and avoid coastal areas.

Despite the strength of the earthquake—one of the most powerful since 2011—the overall impact was relatively contained. Authorities across the Pacific continue to monitor the situation for aftershocks and residual wave activity.