

## 5.4 quake creates 'very scary' event

*No injuries, little damage from San Jacinto fault temblor*

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A 5.4-magnitude earthquake on California's most active fault zone shook the Coachella Valley on Wednesday, a quake even desert temblor veterans called "a scary one."

The quake caused little damage and no injuries but rattled nerves in the summer heat.

Originally estimated at 5.9-magnitude, the 4:53 p.m. quake was later downgraded by the United States Geological Survey, as first reported on mydesert.com

The epicenter was 13 miles northwest of Borrego Springs, and 28 miles south of Palm Springs, according to the USGS website. Its center was somewhat shallow at 6.8 miles deep.

U.S. Geological Survey seismologist Lucille Jones — one of the nation's top earthquake experts — told The Desert Sun the quake occurred in what's known as the San Jacinto fault zone, the most seismically active fault in California.

It was likely set in motion by the magnitude-7.2 temblor in northern Mexico on Easter Sunday, but would not be classified as an aftershock, seismologists told The Desert Sun.

The shaking was felt as far away as Laughlin, Nev., San Diego and Ridgecrest, about 100 miles north of Los Angeles.

As is typical, the quake has about a 5 percent chance of triggering a larger temblor over the next few days, Jones said.

"Oh man, it was just a real sharp jerk, a tremendous jolt," said Lynn Hunter, who was standing in the kitchen of her Sun City Shadow Hills home in Indio.

"The floor actually came up a little in the kitchen. The floor actually kind of buckled a little in the middle."

Charlie Ash, who lives on New York Avenue at Palm Desert Country Club, said the quake felt "like a train moving through a lot of earth."

Three elevators at Agua Caliente Casino Resort Spa were temporarily out of service after a safety measure tripped.

"Fewer than 10" guests and employees were trapped inside for 30 to 40 minutes, said Therese Everett-Kerley, a spokeswoman for the resort, which is operated by the Agua Caliente Band of Cahuilla Indians.

"We are told the elevators are very, very sensitive to any earthquakes," she said.

The earthquake caused a rock slide on Highway 74 in Pinyon Pines that led to "several vehicles with flat tires," the California Highway Patrol reported.

Caltrans has removed the "grapefruit" sized rocks, said John Quintero, a CHP spokesman with the Indio office.

"It's open, so, basically we're good," he said.

A rock slide was reported near the Palm Springs Aerial Tramway off Highway 111, but police determined there were no injuries or damage.

The quake, however, caused fear and confusion among tramway tourists.

Dwight Steward and his family were visiting from Austin, Texas, when the quake hit.

Steward, 42, was on Mount San Jacinto on an overlook when the rock beneath him began moving.

"It was like a slow motion kind of thing," he said.

The quake caused a rock slide on the south side of the mountain and "we could see a plume of dust," Steward said.

Erik Finefield sat in a restaurant at the tram station when the window started shaking.

"Workers told everyone to get away from the glass," he said. "It was scary."

At Palm Springs International Airport, aviation director Tom Nolan said there was a "momentary halt" in operations as crews checked their systems.

Crystal Fantasy owner Joy Meredith said this is the first time a quake caused damage at her downtown Palm Springs store. A number of items, including a large fossil piece, fell off the store shelves. She estimated damage at \$1,000.

"That was a scary one," she said.

Clerks at the Center Market in Borrego Springs "flew out the door" when the quake hit, but there was little damage at the store, clerk Mary Jane Laws said. "This is the first time that I've lived here that it threw things off the shelves," the 30-year resident said.

USGS reported at least five aftershocks magnitude-3.0 or larger following the quake.

"I was on the overpass at Washington waiting at the stoplight (at Country Club) and it started rocking. I thought, 'That seems odd; it's not that windy; it shouldn't be shaking like that,'" said Shari Woodbridge of Indio.

"I looked at the stop signals and they were swaying."

Tony Wann, 37, a bartender at Carlee's Place in downtown Borrego Springs, said, "You heard it before you felt it.

"It was a big rumbling, then a few seconds of violent shaking. Everybody came out of their shops, then everybody went right about their normal business. It's part of living in California."