

At least four people have been killed and dozens injured after a series of powerful earthquakes hit eastern Indonesia, officials say.

The strongest tremor, with a magnitude of 7.6, struck north of the city of Manokwari in West Papua province at 0443 (1943 GMT on Saturday).

It was followed by another big quake and a string of aftershocks.

Witnesses said the tremors triggered mass panic in Manokwari, where several buildings were flattened.

Among the four victims of the quakes was a 10-year-old girl who was crushed by a falling wall, officials said.

At least 37 people were injured and were being treated in hospitals.

An official with the World Vision aid organization said 10 buildings had been totally destroyed, including several hotels and the house of a government official.

Officials said three people, who had been staying at the Mutiara hotel in Manokwari, were pulled alive from the rubble and taken to hospital.

Electricity was also cut off in the city with a population of some 160,000 people.

Susan writes,

Perhaps you have heard about the earthquakes we had here. We were rudely awakened by a very large earthquake at 4:45 this morning. It was bad enough that all of us ran out of the house. I could hear things falling all over the place in the house including dishes crashing to the floor. I don't know how big the quake was but someone said they heard it was 7. something. We finally all went back into our houses to get ready for church and then at 6:30 there was another one. I could tell immediately that it was worse than the first one. Once I got out in the yard I slipped on the wet grass and fell. Didn't hurt myself at all but because it was still shaking I decided not to get up until it stopped. This one lasted longer and I could hear more things crashing to the floor. The first time only a few vases fall off my entertainment center but this time things fell out of the cabinets. My water cooler crashed to the floor and broke and the huge bottle of water went all over. The water ended up covering most of my living room floor and about

half the kitchen floor. All that water was mixed with tiny slivers of glass so I had to be very careful when trying to mop it up. The brick wall all along Vicki's side fell down. This is the same wall where part of it fell down last time. This time the whole wall fell down the entire length of our property. It really shook us up. Of course the electricity went off immediately with the first jolt and then it stayed off all day.

Everyone was sitting out in the street because they were afraid to go in their houses or be anywhere near them. We were the only ones that returned to our houses. I decided not to go to church partly because I had to wipe up all that water and partly I didn't want to leave our houses with the wall down. Everyone was out in the street mulling around and walking around to see what damage was done.

Several of the hotels in town fell right to the ground and people were trapped underneath. Vicki and her family all went to church because Ron was supposed to preach. I didn't think very many people would be there but they did meet outside under a tarp. No one wanted to go inside. We drove around in the afternoon to look at the damage. I could not believe the hotels that had crashed. A lot of stuff fell out of my cabinets. I have 2 tea sets that fell off my hutch and broke. All my videos fell off the shelves, but the shelves did not fall down. In Vicki's house her huge shelves fell down.

It was so hot and miserable all day with no electricity and I spent the whole time trying to clean up my mess. The thing that took the longest was mopping up all that water. My Christmas tree also fell over but none of the ornaments broke. So I spent part of the day taking down all my Christmas decorations.

We continue to have small aftershocks. Not enough to make us run out of the house but enough to be unnerving. A lot of people are homeless and the governments have set up tents all over. Most of our neighbors have tarps set up because they are afraid to sleep in their houses. Vicki's whole family is going to sleep in the living room so they are closer to the door. I was planning to sleep in my bed but am not really sure what I should do. Rumor has it we are expecting one more.

The electricity finally came back on at 6:00 tonight so that was a blessing. Tomorrow is the opening ceremony for the schools 50th anniversary and a reconciliation ceremony is planned with the families of the men who killed our first 2 missionaries. We have heard that it is being filmed by one of the TV stations. So that will be a very full day. Hope we do not have anymore shocks and I don't know if any damage was done at the school.

Wish I had had someone here to help me with all this clean up. Vicki had her family there to help her but they didn't do a thing with the shelves in her office. This is the second time they have fallen down so Walter said he will come up and bolt them to the wall.

I think I will go ahead and go to bed and try and get some sleep. Tomorrow will be a full, hectic and hot day.

We are still having little after shocks. Last night I didn't sleep so well. Every time I rolled over in bed it woke me up thinking the bed was shaking. I understand everyone was feeling the same.