

Rare NYC-area earthquake rattles, unnerves northeastern United States

By [Jennifer Peltz](#) and [Mike Catalini](#) , April 5, 2024



NEW YORK (AP) — An earthquake shook the densely populated New York City metropolitan area Friday morning, with residents across the Northeast reporting rumbling in a region unaccustomed to it.

The United States Geological Survey reported a quake at 10:23 a.m. with a preliminary magnitude of 4.8, centered near Whitehouse Station, New Jersey, or about 45 miles (72 kilometers) west of New York City and 50 miles (80 kilometers) north of Philadelphia. The agency's figures indicated that the quake might have been felt by more than 42 million people.

People from Baltimore to the Massachusetts-New Hampshire border reported feeling the ground shake. While there were no immediate reports of serious damage, officials were checking bridges and other major infrastructure, Amtrak slowed trains throughout the busy Northeast Corridor, and a Philadelphia-area commuter rail line suspended service out of what it said was "an abundance of caution."

"Pretty weird and scary," Shawn Clark said after feeling the quake in his 26th-floor midtown Manhattan office. Clark, an attorney, initially feared an explosion or construction accident.

His colleague Finn Dusenbery worried the ceiling or even the building would collapse.

"I wanted to get out of the building when I felt that," Dusenbery said.

In midtown Manhattan, traffic grew louder as motorists blared their horns on shuddering streets. Some Brooklyn residents heard a boom and felt their building shaking. Cellphone circuits were overloaded for a time as people tried to reach loved ones and figure out what was going on.

At United Nations headquarters in New York, the shaking interrupted the chief executive of Save The Children, Janti Soeripto, as she briefed an emergency Security Council session on the threat of famine in Gaza and the Israeli drone strikes that killed aid workers there.

"Is it an earthquake?" Soeripto wondered aloud, then asked if it was all right to go ahead. She did, but soon diplomats' phones blared with earthquake alerts.

In New York City's Astoria neighborhood, Cassandra Kurtz was giving her 14-year-old Chihuahua, Chiki, a cocoa-butter rubdown for her dry skin. Kurtz was recording the moment on video, as an everyday memory of the dog's older years, when her apartment started shaking hard enough that a large mirror banged audibly against a wall.

Kurtz assumed at first it was a big truck going by. The video captured her looking around, perplexed. Chiki, however, "was completely unbothered."

Earthquakes are less common on the eastern than western edges of the US because the East Coast does not lie on a boundary of tectonic plates. The biggest Eastern quakes usually occur along the mid-Atlantic Ridge, which extends through Iceland and the Atlantic Ocean.

Quakes on the East Coast can still pack a punch, as its rocks are better than their western counterparts at spreading earthquake energy across far distances.

"If we had the same magnitude quake in California, it probably wouldn't be felt nearly as far away," said US Geological Service geophysicist Paul Caruso.

A 4.8-magnitude quake isn't large enough to cause damage, except for some minor effects near the epicenter, the agency posted on X.

Earthquakes with magnitudes near or above 5 struck near New York City in 1737, 1783 and 1884, the USGS said. And Friday's stirred memories of the August 23, 2011, earthquake that jolted tens of millions of people from Georgia to Canada. With an epicenter in Virginia, it left cracks in the Washington Monument and rattled New Yorkers ahead of the 10th anniversary of the September 11 terror attacks.

Registering magnitude 5.8, it was the strongest earthquake to hit the East Coast since World War II.

On Friday, the White House said in a statement that US President Joe Biden had been briefed on the earthquake and was "in touch with federal, state and local officials as we learn more."

As of noon, New York City had no indications of "major life safety or infrastructure issues from the earthquake," Mayor Eric Adams said on X, adding that the city was inspecting critical areas.

New York Governor Kathy Hochul posted on X that the quake was felt throughout the state, but officials had no reports of any life-threatening problems.

Solomon Byron felt it as he sat on a park bench in Manhattan's East Village.

"I was just like, 'Where is that vibration coming from?'" Byron recalled. He was especially puzzled since there were no subways running nearby.

But he didn't realize there had been an earthquake until he got the alert on his cellphone.

