

Quake in China may have killed 5,000

by UPI

BEIJING -- Local Chinese officials said up to 5,000 people died and another 10,000 were injured Monday in a powerful earthquake in the southwestern part of the country. "This is a very dangerous earthquake," Bruce Presgrave, a geophysicist with the U.S. Geological Survey, told CNN. Provincial disaster relief officials said local officials were the sole source of the death toll estimates, and put the figure at between 3,000 and 5,000 in Beichuan County in Sichuan province, Xinhua, China's official news agency, reported. Officials said about 80 percent of the buildings collapsed in the Beichuan area after the 7.8-magnitude quake struck. The Chinese Ministry of Civil Affairs reported up to 900 students may have been trapped when a high school collapsed. Tremors were felt in other parts of China, as well Hanoi, Vietnam, and Bangkok. An underground water pipe burst near Chengdu's southern railway station, flooding a downtown area. Damage reports also included collapsed and cracked buildings in residential areas and downed communication networks, the news agency reported. Venues for the 2008 Summer Olympics weren't damaged, Xinhua reported. Presgrave said the quake's damage potential was great because of its strength, nearness to population centers and shallow epicenter. Five more earthquakes, measuring in magnitude between 4.0 and 6.0, occurred in nearby areas over the next several hours, USGS reported.

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