

## Second earthquake in two days hits TT

# UWI SRC: We need building codes, general preparedness

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**DIRECTOR** of The University of the West Indies Seismic Research Centre Dr Joan Latchman has renewed calls for building codes and preparedness at every level after the country experienced two earthquakes in two days.

On Sunday at 11am, the country was affected by a 5.7 magnitude earthquake approximately 68 kilometres northwest of Tobago, which was felt in several parts of north Trinidad and parts of Tobago. On Monday at 8.25 am there was a 4.2 magnitude earthquake 41 kilometres west of Scarborough, 60 km north-northeast of Arima and 71 km northeast of Port of Spain.

Latchman, in a telephone interview, said the two consecutive earthquakes created no more cause

for concern than they have always had. She said the centre had previously described the vulnerability of the Eastern Caribbean and this country to an earthquake of significant magnitude.

“We must not use the occurrence of 5.7 or 4.2 (earthquakes) for us to remember this is our vulnerability and we need to be prepared now, and we are not getting prepared. We have to have all measures in place.”

She said while you can see a hurricane forming in Africa, an earthquake was not like other hazards and the time, place and magnitude could not be predicted. Latchman said preparedness must be in place, which includes the need for building codes, legislation to govern it, and a framework for monitoring and enforcement. Latchman ad-

vised there must also be preparedness at the regional, national, community and home/individual level.

The last recorded earthquake to cause major damage in this country was a 6.1 earthquake in 1997 and the most devastating was a 7.9 quake in 1766 which destroyed the capital at the time, San Jose (St Joseph).

The following are a list of major earthquakes to affect this country as provided by the Office of Disaster Preparedness and Management:

\*2010 (Dec 26) - 4.7 felt throughout Trinidad, from Carenage to Moruga to Matura. No reported injuries or damage. \*2009 - 4.8 occurred on land and felt in Sangre Grande and Penal, no reported injuries.

\*2008 - 5.6 on the East Coast and felt mainly in Galeota, no reported



The location of the 4.2 earthquake which occurred early Monday.

injuries.

\*2007 - 7.3 felt throughout the Eastern Caribbean from Puerto Rico to Guyana; damage reported in Martinique, St Lucia, St Vincent and Barbados. This was the fifth earthquake in the magnitude 7 range to occur near Martinique

since 1727.

\*2006 - 5.8 felt throughout Trinidad with 3 reported injuries in Point Lisas.

\*1997 (April 22) - 6.1 US\$25 million in damage to Tobago, two were injured and 15 left homeless.

\*1996 - 5.2 North of Trinidad, occurred New Year's Day. No reported injuries.

\*1988 - 6.3 off east coast of Trinidad. No injuries reported.

\*1982 - 5.2 largest earthquake near Tobago up to that time.

\*1968 - 7.0 significant damage in Venezuela with some damage to Port of Spain.

\*1954 - 6.5 one person was killed and many were injured.

\*1888 - 7.5 Damage occurring from Trinidad to St Vincent.

\*1766 - 7.9 Destroyed Trinidad's then capital, San Jose.