

# Minor Earthquake Shakes Up U.S. Capital's Movers

BY KAREN MAHABIR AND JESSICA GRESKO  
Associated Press Writers

WASHINGTON — Earthquakes are so rare in the Washington area that even a geology student wasn't quite sure what was going on when a minor one hit early Friday. Was it a truck passing by? A low-flying plane?

Gerasimos Michalitsianos, who will be a senior at the University of Maryland, College Park, was sitting on his couch looking at e-mails when the 3.6-magnitude temblor occurred.

"I didn't actually know that I was in an earthquake," said Michalitsianos, who is studying postseismic relaxation, how the ground changes following major earthquakes.

Michalitsianos said he only found out he'd been through an earthquake when he looked online.

"It was a rare treat to see an earthquake occur here on the East Coast and to actually feel it," he said.

Washington area residents are used to politicians being the region's movers and shakers, so it was a surprise when the earth below shook. The earthquake rattled windows and jostled dishes but apparently caused no serious damage. President Barack Obama told reporters he didn't feel it.

Though Californians who have earthquakes of this size almost weekly may scoff, it was the strongest to hit within 30 miles of D.C. since officials began keeping records in 1974. Rep. Darrell Issa, R-Calif., joked on Twitter, "Small earthquake in DC this morning... someone must have dropped a copy of ObamaCare," the president's health care legislation.

The quake happened at 5:04 a.m. and was centered in the Rockville, Md., area, said Randy Baldwin, a geophysicist with U.S. Geological Survey's National Earthquake Information Center. More than 18,000 people logged on to the U.S. Geological Survey's website to report feeling it, some from as far away as Pennsylvania

and West Virginia. The website said earthquakes east of the Rocky Mountains can be felt over an area as much as 10 times larger than a similar magnitude earthquake on the West Coast.

Police in Washington and nearby Montgomery County, Md., said they received many calls from residents Friday morning, but there were no immediate reports of injuries or damage. Water, gas and electric utilities reported no problems to the District of Columbia Department of Homeland Security, which said streets were clear and the subway wasn't affected. Crews did go out to inspect bridges, however, to check for damage.

Residents, meanwhile, spent the day asking each other "Did you feel it?"

Matthew Castelli, 40, of Fredericksburg, Va., said he didn't.

"I understand in this area for a lot of people it's 'holy cow!'" he said. "I think people tend to forget that we're near a fault line around here."

The Washington area has had small, infrequent earthquakes over the years, including a 2.5-magnitude quake in 1997 that was within 25 to 30 miles of Friday's and a 2.3-magnitude quake in 1996 that was within 15 miles. One earthquake larger than a magnitude 5 was recorded in the area in 1897, and it's possible one might occur in the future, but it would be an extremely rare event, said USGS geophysicist John Bellini. Earthquakes in the area occur on fault lines called intraplate faults because, unlike California's San Andreas fault and others, they are not on boundary lines between the six or so large plates that make up the Earth's crust.

Debby Taylor Busse said she was watching television in the basement of her home in Vienna, Va., when she felt the quake.

"I didn't know what it was," Busse said. "I have never been in an earthquake before. It felt like an airplane going overhead or thunder, but it wasn't coming from above."

## YSB

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acknowledges there is a lot of work left to do.

According to Superintendent Dr. Joe Gertsema, Ekeren is leaving big shoes to fill.

"Doug Ekeren has contributed a great deal to the school district during his time on the school board," Gertsema said. "He is a very talented person with excellent management skills, and he will be missed."

Ekeren said that perhaps the biggest change affecting the district he has seen in the last nine years is the change that No Child Left Behind has caused.

"No Child Left Behind, which continues to evolve, has forced the district to work with the system," he said. "We are fortunate that Dr. Gertsema and the administration have a good working relationship with our representatives and the Department of Education. (NCLB) has created so much paperwork and bureaucratic work that it has pulled administrator time away from the teachers and children to get those reports done. I think we are fortunate that our teachers, administration and board have a very good working relationship."

The working relationships at every level is something he feels the community should be very proud to have.

"I am not going to say we haven't had issues over the years that we have not had disagreements, because we have," Ekeren said. "But that's why you have a board and why we as board members try to speak with the members of the community both individually and through formal opportunities. I think as a whole the community is fairly comfortable with the district and the education that we provide to the students."

The quality of graduates that the district produces is a representation of how well the district is doing, Ekeren said.

"Our hope is that, as we send our students off to further their education, some of them will come back to help the community continue to grow," Ekeren said. "I always say the best form of economic development is a strong school. We have lots of

students go on to very good professional careers be it medical, professional or manufacturing. It is a credit to the education students are getting at Yankton School District."

Ekeren feels budget issues will continue to loom large as the next board takes the reins. He noted that one of the hardest things for community members to understand is that there are several funds operating the school district and that each fund has specific uses that the money can and can't be applied.

"I think we as a district have done very well managing the budget. That being said, the district as an entity has to look for ways to do better," Ekeren said. "With very limited resources given the economic climate, we have to be good stewards of what resources we have."

"We can't look to Pierre and Washington to fix our problems, we have to find a way to do it locally."

Ekeren pointed to the new facilities and improvements at Lincoln and Stewart Elementary schools as examples.

"When you look at Yankton and where we are at our physical facilities, there have been significant improvements," he said. "I know there are those who are not convinced that we needed the new administration building and bus garage, but I think it will help serve the district for many years to come. For me, I certainly don't have any vehicles that cost \$70,000 but if I did, I would want it in a garage."

Ekeren also stressed how limited the General Funds is.

"The economy and the lack of increases from the state has forced us to make (tough) decisions," he said. "One of the biggest challenges that creates for us as a district is that 87-88 percent of the general fund is spent on staffing. So we have to make sure that we are using those resources wisely and efficiently and yet we are rewarding those folks who year in and year out are doing a good job."

Ekeren says he expects the board to continue its high level of diligence for the school district.

"I think the administration and the chair have done a good job of asking the questions and getting the information to us we need," Ekeren said. "I expect that to continue."

# Neb. Court Revives Lawsuit Against School

BY JOSH FUNK  
Associated Press Writer

OMAHA, Neb. — The family of a boy who was sexually assaulted when he was 5 years old by a school intruder can argue in court that the Lincoln school district should have done more to protect him, according to a Nebraska Supreme Court ruling released Friday.

The court said Lancaster County District Court should examine the facts of the case to determine whether the district did enough to protect the boy, who was sexually assaulted in 2005 by a stranger in an Arnold Elementary bathroom.

"This decision allows my clients to go forward and have their day in court," said Vince Powers, the family's attorney.

A district judge ruled last year that the school district wasn't responsible, because the assault couldn't be foreseen. But the Supreme Court's ruling Friday will

change the way courts in the state evaluate what is foreseeable.

School district lawyer Jim Gessford said the ruling makes it clear there is a factual question to resolve, but it doesn't say the district was at fault.

"Safety and security of students is the No. 1 priority of the Lincoln Public Schools," Gessford said.

Powers said one benefit of the lawsuit was that the district improved its security procedures after it was filed. Visitors to Lincoln schools now face additional scrutiny.

"They've put into place what appears to be a good security plan so something like this wouldn't happen," Powers said.

Joseph Siems Jr., now 32, was sentenced in 2006 to 20 to 30 years in prison for the assault in this case. The Associated Press is not revealing some details — including the names of the boy and the mother — that could identify the victim.

Siems entered the school mid-day when no one was covering the desk at the school's unlocked entrance, went into a restroom and performed oral sex on the then 5-year-old boy, according to court documents.

The boy reported the assault to his teacher. Siems' arrest followed.

Before the assault, three teachers and a secretary saw Siems inside the school. Two questioned him, including one

teacher who directed him after he told her he needed to use a restroom. She then alerted administrators, who put the school on lock down.

The high court said the school employees failed to monitor Siems after spotting him and allowed him to enter the restroom alone.

"Reasonable minds could differ as to whether Siems' assault of (the boy) was a foreseeable result of those failures," the court said in its ruling.

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