

## Italian earthquake region suffers aftershocks as residents seek shelter

Four thousand people sleep in cars, tents and temporary accommodation after quake in Emilia-Romagna that killed seven

[Tom Kington](#) in Rome  
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*The Italian culture minister said tens of millions of euros would be needed for restoration.  
Photograph: Olycom SPA / Rex Features*

More than 100 aftershocks rattled the Emilia-Romagna region on Sunday and continued into Monday as 4,000 residents were forced to sleep in cars, tents and temporary accommodation following a major earthquake that killed seven people and toppled churches and castles.

Heavy rain made life more miserable for people fleeing their homes in small towns on the plains north of Bologna where the 6.0 magnitude earthquake struck just after 4am on Sunday.

Experts were meanwhile working out the extent of the destruction from the quake, which was the most damaging to [Italy's](#) cultural heritage since the two in 1997 that damaged the basilica of St Francis in Assisi.

In Finale Emilia, where rubble littered the streets, the cathedral, town hall, three churches and a castle were all seriously damaged, while a clock tower built in 1213 collapsed, although an official at Italy's culture ministry said it might be rebuilt using the same bricks which now lie in a pile on the street.

In San Felice sul Panaro, where three churches were ruined, only one of four towers at the town's castle was left standing and a large crack suggested it too might fall.

In Sant'Agostino, firefighters used a crane to lift a large painting from the shell of the church of San Carlo on Sunday. The Estense castle in Ferrara was also lightly damaged, while a clock tower in Poggio Renatico collapsed.

The Italian culture minister, Lorenzo Ornaghi, called the damage "very serious" and said tens of millions of euros would be needed for restoration.

The flatlands of the Po valley were long considered far from Italy's seismic danger areas, but a scientist said on Monday he had predicted a major quake could hit the area.

"After identifying fluxes in activity we used algorithms to identify an area stretching across northern Italy and down the Apennines where there was increased probability of an earthquake measuring over 5.4 between March and September," said Giuliano Panza, professor of seismology at the University of Trieste, who presented his findings to the Italian government earlier this year.

"It is a very large area so we couldn't issue a red alert, but I do believe more prevention is called for," he said.

Four of the people killed were working night shifts in factories which collapsed. "We need to reflect on the fact that buildings built in the last decade were collapsing," said the head of Italy's civil protection agency, Franco Gabrielli.

Two more people reportedly died of shock and one was hit by a falling beam.

The last major quake to strike the area was in Ferrara in 1570, but seismic activity has increased this year, with a 5.4 quake felt in Parma in January.

**"The area was not considered dangerous until 2004 when classifications were changed to reflect scientific findings – in this case the fractures in the Apennines – instead of history," said Gian Vito Graziano, head of the Italian Council of Geologists. "Sunday proved the new classification right."**

The area avoided casualties on the scale of the 2009 earthquake in L'Aquila, which killed 300, because it was less built up, he added.

In a front-page editorial, Corriere della Sera pointed out that preparation for earthquakes in Italy was negligible, despite 88 earthquakes larger than the L'Aquila one striking in the last five centuries, one every five years, killing 200,000 people.