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Earthquake Shakes Central Virginia

Amelia County, VA - On May 21, 2014, at 9:46 p.m., residents in central Virginia experienced a relatively small but widely felt earthquake noticeable over a large part of the region. The ground shaking lasted up to 80 seconds in some areas.

The earthquake's epicenter was just south of the Appomattox River in northern Amelia County, about 32 miles west of Richmond. The U.S. Geological Survey reports that residents as far north as New Jersey and Delaware and as far south as North Carolina also felt the earthquake. At magnitude 3.2, it was much less powerful than the 2011 earthquake in Louisa County. That earthquake, with a magnitude of 5.8, was felt up and down the east coast and caused a reported \$200 million in damages. No damage was reported from last night's earthquake.

State Geologist David Spears experienced the earthquake at his home in eastern Buckingham County. "After the 2011 event, when the ground shakes, you're aware. You hear that rumble and then you wait to feel the shaking. This is another reminder that we should be prepared for such events in central Virginia."

Some have suggested that this was an aftershock from the August 2011 earthquake. Spears has an alternative explanation. "This event is just part of the expected background level of earthquake activity in the Central Virginia Seismic Zone, which extends roughly from Richmond to Charlottesville. We should expect an earthquake this size every year or two, and plan for them accordingly."

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