

Why Panama's quake caused far less damage than Venezuela's

When	No date given
Where	Panama
Source	prensa
Published	2026-10-10 12:08-05:00
Discovered	2026-10-10 14:00-05:00
Link	https://www.prensa.com/sociedad/por-que-no-se-pueden-comparar-los-terremotos-de-venezuela-y-panama/

Summary

La Prensa interviews engineers who explain that magnitude alone does not determine damage: soil type, depth, distance, building design and maintenance matter, which is why Panama's 7.5 quake caused much less harm than Venezuela's.

Details (summary of the article)

La Prensa explains why online comparisons between Venezuela's quakes (7.2 and 7.5, over 6,000 dead and tens of thousands of damaged homes) and Panama's 7.5 are misleading. Engineers Óscar Ramírez and Ramiro Vargas, speaking at a Technological University of Panama forum a month before the quake, note that damage depends on distance to the epicentre, rupture characteristics, soil type and the quality of buildings. Panama's epicentre was in a rural area with smaller buildings, while Venezuela's hit a dense city built on soft soils that amplify shaking. Soft ground can resonate with flexible structures and greatly amplify movement, so identical buildings behave differently on different sites. Vargas warned that single-family houses, about 86% of Panama's housing stock per the 2023 census, are especially vulnerable when remodelled without proper beams, columns and wall ties. He also flagged unstable hillside construction — citing areas of Chiriquí, San Miguelito and Arraiján — and liquefaction in sandy, waterlogged soils, urging geotechnical studies despite their cost.

Original (es)

¿Por qué no se pueden comparar los terremotos de Venezuela y Panamá?

Los ingenieros Óscar Ramírez y Ramiro Vargas explican cómo el terreno, el diseño, la construcción y el mantenimiento influyen en la seguridad de edificios y viviendas.