

Instructions: Read the documents below and answer the following questions:

- How long does an earthquake last?
- What are the consequences of an earthquake?
- What are the major dangers for the population?



Japan hit hard



A very powerful earthquake hit Japan, causing a tsunami which swept away everything in its path in the northeast of the country. The Pacific Ocean area is on the highest alert. It was the middle of the afternoon in Japan, and the early hours of the morning in France. The earth started to shake violently for more than two minutes, an eternity. The tremor was the most violent ever experienced in Japan for more than 140 years. It was measured at 9.0 on the Richter scale.

Although Tokyo appears to have resisted the tremors well, several cities on the country's east coast were submerged by waves more than 10 meters high in the following hours. The earthquake, located underwater at 300 km off the coasts, caused an enormous tsunami (tidal wave).

Striking images of waves hitting the coasts and carrying off everything in their path were broadcast on television, showing the scale of the catastrophe.

By 3.30 p.m., the number of casualties was 285 dead and 350 missing, according to figures released by the police. This casualty figures are probably going to rise.

In the coming hours, the tsunami is forecast to hit the coasts of several other countries from Indonesia to South America, as well as Australia, which has issued warnings for the evacuation of people from the coastal areas.

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Annecy still a-tremble

During the early hours of Monday, Haute-Savoie (France) suffered a 5.2 magnitude earth tremor, one of the strongest in the region in more than 30 years. The earthquake, which occurred at 2.13 a.m., was felt as far away as Grenoble, Besançon, Belfort and Lyon. The epicenter was located at about thirty kilometers to the northeast of Annecy. Aftershocks have been recorded and more may occur.

■ En Société
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Photo AFP

In Annecy and the surrounding area, in addition to a lightly injured man, there is a lot of material damage – collapsed chimneys, broken glass, damaged cars and vehicles.