

Japan Issued Its First-ever Megaquake Alert. What Does That Mean?

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Japan's first-ever alert for a possible Nankai Trough megaquake, announced Thursday evening following a magnitude 7.1 tremor earlier in the day, left many wondering what to make of the relatively unknown warning.

On Thursday, media outlets sent breaking news notifications about the Meteorological Agency's decision to issue the alert, urging people to step up preparations in case the "Big One" hits.

The impact of Thursday's quake so far appears to be minor, with 16 injuries and three buildings damaged reported in the regions affected.

But the alert that followed may have put residents on edge. How serious is the situation, and what should people do in the days to come? Here's what you need to know.

The Alert

At 7:15 p.m. Thursday, over two hours after the quake struck off the coast of Miyazaki Prefecture, the Meteorological Agency issued a megaquake alert.

At a news conference that followed, the agency said the chance of a major earthquake striking along the Nankai Trough is relatively higher than usual, although the alert doesn't mean a major earthquake will necessarily occur within a specific time-frame.

However, considering that this is the first alert of its kind, the agency is urging people to be prepared for potential disasters while avoiding panic.

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Featured image: Naoshi Hirata (center), chairman of a committee tasked with evaluating the risk of a Nankai Trough earthquake, speaks at a news conference in Tokyo on Friday. | Jiji

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