

Local earthquake risk unaffected by temblor

By the STAR Staff

Sunday's earthquake measuring 5.0 on the Richter scale may have released some pressure along the fault where it occurred, reducing the risk of a large earthquake there in the near future.

But it has no affect on the possibility of earthquakes along other faults within Puerto Rico, a geologist said.

"It definitely has not released pressure in the whole region and won't have any affect on the liberation of gasses in other faults," said Christa von Hillebrandt, a geologist at the University of Mayaguez's science department.

Because the Muertos Trough, where Sunday's earthquake occurred, is under water, geologists cannot monitor very closely the stress along the fault, she said. The earthquake was unusual, however, because there has only been about five earthquakes along the Muertos Trough since 1990, said Hillebrandt. That is considered a small amount.

She classified the earthquake as moderate, pointing out that Puerto Rico's largest earthquake in 1918, was 7.5 on the Richter scale.

Every increase in one number means that the ground motion is 10 times greater.

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