

Guatemala ravaged by giant sinkhole, earthquakes and flooding

Written by T. Rob Brown (aka Roberto Chocolate)

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This article was published in National Geographic. Roberto

Huge 300 foot deep Sinkhole appears in Guatemala City

The appearance of a massive sinkhole in Guatemala City (map), Guatemala, on Sunday is thought to have been triggered by tropical storm Agatha, a violent tempest that struck Central America over the weekend.

From photographs, the new Guatemala sinkhole appears to be about 60 feet (18 meters) wide and about 300 feet (100 meters) deep, said James Currens, a hydrogeologist at the University of Kentucky—which explains how the sinkhole was reportedly able to swallow an entire three-story building.

Sinkholes can form when water-saturated soil and other particles become too heavy and cause the roofs of existing voids in the soil to collapse, Currens said.

Another way sinkholes can form is if water enlarges a natural fracture in a limestone bedrock layer. As the crack gets bigger, the topsoil gently slumps and develops into a sinkhole.

In either case, the final collapse can be sudden, Currens said.

This article is from the AS/COA (American Society/ Council of the Americas) newsletter. Roberto

Guatemala Plagued by Storm, Sinkhole, and Volcano

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Tropical storm Agatha—the first of the hurricane season—ravaged Central America over the weekend, leaving over 175 people dead, with Guatemala hit particularly hard. This came after last week's exodus of more than 1,600 Guatemalans fleeing the eruption of Pacaya volcano (view a BBC video), which covered parts of the capital in ash. To top it off, Guatemala City residents were shocked after a giant sinkhole swallowed several buildings over the weekend.

UN agencies are preparing to assist the tens of thousands of people affected by Agatha in Guatemala, Honduras, and El Salvador.