



The Modified Mercalli Intensity (MMI) Scale is a qualitative ranking system that describes the severity of shaking in specific locations during an earthquake. The scale is composed of increasing levels of intensity that range from imperceptible shaking to catastrophic destruction. Each ranking is assigned a Roman numeral from 1 to 10 (I-X).

MMI values are a more useful measure of earthquake severity to the public and emergency managers than other measurements, such as magnitude, because they describe the observed effects experienced in specific locations.

Modified Mercalli Intensity (MMI) Scale		
Intensity	Shaking	Description
I	Not felt	Not felt by most people.
II	Weak	Felt only by a few people at rest.
III	Weak	Felt by many people indoors, although not often recognized as an earthquake. Vehicles may sway; vibrations felt like that of a passing truck.
IV	Light	Felt by a few people outdoors and most indoors. Vehicles at rest noticeably moving. Dishes, windows, and doors disturbed.
V	Moderate	Felt by nearly all people regardless of location. Some unstable objects may move, dishes and windows break.
VI	Strong	Felt by all. Some heavy furniture moved, damage slight.
VII	Very strong	Damage slight to moderate in well-built structures. Some chimneys broken.
VIII	Severe	Considerable damage in ordinary substantial structures with partial collapse. Heavy furniture overturned, chimneys and walls fall.
IX	Violent	Significant damage to all structures. Buildings shifted off foundations.
X	Extreme	Most masonry and frame structures destroyed, some well-built structures destroyed. Railways bent.

*Adapted from The Severity of an Earthquake, USGS General Interest Publication 1989-288-913*