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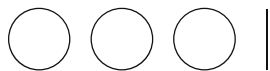
LOCAL // TRENDING

Massive Daisetta sinkhole once thought to be growing is actually a second, adjacent sinkhole



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Updated: April 13, 2023 6:53 p.m.





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A drone image of the 2008 (left) and 2023 sinkholes in Daisetta, Texas, taken on April 8, 2023.

John Andrews

There are now two sinkholes in Daisetta, a city of about 1,000 between Houston and Beaumont.

Researchers from the Bureau of Economic Geology were invited to visit what was once believed to be a single sinkhole after the city reported it was growing after remaining dormant for 15 years.

In doing so, researchers determined the sinkhole was not actually growing, but rather that a new sinkhole had formed adjacent to the original one. The researchers

are planning on continuing to investigate both sinkholes to better understand the cause of the collapse and to minimize the risk of potential future collapses.

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“On Sunday, April 2, 2023, a sinkhole formed on the northwestern flank of the Hull Salt Dome in the city of Daisetta, Texas,” a new Bureau of Economic Geology report reads. “This nearly circular sinkhole, having a water-filled diameter of about 70 meters, is located adjacent to the southwestern edge of the larger 2008 Daisetta sinkhole.”

The researchers visited the city last Sunday to map the new sinkhole. They found the maximum water depth in the 2008 sinkhole was about 75.5 feet (23 meters) while the maximum depth of the 2023 sinkhole is 29.5 feet (9 meters).

According to the report, the city is located on top of a low hill, due to the presence of the underlying Hull Salt Dome, which is a relatively common geography for the area. [The Hull Salt Dome](#) is basically a large salt deposit, and because it is made up of salt, it is susceptible to rapid dissolution.

Both sinkholes are similar in the way they collapsed, the research found. The water level in the 2023 sinkhole equals the current level in the 2008 sinkhole, and murky, sediment-laden water from the 2023 sinkhole has filtered into the 2008 sinkhole.

“The collapsed area could also not expand much beyond its current extent,” the report about the new sinkhole concluded. However, “future collapse similar to that observed in 2008 and 2023 is also possible in adjacent areas along the steep flank of the salt dome.”

Concern about another collapse

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Daisetta resident Alexis Laird, 25, a mother of three kids, said she hadn't really thought much about the sinkhole since first seeing it as a fourth-grader in 2008. Now she's worried about it, as her apartment is located less than two blocks away. She said she wants officials to be more proactive in their updates to residents.

"It doesn't matter whether it's good or bad or a minuscule amount of information.. ... Tell the people that live here," she said.

When the first sinkhole appeared, some residents had feared it might engulf their small town, as it had swallowed up some oil tanks and several vehicles but spared nearby homes. Some residents used humor to calm their fears, making "Sinkhole de Mayo" T-shirts, a reference to Cinco de Mayo. For others, the sinkhole, which eventually filled with water, became a new fishing spot.

Daisetta City Secretary Joan Caruthers said officials are working to set up a website that will provide updates about the second sinkhole and are planning to hold a public meeting in the future. Caruthers said they want "a little more information" before scheduling the public meeting.

"I don't think (residents) should panic or anything. But it's something that they should watch," said Richard Howe, a private geologist with Houston-based Terra Cognita who's helping Daisetta officials monitor the sinkhole.

The Associated Press contributed to this report.

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