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MANOKWARI, 04 January 2009 - Authorities in Rendani Airport, Manokwari, West Papua has stopped activities in the airport following series of powerful earthquakes that hit the city earlier on Sunday, Kompas.com reported. The authorities and airlines operating in the airport agreed to stop every activity on security and safety concerns.

An Express Air airlines flight heading for Manokwari from Jayapura, Papua, was forced to fly back following the decision. A series of powerful earthquakes hit at dawn, cutting power lines, badly damaging buildings and killing at least three people in the area.

Manokwari Police chief Adj. Snr. Comr. Pit Wahyudi said that the police were working to evacuate two people buried under debris of Mutiara Hotel. Two hotels collapsed and hundreds of houses damaged after the quake, he said. A number of city residents has been evacuated to the local military command headquarters. There are approximately 70,000 people living in Manokwari.