

HAZARDS AND THREATS: EARTHQUAKES

INTRODUCTION

Earthquakes

One of the most frightening and destructive phenomena of nature is a catastrophic earthquake and its terrible aftereffects.

An earthquake is a sudden movement of the Earth, caused by the abrupt release of strain that has accumulated over a long period of time. For hundreds of millions of years, the forces of plate tectonics have shaped the Earth as the huge plates that form the Earth's surface slowly move over, under, and past each other. Sometimes the movement is gradual. At other times, the plates are locked together, unable to release the accumulating energy. When the accumulated energy grows strong enough, the plates break free. If the earthquake occurs in a populated area, it may cause many deaths and injuries and extensive property damage.

Today we are challenging the assumption that earthquakes must present an uncontrollable and unpredictable hazard to life and property. Scientists have begun to estimate the locations and likelihoods of future damaging earthquakes. Sites of greatest hazard are being identified, and definite progress is being made in designing structures that will withstand the effects of earthquakes.

Major earthquakes may happen anywhere you work, live or travel in the County of Los Angeles. We must all be prepared for major earthquakes, and most importantly practice on a consistent basis on how to protect ourselves when it happens. While the potential earthquake hazard you will experience depends on the location, County of Los Angeles as well as other parts of the State of California are considered at high risk compared to the rest of the nation.

If an earthquake hits your location, remember to “Drop, Cover, and Hold On.”

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