

Earthquakes, Part one

Earthquakes are one of Nature's most common events, and there are approximately 8000 recorded earthquakes around the world every day. An earthquake is a sudden slipping or movement of a portion of the earth's crust, caused by a sudden release of stress usually less than 25 miles below the surface.

During the period of time between May 2, 2005 and October 26, 2005 there have been **154 Quakes** along the New Madrid Fault zone area. Until this reported time, in the past, there was an average of **20 Quakes per year; however this average has changed to 30**. Most earthquakes that occur in Arkansas are gentle reminders of the activity going on beneath the surface. However, in Northeast Arkansas where the southern tip of the New Madrid Fault is located, the potential for a devastating earthquake exist everyday. There are approximately four million people that live along the New Madrid Fault that are at great risk. (see part 2 for additional information on people at risk) Even if you do not live near the New Madrid Fault it is essential that you prepare for an earthquake. Small scattered earthquakes have occurred in all but 24 Counties in the State of Arkansas. (see earthquakes at www.adem.state.ar.us).

The highest earthquake risk in the United States, outside of the west coast, is along the New Madrid Fault Zone. Damaging tremors are not as frequent as on the west coast, but, due to the unconsolidated soil conditions and other geology, when an earthquake does occur the destruction will cover 20 times more area. The magnitude 4.1 earthquake that occurred on May 1,

2005, 15 miles WSW of Blytheville, Arkansas was reported as felt in El Dorado, Arkansas.

Hypothetically, lets say the BIG one hits Northeast Arkansas and sever damage and power outages have been reported as far as 250 to 350 miles out from the epicenter. Are you prepared to be self sufficient? Is your family? Your neighborhood? For at least 72 hours? Below is a list of fourteen things for individual and family preparedness:

1. Know the safe spots in each room of your home or office. ie, under sturdy tables or desk, and against inside walls.
2. Know the danger spots. Ie, windows, hanging objects, fireplaces, tall furniture.
3. Conduct practice drills.
4. Develop a family plan of action.
5. If outside, stay away from, tall buildings, tall signs, hazardous products, power lines, bridges and overpasses, etc.
6. Learn how to shut the gas, water and electricity off at the meters.
7. Check chimneys, roofs and wall foundations for stability.
8. Secure water heaters, stoves, washers, dryers and heaters.
9. Secure heavy pictures, mirrors etc. that are hung on walls.(especially over beds and sofas).
10. Put latches on cabinet doors to keep them closed during shaking.
11. Keep all flammable or hazardous liquid, pesticides, paint and cleaning products in secured cabinets.
12. Maintain emergency food, water and other supplies, including medicine, first aid kit and clothing.
13. Organize a neighborhood preparedness program.(FEMA has an excellent one on their web site).
14. Identify neighbors who have special needs or will require special assistance.

Of interest Now, I've heard people in the past and also recently say that the smaller earthquakes are letting off steam and keeping the BIG one away. This is a myth and not true! Moderate earthquakes may actually be precursors of larger earthquakes.

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