

A Devastating Earthquake in California?

At press time, there have been several dozen earthquakes locally in the Salton Sea Basin. Nearly every month, we hear of significant earthquakes or other disasters in other parts of the country (and of the world). Some time in the future, these other parts of the world will hear about OUR earthquake; about how the San Andreas Fault has ruptured causing a 7.8 earthquake in southern California, about how thousands are missing or dead, how buildings have collapsed, how the resources are spread too thin and how thousands will be without water, food, and electricity for weeks to months.

Recall that we live on the Pacific's "Ring of Fire" where 90% of the world's earthquakes occur, and where 81% of the world's most devastating earthquakes occur. Living in California, earthquakes are commonplace and most of us take them in stride. Now imagine an earthquake on the San Andreas Fault with a magnitude 7.8 striking Southern California. Can this happen? It is not a function of "can it happen," it is a function of "when will it happen." According to the U.S Geologic Survey (USGS), **an earthquake of this magnitude is inevitable.**

What many residents don't realize is that the southern portion of the San Andreas Fault is long overdue for a major earthquake. Historically, a magnitude 7.2 or greater earthquake strikes this portion of the fault every 200 years, yet it has been over 300 years since this last occurred. An earthquake of this magnitude is **likely to happen within our lifetime.** Based on the high probability of this occurring, the USGS recently released the findings of a 2008 study, "The Shakeout Scenerio," which include the following:

- a magnitude 7.8 earthquake (approximately 8 times stronger than the Haiti earthquake) will cause the San Andreas fault to shift up to 23 feet,
- over 10 million people will experience significant shaking,
- despite the epicenter of this earthquake likely being in the Inland Empire, downtown Los Angeles will experience 55 seconds of shaking (8 times longer than the Northridge earthquake) and some areas in southern California will experience up to 5 minutes of continuous shaking,
- over 1800 lives will be lost and there will be over 50,000 serious injuries,
- electricity and gas will be unavailable for weeks to months, and water will be unavailable in some areas for as long as six months,
- 2/3 of all hospital beds in Orange County, Los Angeles County, Riverside County and San Bernardino County will be non-operational,
- there will be over 1600 significant fires with hundreds of city blocks completely destroyed, and
- economic damage to the area will total \$200-\$300 billion dollars.

These are not meant to be a doomsday, extremist views; these are likely scenarios developed by over 300 scientists and disaster experts. What is equally amazing is the number of residents the Emergency Preparedness Committee has spoken with who are unaware or unprepared. Some have even stated, "Well, I pay my taxes. I'll just call 9-1-1." Unfortunately, there are several problems with relying on this method of getting

assistance: 1) the phones are unlikely to work (including cell phones), 2) if they do work, they will be jammed with others trying to call, and 3) if the phones do work and you happen to get through to emergency services, you will not see any assistance for several days because they will be inundated with calls. We can look to Hurricane Katrina in 2005, or more recently, Superstorm Sandy to see how long it takes to get assistance. Emergency Preparedness Coordinators and first responders in Orange County have already stated that we should all be self sufficient for the 72 hours after a disaster. Your Nellie Gail Emergency Preparedness Committee cannot emphasize enough: **In the event of a major disaster, do not expect outside help for at least 72 hours and likely longer.**

Dr. Lucy Jones, the world-renowned seismologist from Caltech and the US Geologic Survey, stated that the key to preparing for an earthquake is to network with your local resources before the earthquake occurs. This is precisely what has developed with the Nellie Gail Emergency Preparedness Committee. Are you a part of it? Do you have a 30-days of supplies in your earthquake kit? Have you contacted your Block Captain? Over the past several years, your Nellie Gail Emergency Preparedness Committee has been providing you with information through the *Pony Express* and the Nellie Gail website (www.nelliegailranch.org) on how to prepare, be self-reliant and be of assistance to your neighbors. Currently, community volunteers include over 40 Block Captain, 6 Area Coordinators and 7 Committee members, all of whom are here to help you better prepare for the *inevitable* regional earthquake. In the coming months, you will see articles that will help you in preparing before the next earthquake, how to respond during an earthquake, and what to do immediately after the earthquake. Additional articles will include the proper selection and storage of food and water, communications during disasters, proper shelter, light rescue techniques, and other information. Your committee's goal is to help you prepare, because "failing to prepare is preparing for failure" –Benjamin Franklin.

*******Attention Residents of Nellie Gail Ranch*******

Your Emergency Preparedness Committee is seeking volunteers to serve as Block Captains, Area Coordinators, and Committee Members (if you have not been contacted by your Block Captain, you probably don't have one.) It is preferable that prospective volunteers have the following attributes:

- a desire to be better prepared for disasters and emergencies
- a desire to help your friends and neighbors
- a willingness to be provided all the skills you will need to be prepared
- be able to find no more than 1 (one) hour per month in your busy schedule to helping others
- a willingness to accept gratitude for being a neighborhood role model.

Only those who fit the above criteria can be considered. If you qualify, please send an email indicating your interest to Ken Cheng, Nellie Gail Emergency Preparedness Committee Member. His email is kennethscheng@gmail.com.