

California Experiences 1,000 Earthquakes in 3 Weeks

In a key seismic zone approximately 40 miles east of downtown Los Angeles, there have been more than 1,000 earthquakes since May 25th. Needless to say, it would be quite alarming for the entire state of California to experience more than 1,000 significant earthquakes in just three weeks, but in this case we are talking about an area that is “less than a square mile” in size.

And what makes this even more concerning is that all of these earthquakes are happening in a location that is very close to the San Andreas Fault. Could it be possible that the San Andreas Fault is about to wake up in a major way? I don't know about you, but if I were living in Southern California right now, I would find this sort of news to be extremely unsettling:

A flurry of more than 1,000 small earthquakes has rattled Southern California over the past three weeks.

The quakes have occurred in an area covering less than a square mile in San Bernardino and Riverside counties, roughly 40 miles east of downtown Los Angeles.

The United States Geological Survey map depicting the uptick in seismic activity shows a thick collection of dots, a rather unsettling sight.

Of course it is perfectly normal for California to experience earthquakes. They happen on a daily basis, and normally they aren't anything to be too concerned about.

But to have this many earthquakes concentrated in an extremely limited area is definitely unusual. According to USGS science

advisor Ken Hudnut, this current earthquake swarm is “a little different than what we’ve seen before”:

“In detail, if you zoom in on it and look at the pattern and how it’s evolving in time, it’s a little different than what we’ve seen before,” he says. “We get these swarms, but we don’t see exact repeats. Obviously, it’s very disruptive to the people who are feeling these earthquakes. We’re watching this activity closely.”

Normally, earthquake swarms subside after a certain period of time. But so far, there are no signs that this swarm is going to end. Instead, we just keep seeing quake after quake.

That doesn’t mean a major event is imminent, but without a doubt, there are good reasons to be concerned about what is happening. As geophysicist Andrea Llenos recently explained, every small earthquake increases the likelihood that there will be more seismic activity, and she stressed that we “do know a big earthquake is going to happen” someday:

But “any time you have an increase in the number of small earthquakes,” according to Andrea Llenos, a research geophysicist with the US Geological Survey, “you’re likely to increase the likelihood of a slightly larger earthquake happening.”

“I would redefine normal as: You should still be prepared for a large earthquake,” Llenos told the paper. “We do know a big earthquake is going to happen.”

Californians have been hearing that the “Big One” is going to hit the San Andreas Fault for a very long time.

We even had a major Hollywood movie starring the Rock made about such a quake, but it still hasn’t happened yet.

But one day it will. In fact, the chair of UCLA’s Civil and

Environmental Engineering department insists that such a quake is “an existential threat to our economy, our ability to live here”:

“There is no fault that is more likely to break [in California] than the San Andreas Fault,” says Jonathan P. Stewart, professor and chair of UCLA’s Civil and Environmental Engineering department and an expert in earthquakes. “Small local earthquakes—the Northridge earthquake, the San Fernando earthquake—they can kill people in the dozens, they can have freeways coming down, they can affect dams, and all of that is bad,” he says. “But it doesn’t really pose an existential threat to our economy, our ability to live here.” A large earthquake on the San Andreas Fault, on the other hand, he says, could create a devastating threat to humanity, infrastructure and the economy, with implications that extend nationally and even globally.

As ominous as that sounds, the truth is that Stewart may actually be understating the threat Californians are facing.

A few years ago, a team of scientists conducted a major study, which found that major quakes in the distant past had caused “part of the coastline south of Long Beach to drop by 1 1/2 to 3 feet”:

Scientists from California State University Fullerton and the United States Geological Survey found evidence the older quakes caused part of the coastline south of Long Beach to drop by 1 1/2 to 3 feet.

Today that could result in the area ending up at or below sea level, said Cal State Fullerton professor Matt Kirby, who worked with the paper’s lead author, graduate student Robert Leeper.

“It’s something that would happen relatively instantaneously,” Kirby said. “Probably today if it happened,

you would see seawater rushing in."

In other words, scientists are telling us that if such a quake happened today we could see areas along the California coastline go into the ocean permanently.

I don't know how much clearer I can make it.

We have entered a time when dramatic changes are happening to our planet, and this is something that I have been writing about for a long time. And even though much of the rest of the Ring of Fire is shaking like a leaf right now, most of those living along the California coastline have been lulled into a false sense of security because there has not been a massive quake on the west coast for many, many years.

But scientists assure us that the San Andreas Fault is loaded and ready to spring at any moment, and they have also warned us that the entire fault zone "could unzip all at once."

Let's hope that day is delayed for as long as possible, but if the hundreds of earthquakes that have happened in recent weeks are any indication, time could be running out a lot faster than most of us had anticipated.

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