

2019 SWMHE *in Ventura County*

SCENARIO

July 2019

At approximately 8:19 pm on July 5th the United States Geological Survey (USGS) reported a 7.1M earthquake which struck the Mojave Desert, 11 miles from Ridgecrest, CA. This earthquake followed a 6.4M earthquake that occurred on July 4th in Searles Valley, CA; near Ridgecrest. Aftershocks have been reported and are expected to continue.

California Governor Gavin Newsom declared a state of emergency in San Bernardino and Kern Counties. Newsom also formally requested a Presidential Emergency Declaration for Direct Federal Assistance to further support response and recovery in impacted communities.

Aftershocks of the earthquakes near Ridgecrest have been encroaching on two major earthquake faults; generating interest and some concern among seismologists over whether it could trigger another large temblor. Both faults are capable of producing new earthquakes of magnitude 7 or greater. The USGS says the chance of an earthquake of magnitude 7 or greater from the July 5 earthquake is 1 in 400 — “possible, but with a low probability.”

Weeks later...

Seismologist are reporting that earthquakes do not reduce the risk of future quakes. Rather, an earthquake increases the probability for more quakes. Models show that earthquakes relieve stress to some areas around them but redistribute the stress and can push other faults in the area to failure; ultimately leading to a greater potential for a large earthquake.

September 2019

Since July, a continued increase in seismological activity has been observed, leading the USGS to develop an earthquake preparedness campaign. As part of this campaign, USGS and the Southern California Earthquake Center constructed a [computer simulation of the ground shaking in Ventura County](#) based on a worst-case scenario earthquake. It is meant to emphasize the magnitude of the threat and underline the importance of preparedness. Local health officials are taking this concern seriously and advising organizations within the medical and health system to ramp up their preparedness efforts. Under the direction of the California Office of Emergency Services, similar planning is underway through Operational Area emergency management agencies in collaboration with public safety agencies and non-governmental organizations. The Sheriff's Office of Emergency Services has chosen to focus on the threat of Earthquake for their Preparedness Month outreach; encouraging community members throughout Ventura County to take the [Seven Steps to Earthquake Safety](#).

Two Weeks Prior to Exercise

At the request of the California Department of Public Health (CDPH), local health departments have been working with health care coalition partners to assess their vulnerabilities in the event there is an earthquake. Authorities have requested that emphasis be placed on critical systems required to maintain operations such as emergency power, water supply, on-site disaster supplies, and building safety.

Two Days Prior to Exercise

There has been an increase in inquiries both by media and elected officials on the state of preparedness among healthcare organizations and public safety agencies. The aging infrastructure as well as communication and transportation systems are being highlighted in the media reports. Of particular focus is the threat of a massive power failure that could occur if a major fault line ruptures; emphasizing concern for community members who rely on electricity for assistive technology and medical devices. Local health officials have developed guidance – [Preparing for Power Outage: Persons Dependent on Electricity](#) – to aid community members with their personal preparedness.

As USGS continues to observe a heightened level of seismological activity, media outlets report a spike in sales of disaster supplies.

