

After the Big One: Are you ready for recovery?

October 24, 2019



On the same day of the Great Shakeout, two earthquakes struck off the Oregon and California coastline.

The Shakeout was a worldwide earthquake preparedness drill held at 10:17 a.m. Oct. 17.

The U.S. Geological Survey recorded the first quake at 3:10 a.m. Thursday, a 3.4-magnitude tremor with a depth of 22.3 miles, about 4.3 miles west-southwest of Klamath off the California coast.

A second undersea earthquake occurred Thursday afternoon, west of Port Orford. The geological survey said the 4.7 tremor registered 6.2 miles in depth.

There were no tsunamis generated by the tremors and no reported damage or injuries.

The U.S. Geological Survey also reported a 4.6 magnitude tremor occurred just before 7 a.m. Monday morning, Oct. 21, about 130 miles of the Bandon - Coos Bay area.

Meanwhile, state emergency management officials said 2,848 Curry County residents participated in the annual Great Oregon Shakeout. The focus of the drill was to drop, cover and hold.

Curry County's emergency manager, Jeremy Dumire, said what follows a major earthquake should be a key focus. According to Dumire, the destruction from the Cascadia Good Friday earthquake of 1964 in Alaska, at magnitude 9.2, is a good learning example of what to expect.

"The potential damage to infrastructure would be considerable, which makes it all the more important that individuals and families prepare ahead to ensure they are two weeks ready with food and supplies," he said.

"Even if the Cascadia does not happen in our lifetime, being two weeks ready is a great start to prepare for any other disasters that Curry County may face in the future."

Durmire said disasters over the past two years in Curry County, including two major wildfires, landslides, road failures and flooding, gives a minor preview of what a Cascadia quake would be like for this region.

Geologists have said there is evidence that a massive subduction zone earthquake will occur off the coast from northern California to British Columbia, with force similar to that which hit Indonesia in 2004, and Japan in 2011, during subduction zone earthquakes and tsunamis. Precisely when such a disaster would occur is difficult to pinpoint.

Oregon's Office of Emergency Management (OEM) encourages people to be prepared to be on their own for a minimum of two weeks following a major earthquake. "This lessens the strain on emergency responders, who need to focus limited resources on injured and other vulnerable populations immediately following a disaster," said OEM public information officer Paula Fasano Negele.

"For many years, we've been talking about the importance of being prepared for 72 hours. This is a good start, and helpful in the event of short-term power outages or temporary evacuation."

A large earthquake and tsunami will leave much of the area's transportation routes destroyed. "Oregonians will have to count on each other in the community, in the workplace and at home in order to be safe until responders can reach you," Fasano Negele said.

"Being prepared to be self-sufficient for two weeks is an achievable goal. Many of the standard preparedness kit items, such as flashlights, gloves, hand-crank radios, trash bags and a first-aid kit, should already be in your 72-hour kit."

How quickly Curry County recovers from a major earthquake depends on how individuals, businesses and the public sector prepares today for such an event, according to Dumire.

During an Emergency Preparedness Expo in Gold Beach on Oct. 12, The Pilot asked a few of the attendees if they were ready for the aftermath of a major earthquake.

"Yes, I am," Gold Beach resident Adrienne Thompson said. "I have my emergency bug-out bag in my home and I have canned foods. I have extra blankets and our camping gear. I think I would be able to live for at least seven days with what I have."

No, I'm not," said Alex (who declined to give his last name or where he was from). "I wouldn't really know where to start. I think I just need more food prep, and have food that's able to be stored for a long time."

To learn more about protecting yourself during earthquakes, visit www.earthquakecountry.org/step5 and www.ShakeOut.org. For more information about disaster preparedness, visit the Federal Emergency Management website, ready.com.