



Central United States Earthquake Consortium

CUSEC

a partnership to mitigate disasters and save lives....

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Haiti earthquake reminds us of seismic risk in central U.S.

Central US Earthquake Consortium Restates Earthquake Risk in the Central U.S.

Memphis, TN (January 13, 2010)— According to the U.S. Geological Survey (USGS), the island of Haiti was hit with a 7.0 magnitude earthquake at 3:53p.m.CST on Tuesday, January 12, 2010— the strongest earthquake to strike the island in more than 200 years. As the extent of devastation and casualties becomes clearer, an international disaster relief effort is underway to assist an estimated three million people in need of emergency aid. This catastrophic event should serve as a reminder to central U.S. residents that we also have our own earthquake hazard to address, and that individual and community preparedness is key in mitigating losses of life and property.

Knowing that at any moment a major earthquake can strike the central U.S., local, state and federal governments are taking steps to ensure a unified approach to response and recovery following a major seismic event in the region. Initiated by the Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA), the New Madrid Seismic Zone (NMSZ) Catastrophic Planning Initiative is a project to help increase national readiness for a catastrophic earthquake in the NMSZ. This initiative includes participation from local, state and federal governments, academia, business, industry and volunteer organizations.

Through planning workshops, meetings and conferences, participants in the initiative have been working since March of 2007 to achieve the following key goals:

- Improve response to a catastrophic earthquake and related hazards in the NMSZ
- Plan for a coordinated response and recovery effort among federal, state and local agencies
- Incorporate lessons from Hurricane Katrina response, Southeast Louisiana Catastrophic Hurricane Plan and previous earthquakes

The central U.S. is home to 44 million people residing in the states of Alabama, Arkansas, Illinois, Indiana, Kentucky, Mississippi, Missouri and Tennessee. Adding to the danger, a large percentage of structures in the region were not built to withstand earthquake shaking. Efforts to adopt new and more comprehensive building codes are under way throughout the central U.S., which will reduce the vulnerability to new structures, but unfortunately will not address these pre-existing structures. Aggressive mitigation efforts are needed which directly address the vulnerability of these structures.

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The Central US Earthquake Consortium (CUSEC)— a partnership of the federal government and the eight states most affected by earthquakes in the central United States; whose primary mission is the reduction of deaths, injuries, property damage and economic losses resulting from earthquakes in the Central United States—urge central U.S. residents to learn as much as possible about pre-disaster preparedness and encourage the following:

- 72-hour disaster preparedness kits with food, water, prescription medication and first aid kits, battery-powered lanterns and radios, and extra batteries
- Family disaster plans should be rehearsed, and updated routinely
- Knowing how to turn off gas, power and water to their home
- Anchoring heavy objects to walls (bookcases, mirrors, etc.)
- Never placing unsecured heavy objects over beds, and keep heavy objects lower than head height of shortest family member

For more information on the seismic risk in your state and the central U.S., you can contact your state emergency management agency and/or FEMA.

You can also find additional earthquake-related information at www.cusec.org

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