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IEMA Encourages People to Prepare for Earthquakes

February 7 is anniversary of devastating quake in New Madrid zone

SPRINGFIELD – Some of the largest earthquakes ever recorded in North America rocked the mostly rural Central U.S. between December 1811 and February 1812, including parts of southern Illinois. The strongest earthquakes in this series were estimated to be around magnitude 8.0, and were felt as far away as the East Coast.

Today, this multi-state region is heavily populated and highly developed. A similar earthquake now would cause widespread devastation to buildings, utilities, roads, bridges and other infrastructure, as well as result in many injuries and deaths. While damage would be less severe in other parts of Illinois, utility outages, road closures and disruptions to deliveries of essential supplies would significantly impact the lives of most Illinoisans.

Recognizing this serious risk, the Illinois Emergency Management Agency (IEMA) and local emergency management agencies will promote earthquake preparedness throughout February.

“Southern Illinois is adjacent to two earthquake zones, so the risk of a major earthquake is very real,” said IEMA Acting Director Joe Klinger. “We can’t predict when the next devastating earthquake will occur, but we can help people learn how to protect themselves and reduce damage to their homes.”

Klinger said people need to remember to “Drop, Cover and Hold On” when they feel the ground shaking. The phrase prompts people to “Drop” down to the floor, take “Cover” under a sturdy desk, table or other furniture, and “Hold On” to the furniture item and be prepared to move with it until the shaking ends.

There are several steps people can take to help prevent injuries and property damage at home, including:

- Strapping water heaters and large appliances to wall studs
- Anchoring overhead light fixtures
- Fastening shelves to wall studs and securing cabinet doors with latches
- Learning how to shut off gas, water and electricity in case the lines are damaged

For additional earthquake preparedness information, visit www.Ready.Illinois.gov or follow IEMA on Facebook (www.facebook.com/ReadyIllinois) and Twitter (twitter.com/ReadyIllinois).