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Shake Out

By Cynthia De Castro Asianjournal.com

Largest earthquake drill in US history

LOS ANGELES - To help prepare Angelenos for a major earthquake likely to occur within the next 30 years, the Great Southern California ShakeOut campaign was launched a few days ago. Mayor Antonio Villaraigosa joined local safety officials, community and business leaders, and emergency managers to announce the launch of the largest earthquake drill in American history. ShakeOut will take place in November in eight southern California counties – in preparation of a major earthquake likely to occur within the next 30 years.

"This is our reality. A major earthquake will come, and it is our responsibility to be prepared for the economic and social aftershocks," said Mayor Villaraigosa. "An early investment in preparedness can have a priceless return after a disaster."

The Great Southern California ShakeOut is a region-wide campaign geared to encourage residents, schools, businesses and organizations to get ready for big earthquakes, and to help residents prevent disasters from becoming catastrophes. The campaign calls on everyone to participate in the country's largest earthquake drill that will take place at 10:00 am on November 13, 2008.

For more than a year, the United States Geological Survey (USGS) has led a collaboration of experts and professionals to understand how a magnitude 7.8 earthquake along the Southern San Andreas Fault – an event larger than a dozen Northridge earthquakes occurring simultaneously across the region – would affect Southern California, from seconds to decades after the event.

At the June 4 meeting at Caltech, earthquake scientists outlined the possible effects of a large earthquake and discussed preparations for the drill in November. Geological forecast studies have shown that an earthquake of a magnitude 7.8 is likely to occur in the next 30 years and would affect the majority of the City of Los Angeles. The ShakeOut scenario estimates that a potential earthquake of this magnitude would be a large-scale national disaster causing 2,000 deaths; 50,000 injuries; \$200 billion in damage; and severe, long-lasting disruption.

Mayor Villaraigosa has worked to ensure that Los Angeles is prepared in the event of an emergency, appointing Los Angeles Fire Chief Douglas Barry and Emergency Management Department General Manager James Featherstone to oversee key agencies and update and improve the City's preparedness plans.

The Mayor called on all area business and residents to sign up to participate in the ShakeOut. The Mayor also emphasized the need for personal preparedness and encouraged all Angelenos to have emergency plans and kits in their homes, cars and offices.

"While we can't predict, we can prepare. Preparedness is a shared responsibility.

We're going to need water. We're going to need food. We're going to need each other," said Mayor Villaraigosa.

ShakeOut is organized by the Earthquake Country Alliance, a public-private partnership of leading earthquake professionals, emergency managers, government officials, business and community leaders, and others, led by Dr.

Lucy Jones (United States Geological Survey), Jim Featherstone (City of Los Angeles Emergency Preparedness Department) and Prof. Tom Jordan (Southern California Earthquake Center, USC). Partners include the Southern California Association of Governments, the County of Los Angeles, California Geological Survey, Caltech, UCLA, FEMA, California Office of Emergency Services, California Earthquake Authority, and the American Red Cross. (AJ)