



COUNTY OF HENRY

OFFICE OF EMERGENCY MANAGEMENT AND SAFETY

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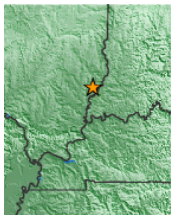
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PRESS RELEASE:

February 11, 2009 (PARIS, TN) The Tennessee Emergency Management Agency has proclaimed this week, Feb 9-13, 2009, "Earthquake Awareness Week". This year TEMA has again joined with the Central United States Earthquake Consortium (CUSEC), and the Center for Earthquake Research and Information (CERI) to promote earthquake preparedness. This year's theme is, "*It Matters! Are You Prepared?*" It is important to keep in mind that an earthquake can occur at any time. Earthquakes are no longer only a concern for citizens along the New Madrid Seismic Zone in the western portions of the state. In addition, there is an unnamed and largely undescribed earthquake zone that roughly parallels Interstate 75 from Chattanooga to near Knoxville. A major earthquake represents what would potentially be the largest natural disaster ever to occur in the state of Tennessee. Some estimates suggest that a major earthquake in the New Madrid zone would be a nationwide catastrophic event, largely due to the interruption in transportation, communications, fuel supply, and other economic consequences that would be experienced as a result of damage to the infrastructure.

The New Madrid seismic zone is one of the most active in the world. Scientists predict a large magnitude earthquake in the New Madrid seismic zone will occur in the near future. A large magnitude earthquake will definitely affect Henry County in some way. Bridges and buildings could collapse especially older ones. According to CERI's Gary Patterson, "The irony is that the longer we go without an earthquake the closer we are to the next." How true this statement is. We must not become immune to the threat that exists.



The most recent large earthquake occurred on April 18, 2008, in the Wabash Valley Seismic zone, which is defined by a zone of earthquakes that are scattered across a large area of southeastern Illinois and southwestern Indiana. On this day, Henry County Emergency Management reported the 5.2 magnitude earthquake was felt around 4:35AM that morning in Paris and Henry County. 911 calls started to inundate the dispatch center around 4:38AM. No injuries or major structural damage occurred as a result of the quake. According to a Central United States Earthquake Consortium (CUSEC) spokesman, that was the highest magnitude earthquake in our region since 1968 when a 5.4 magnitude occurred.

In 2007, West Tennessee Counties received a report from the Tennessee Emergency Management Agency estimating damage their county would receive from a projected 7.5 magnitude earthquake on the New Madrid fault line. This report was generated with a software program developed by the Federal Emergency Management Agency called HAZUS. The report projects damage to infrastructure, public facilities, medical facilities, and emergency response capabilities with some local capabilities estimated at less than 50% operational after the quake. Henry County is less than 100 miles from the fault line and is projected to sustain moderate damage to our county. Watkins states, "In light of this projection, 72 hours may not be long enough to prepare to be on your own, when in fact it could take up to a week for emergency services to reach some affected areas. For years, Emergency Managers have recommended creating emergency supply kits to last a family for up to 72 hours. I feel a more realistic plan, according to the projected damage in this report, would be to prepare for at least five days. When this event occurs, all of West Tennessee is going to be overwhelmed with injuries, major damage to buildings, no electricity, and communities facing possible isolation from any outside resources for several days. It will be catastrophic to all of West Tennessee."

Watkins adds, "The recent ice storm in our area gave us a glimpse of what could happen after a large earthquake. The lack of electricity, water and the inability to purchase goods and services caused residents to leave in search of needed supplies and shelter. The size of Paris doubled over a short period. Local citizens saw a disruption to our community. Hotels rooms were filled to capacity and long lines existed for purchasing ordinary supplies such as fuel, groceries, and equipment. Local churches opened their doors to those needing a place to stay. Two local shelters were open through the emergency management system and several more churches assisted those in need as well. Even though Henry County did not sustain major damage from the ice storm, our community was a central point for refuge for those in the affected areas. This is what we may experience if an earthquake occurs as predicted, but on a much larger scale.

In observance of the Earthquake Awareness Week, Watkins attended a meeting on Monday, Feb 9 of the West Tennessee Seismic Safety Commission. Chairman Barry Moore gave a brief overview of the purpose and direction of the WTSSC and stressed the importance of catastrophic planning with respect to large earthquakes from the New Madrid seismic zone. In partnership with State and local emergency management, the WTSSC engages in direct discussions with communities across west Tennessee to better understand specific needs and concerns.

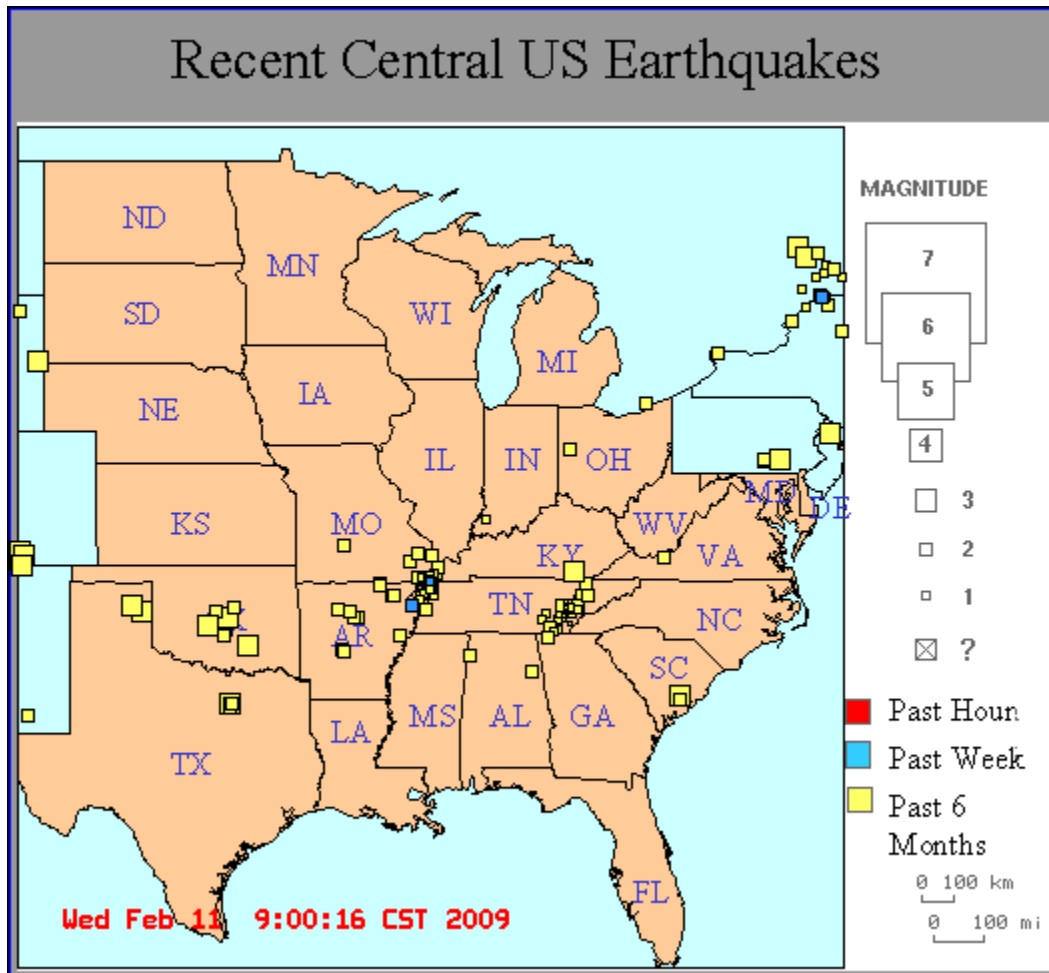
The WTSSC was proud to announce funding from the Assisi Foundation of Memphis to better understand post earthquake mass shelter capabilities for the Greater Memphis area based on social and structural vulnerability.

Additionally, each school in the county has been requested to conduct an earthquake drill to familiarize students and faculty with the correct action to take in the event of an actual earthquake. Business, industry, medical facilities, and day cares should take this time to conduct drills and review plans as well. Watkins does suggest a few simple things we all can do to prepare for disaster:

- Purchase a NOAA weather radio
- Build a disaster supply kit with extra food, water, batteries, blankets, matches, clothing, standard tools, first aid kit, and other items useful during disaster situations.

- Anchor heavy items such as bookcases, tall furniture, and pictures to walls to prevent items from falling and causing injuries. Strap gas water heaters to the wall to prevent tipping and gas leaks.
- Make an Earthquake Preparedness Plan and know where to take shelter in your home and at work when the shaking starts. Practice you plan! Stop! Drop! and Hold!
- Use caution when leaving your structure and be wary of hazards such as electric lines, ruptured gas lines, and falling debris.

For additional information, explore the American Red Cross website at www.redcross.org or the Center for Earthquake Research at <http://www.ceri.memphis.edu/index.shtml> or contact the Henry County Emergency Management office at 644-2678.



There are 186 earthquakes on this map.