

UCSC - KZSC

Quake broadcast brings notoriety to UCSC station

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SANTA CRUZ — Aftershocks continued to rattle the UC Santa Cruz radio station Friday in the wake of a simulated earthquake broadcast gone awry.

UCSC officials apologized for the "War of the Worlds" style broadcast Thursday night in which contrived "news bulletins" claimed that Los Angeles had suffered a major earthquake, killing thousands and creating widespread chaos.



O'Grady

Many listeners believed the report was authentic, despite two disclaimers broadcast before a KZSC-FM official silenced the show.

"I wanted to create earthquake awareness," said Roger Takacs, the student who put the program together. "Obviously, people are talking about about it, but I didn't think this would happen."

The earthquake story, which featured UCSC earth sciences Professor Karen McNally, has created trouble for everyone involved.

Reports of the bogus broadcast were carried nationwide Friday via The Associated Press and other news organizations.

The controversy revolves around a radio show designed to simulate the events that would follow a major earthquake in Southern California. Live "special re-

ports," ostensibly from Los Angeles, punctuated the broadcast. The reports featured "earthquake noise" taken from archival tapes of a major Alaskan earthquake in the 1960s.

Its realism was enhanced by the presence of McNally, a noted UCSC seismologist who agreed to play along with the program by claiming she had come to the KZSC studio after recording the earthquake on seismographs at UCSC.

McNally was upset by the response to the program and apologized for her role in it.

"I feel very badly about it and would never do it again," McNally said. "I intended it as a public service. I feel terrible."

McNally said she agreed to participate in the simulation at the behest of Takacs, who is one of her students.

It was her impression that the the radio audience would realize the program was a simulation. She said she never would not have gone along had she thought people would panic.

"I guess I was stupid and naive," she said.

The program lasted less than 20 minutes before station manager Maggie O'Grady stormed into the studio and demanded Takacs stop the program.

It was unclear whether Takacs, who hosts the "Talk About Where Are We Going," show on Thursday nights would be back on the air.

O'Grady said his actions would be reviewed next week. She described him as a student "on his way out of the station and the university."