



Dan Coyro/Sentinel

Preparation is the key to the next big quake, says Geologist Vasiliki Vassil

## Bay Area quake would isolate Santa Cruz area

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SANTA CRUZ — A magnitude 7.5 earthquake on the Hayward fault could kill 1,500 to 4,500 people in the San Francisco Bay Area, sever freeways and bridges, stop BART in its tracks, shut down Bay Area airports, close eight of the region's 26 major hospitals, flatten buildings at UC Berkeley and cripple the water systems of huge urban areas.

Buildings would be flattened or toppled in a five-mile wide swath from San Pablo to East San Jose. Buildings from Napa and Petaluma to South San Jose would be severely damaged — throughout the heavily populated areas of Contra Costa, Alameda, San Francisco, Marin and Santa Clara counties.

Flanked by fault lines and cradled by rocky ridges, the soft, deep sediments beneath the Santa Clara Valley would heave and shudder from the earthquake's shock like a grimy bowl of asphalt Jello.

The damage would be unprecedented, according to a report issued by the Oakland-based Bay Area Regional Earthquake Preparedness Project.

"Earthquakes of a (magnitude 7 range) are a reasonable expectation and could occur at any time," according to the BAREPP report.

Government seismologists agree. A 1988 report by the US Geological Survey gives even odds that a quake as large or larger than the 7.1 magnitude Loma Prieta earthquake will take place on the San Andreas or Hayward faults in the next 28 years. A revised report soon to be released will increase that probability, according to USGS seismologist Paul Reasenberg last week. Twenty-eight years may sound like a reassuringly long time to some people, but not to earth scientists.

"In geological terms, 28 years is now," said Santa Cruz Geologist Vasiliki Vassil. "It's this instant."

Santa Cruz will probably escape the brunt of the damage if a large quake flattens the Bay Area, but the county will feel strong shaking and damage in areas, especially if the San Andreas fault snaps near Los Gatos, Reasenberg said. The county can expect to be cut off on the north, and may have to care for all of its own problems while

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## Disaster

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national emergency resources are poured into the areas of worst damage.

"We really are going to be on our own," said Nancy Gordon, emergency services coordinator for the county of Santa Cruz and a BAREPP trustee. "There's not going to be much attention left for us. But we know what needs to be done in an emergency — we've had a lot of experience (in the past 10 years)."

County planning officials are looking south, working with officials in Monterey and San Benito counties to locate, list and share emergency supplies if disaster strikes. But like the county, indi-

viduals will have to rely on themselves to ride out the aftermath of a big earthquake. "It is going to be essential for individuals to have emergency supplies," said Gordon. "There are places in the county where every time it rains there's a good chance they'll be isolated. They can't expect the government to bail them out right away, they'll have to be prepared."

The county is encouraging neighborhood groups to prepare for future disasters with an innovative civil defense-type program begun early this year.

County emergency planners hope to organize groups of 10 to 15 households into self-sufficient collectives to care for one another when a disaster first strikes. The groups will outline their priorities

— such as locating children and checking on elderly people — then split up responsibility for such tasks as checking utilities, providing first aid, and handing out food, water and emergency supplies.

When disaster strikes, residents in the organized neighborhoods will know what to do, and when to do it.

"Our packets spell out exactly what you're supposed to do," said planner Esther O'Donald. "There's no guesswork; it's all spelled out in black and white."

The county plans to kick off its emergency preparedness campaign this week with help from police departments and neighborhood watch groups.

"We're hoping to stir up some interest here," O'Donald said.