

## Report: Next major earthquake on Hayward fault will be catastrophic

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It could be the Bay Area's Hurricane Katrina. Or worse.

When the Hayward fault has its next major earthquake, and scientists say it's a matter of when, not if, the results will be catastrophic.

A new study by Risk Management Solutions in Newark estimates that damage and losses from shaking alone in a magnitude 6.8 earthquake could

exceed \$165 billion. Damage from fires could push the number even higher.

According to the report, which appears this month in Catastrophe Risk Management Magazine, about 70 percent of the losses will come from Alameda and Santa Clara counties.

In contrast to Hurricane Katrina, where between 33 and 50 percent of the total economic losses were insured, only 10 percent will be covered in the Bay Area.

In all, five million people and property worth more than \$500 billion in six counties will be impacted.

Just as in the years before Katrina, scientists have been warning the public of the near inevitability of this looming disaster. Research on trenches dug across the Hayward fault has revealed traces of past quakes that were large enough to rupture and offset the ground surface. That research showed that the average time between these jolts is 160 years.

To make matters worse, the pace of the quakes seems to be quickening, with an average of 140 years between the last five. The Hayward's most recent earthquake was in 1868, 140 years ago.

This has scientists ringing the alarm bells even louder.

"Are you ready for this earthquake?" U.S. Geological Survey seismologist Tom Brocher asked last week at a meeting of the California Emergency Services Association.

"I hope you are because this earthquake is ready for you."

Several recent studies round out the grim scenario for the next big one.

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As many as 1,100 roads could be closed, 900 of them in Alameda County.

The Bay Bridge won't survive, and Oakland and San Francisco international airports, Interstate 580 and the BART bay tunnel are also at risk.

The Bureau of Labor Statistics estimates 87,000 employers and 1.5 million jobs are located in areas that likely will be strongly shaken.

The total exposure of \$25 billion in quarterly wages would dwarf the less than \$5 billion at risk in Hurricane Katrina. As many 90,000 housing units will be uninhabitable, forcing 220,000 people out, with up to 70,000 of them looking for temporary public shelter. Two-thirds of those impacted will be in Alameda County.

A rupture of the Hetch Hetchy aqueduct, which crosses the fault could result in \$17 billion in losses, 30 percent of which would be due to lack of water to fight fires.

It would be months, and even years before the Bay Area recovers from these impacts.

More than a decade after a magnitude 6.9 earthquake hit Kobe, Japan killing 5,000 people, large areas of the city have not been rebuilt. Damage to the city's ports caused shipping companies to permanently relocate to other ports.

Many people who experienced the Loma Prieta earthquake in 1989 believe they survived the big one, but scientists disagree. "This earthquake is going to be much stronger shaking for the Bay Area than Loma Prieta was," Brocher said. " '89 was not the big one."

As the scientists' warnings get louder, is anybody listening?

Some definitely are. More than \$30 billion has been spent on strengthening infrastructure including hospitals, bridges, gas pipes and other important infrastructure.

But the public is well behind the curve.

"Most people have no idea when the last earthquake on the Hayward fault was, even though that's the greatest hazard in the Bay Area," Brocher said.

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