

Expert says 4.7-magnitude quake near Truckee was 'pretty normal' for region

Brian Duggan, Reno Gazette Journal, 10-28-11

While the 4.7-magnitude temblor that shook up the region Wednesday night was unpredictable, it wasn't necessarily a total surprise, a research professor at the University of Nevada, Reno said Thursday

"It's pretty normal," said Jim Fauld, who also works within the Nevada Bureau of Mines and Geology. "One of these happens every few years in the region that will wake us up at night."

He adds Nevada is the third most seismically active state in the nation, following Alaska and California.

Wednesday's earthquake happened in an area where two Northern California fault lines meet, the Mohawk Valley and West Tahoe Donner fault lines, which merge north of Truckee, Fauld said. The epicenter of the earthquake, which struck just after 11:30 p.m. Wednesday, happened about 35 miles to the west of Reno.

He said the Mohawk Valley fault line has been producing a series of little earthquakes in recent weeks.

"That could be good, it's relieving the stress in a lot of little earthquakes," he said.

Wednesday's earthquake was also shallow, just 8 miles underground, meaning it could be felt in a wider area.

It wasn't as shallow as the 4.7-magnitude quake that struck just west of Reno in April 2008. Fauld said that one happened just 2 miles underground and damaged homes and other nearby structures.

So far, there have been no reports of any damage or injuries from Wednesday night's shakeup.

Meanwhile, seismologists have been following a swarm of 700 small earthquakes near Sierra County, Calif., since August.

Researchers say those temblors could be happening because of magma moving deep underground. They also say there's been no indication that magma is coming to the surface or that it's associated with the Lassen Volcano to the north.