

4.2 earthquake rumbles through L.A. region

No injuries or damage were reported after the temblor, whose epicenter was in a seismically active area that produced the Northridge and Sylmar quakes.

Rong-Gong Lin II, Los Angeles Times, 9-2-11

A magnitude 4.2 earthquake fluttered through much of Southern California on Thursday afternoon, the largest quake to be felt in the Los Angeles area in more than a year.

But the shaking was so soft many people just carried on with their day.

"Just a rolly," said an operator at Olive View-UCLA Medical Center in Sylmar, two miles southeast of the epicenter in the San Gabriel Mountains. "It didn't even move my chair."

"There was no screaming out that I was aware of," said Joe Keys, a hospital assistant administrator, who described the quake as lasting only a few seconds. "It hardly got my notice. It's just Southern California, you know?"

The earthquake hit at 1:47 p.m. in a seismically active area responsible for the 1971 Sylmar earthquake and the 1994 Northridge quake. The quake was followed by several aftershocks, including a 3.0 at 2:35 p.m.

"There's a lot of faults in that area. Very complex geology," said Anthony Guarino, a seismic analyst at Caltech in Pasadena.

Thursday's quake produced about 178 times less energy than last week's East Coast quake, a 5.8 centered in Virginia, Guarino said.

The quake was felt as far north as Edwards Air Force Base in the Antelope Valley and as far south as Orange County. The most intense shaking was reported far from the epicenter, in Watts and Lynwood, according to the U.S. Geological Survey and Caltech.

The biggest recent quake to be felt in L.A. was the 7.2 Easter Sunday quake of 2010, which struck the California-Mexico border on April 4, 2010. Several weeks before that, a predawn 4.4 quake hit Pico Rivera, and in May 2009, a 4.7 earthquake in Inglewood shattered windows close to the epicenter.

Guarino said the quake offers a reminder to drop, cover and hold on in the event of a large quake and not run outside like many East Coast people did.

"That's one of the worst things to do," he said, because of the possibility of falling building facades.

For example, Guarino said, during the 2003 San Simeon earthquake in Central California, the two people who died had run outside and were struck by falling debris in Paso Robles.

Everyone else who stayed inside the shopping center during the 6.5 earthquake survived.

"Most buildings in California are built to code," Guarino said. "But the facade of the building, there aren't many codes. You may have chunks of plaster or concrete falling as you run outside."