

19th anniversary of Northridge Earthquake reminder to be prepared

Dana Bartholomew, Los Angeles Newspaper Group, 1-17-13

It was a jolt that came 19 years ago Thursday that Los Angeles would long remember - the 1994 Northridge Earthquake.

But there will be another major earthquake, firefighters and city officials warned. And another. So the city and its residents must be prepared.

"We're here today to remember that history," said Councilman Tom LaBonge. "Not just just the history of 1994, the Northridge quake, but Whittier in '87, Sylmar in '71, Tehachapi in '51, and Long Beach in '33 and San Francisco in '06.

"It will come: I guarantee you like the sunshine this morning, there will be another earthquake. Los Angeles is prepared, but it must be better prepared."

LaBonge joined firefighters, police and city emergency management chiefs outside historic Fire Station 27 in Hollywood to warn residents to be prepared.

It was at 4:31 a.m. Jan. 17, 1994, that 10 million residents awoke to the magnitude-6.7 temblor that had rumbled in from 11 miles beneath its epicenter in Reseda.

The pre-dawn quake tossed sleepers from their beds, toppled TVs from their moorings, glasses from their cupboards and upended furnishings from Fillmore to Santa Monica.

Outside, swimming pools cracked. Chimneys toppled. Windows shattered. Buildings crumpled. Apartments caved. Fires rages.

While freeways shifted, a train derailed, releasing a cloud of sulfuric acid. Hospitals and universities became unusable. Power, telephone and water service died.

The Northridge Earthquake would damage an estimated 12,500 homes and businesses. More than 20,000 homes were without

When the dust settled, 57 people had died and more than 9,000 were injured.

The Los Angeles region suffered \$20 billion in damage in the costliest temblor in U.S. history.

"We learned a lot in the Northridge Earthquake," said LAFD Battalion Chief Jeffrey Elder, surrounded by search and rescue equipment, plus the firefighters prepared to use them. "We learned the importance of preparation."

The U.S. Geological Survey has forecast a 46 percent chance of a 7.5-magnitude or greater quake in the next 30 years, most likely in Southern California.

When the ground shakes, residents are urged to "drop, cover and hold on."

Elder also gave five important tips for how families should prepare for a major earthquake which could leave

- Store lots of water, at least one gallon per person per day, to last three to five days. Don't forget pets.
- Store enough food to last from three to five days.
- Develop a communication plan for family members and friends. Establish an out-of-state contact, as long distance service often gets restored first.
- Develop an emergency plan, including evacuation routes, as well as a family meeting spot.
- Become trained in first aid, or in free Community Emergency Response Training.