

Officials seek investigation on link between fracking and earthquakes

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Three Los Angeles City Council members Tuesday called on city staff to investigate whether oil and natural gas drilling methods like fracking helped trigger Monday's magnitude-4.4 earthquake.

City Councilmen Paul Koretz and Mike Bonin introduced a motion, seconded by Councilman Bernard Parks, that would direct city staff to work with the California Division of Oil, Gas and Geothermal Resources, the U.S. Geological Survey and the South Coast Air Quality Management District to produce a report looking into whether a link exists between fracking and the temblor.

Seismologists said the 6:25 a.m. earthquake — dubbed by some as the “Shamrock Shake” because it occurred on St. Patrick’s Day — was the strongest to “hit directly under the Santa Monica Mountains in the 80 years since seismic record-keeping began in the area,” according to the motion.

U.S. Geological Survey officials said there has been a dramatic rise in recent years of “noticeable earthquakes” that exceed 3.0-magnitudes in central and eastern United States, according to the motion.

The geological survey also found that some of the earthquakes happening in Oklahoma, Arkansas, Texas and Ohio were caused by activities related to fracking, the councilmen contend in the motion.

Monday's earthquake originated in West Los Angeles, near where active oil extraction activities have been reported, according to the motion.

Fracking involves injecting a mixture of water and chemicals at high pressure into the ground to free up trapped natural gas and oil deposits.

The City Council last month ordered a halt to fracking, gravel packing, acidizing and other “unconventional” drilling and well-stimulation methods that some oil companies might be using in and around Los Angeles.

City attorneys are expected to prepare an ordinance within the next two months that would impose a moratorium on these drilling methods.

Bonin and Koretz said last month that their biggest worry regarding fracking, aside from its potential impacts on the water supply, is its effects on a region teeming with earthquake faults.