

Earthquake swarm may increase risk of the big one

Terri Hendry, KNRV (Reno television), 11-12-14

An earthquake swarm about 40 miles southeast of Lakeview, Oregon is increasing in activity and intensity.

While the seismic activity is happening in a secluded area centered off Nevada's northwest border, scientists are watching it closely. "It has been going for about five months now and it kind of goes in fits and spurts," said Dr. Graham Kent.

Dr. Kent is the Director of the Nevada Seismological Laboratory. He said that since the activity first started, more than 550 seismic events have been recorded, and all have measured a magnitude of 2.0 or greater. Since October, the intensity has grown even greater. "If this was happening in a populated place like say, Carson City for example, it would have a whole different feel to it because people would be feeling these. They would be some level of damage in the city."

Dr. Kent said the only other comparison to this swarm is another one that happened in the Somerset/Mogul area outside of Reno. However, the most recent event is more intense.

He also said relatively speaking, it increases the risk of a large quake to occur. "The overall likelihood of throwing a magnitude six or 6.5 outta here is still low, but relative to what it was six months ago, it has definitely gone up quite a bit."

Dr. Kent said the earthquake history of the area over the past 150 years indicates a quake with a magnitude of 6.0 is not that uncommon in the Reno area. He said it has been quiet, seismically speaking, and this lull may provide the opportunity to better prepare for the big one.