

# Earthquake preparation is always the answer, says local geologist

Steven Mayer, Bakersfield Californian, 6-22-16

U.S. Bureau of Land Management senior geologist Gregg Wilkerson was happy to respond Wednesday to a new study showing the Bakersfield area slowly sinking and other areas in California slowly rising as a result of seismic strain from the San Andreas Fault.

The study, published Monday in the journal Nature Geoscience, found that “much of the Los Angeles Basin, Orange County, San Diego County and the Bakersfield area are sinking 2 to 3 millimeters a year — a couple of penny-widths annually,” according to a report in the Los Angeles Times. “By contrast, Santa Barbara and San Luis Obispo counties, and a large portion of San Bernardino County, are rising at the same rate.”

These technical details help scientists understand our world — and each new study adds to our increasing body of knowledge, said Wilkerson, who works out of the BLM’s Bakersfield office.

But what is the average California resident supposed to do with this information?

It’s no secret that the massive amounts of energy building up on the state’s biggest fault will some day be released in a large earthquake, possibly 100 times larger than any quake most people have ever experienced, Wilkerson said.

“This segment of the fault (near Bakersfield) is bound up,” he said. “The pressure being accumulated is like stretching a rubber band. Eventually it’s going to break.”

The day of reckoning has only been postponed, he said. But its arrival is inevitable.

The answer is not avoidance or despair. It’s preparation.

Cellphone towers will likely fall in a strong temblor. What is your communication plan?

If you have a swimming pool, you already have a reservoir of potable water. Otherwise, keeping a few 5-gallon bottles in the garage might be a good idea.

“It’s my hope that by talking about these things, people will be better prepared” when the Big One strikes, Wilkerson said.

There’s a wealth of information available on the Web for anyone wishing to put together an earthquake preparedness kit. Try this American Red Cross site for starters: <http://www.redcross.org/get-help/prepare-for-emergencies/be-red-cross-ready/get-a-kit>.