

# Extreme earthquake preparedness is preposterous

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People were allegedly stocking up on bottled water, flashlights, batteries, canned food, first aid supplies, tools and other emergency preparedness items because scientists said California's San Andreas Fault was "locked, loaded and ready to roll." These scientists even set a date.

Since when can we predict earthquakes?

"First of all: Don't worry about it," I said to my wife and 13-yearold son, who were worried about it. "And second: We're gonna be fine. I'm gonna keep you safe."

Then coworkers and friends began telling me about the big, predicted one. And I saw actual people actually stocking up on actual bottled water, flashlights, batteries, canned food, first aid supplies, tools and other emergency-preparedness items.

"This is ridiculous," I told my family. "It's impossible to predict earthquakes."

Afterward, I read that scientists are using some algorithm that makes it quite possible.

"We could always grab our stuff and go to safer ground," I told my family.

My son asked what I was doing.

"Trying to find the flashlights," I said.

"I thought we were gonna be fine."

"We *will* be fine," I told him. "But we should always have flashlights in strategic places in the event the power goes out and we can't see and we need to see and glass is everywhere."

As the day of the predicted quake drew near, I began seeing crazy worriers everywhere. These people agonizing over the earthquake also obsessed over low fluid levels in their cars, Charles Manson being paroled and "It's the Great Pumpkin, Charlie Brown" not airing this Halloween season.

How ridiculous! You'd still be able to see the Charlie Brown classic on video.

"Why are your shoes in the middle of the floor?" my wife asked.

"They're not in the middle of the floor," I said. "They're near the bed in the event we have to run outside in the middle of the night because the walls are falling and the ceiling's coming down."

Here's the problem: Scientists say earthquakes should be relieving about 16 feet of accumulated plate movement every 100 years. I read that on the internet. I also read that the San Andreas Fault has reportedly not been relieving stress for more than a century. And while that doesn't give us any real data about the size or day of the next big earthquake, I'm pretty sure it means we better start stocking up on emergency-preparedness items right this second.

"What's all this water really going to do?" my wife and son asked me as I was adding another case to a pyramid of bottled water I'd stacked in the office. "If there's an earthquake, it'll be stuck in here." "It's more

for you guys,” I said. “I know we’ll be fine, but I just want you to have peace of mind. If something really went down, we’d just go to my dad’s in Washington where it’s safe and there’s plenty of food and water. We’re gonna be fine. I’m gonna take care of you. Is there more water in the car?”

On the morning of the predicted quake, I found myself rushing my shower because an earthquake while showering would be really bad. The glass doors could break into deadly shards. My bigger fear was going to safer ground in my cul-de-sac naked. That’d be embarrassing.

Later that morning on my drive to work, a light on my dash indicated that my fluids were low. Then I started wondering what would happen if Charles Manson *did* get paroled. And what if “Great Pumpkin” didn’t air this year and the quake knocks out our power, the Wi-Fi and our cell service, eliminating all possible ways to see if the Great Pumpkin will visit Linus this year?

“First of all: Don’t worry about it,” my wife said to me when we spoke on the phone. “And second: We’re gonna be fine. If something really went down, we could just go to your dad’s in Washington where it’s safe and there’s plenty of food and water.”

No, we never packed up our stuff and drove to Washington. Throughout the day of the predicted earthquake, I made sure my wife and kid were in safe places, I checked on them every five minutes and I anticipated worst-case scenarios and how I’d respond so I could get to them and protect them. I even downloaded “Great Pumpkin” on my phone so we could watch it—power or no power.

Days later, people stopped stocking up on earthquake-preparedness items and began drinking their water surpluses. I’m only just beginning to go nuts. I still have many more emergency precautions to take, first aid classes to attend, evac plans to run. . . .