

# Baja earthquake not likely to increase chance of Los Angeles area shaker

**Dan Abendschein, Los Angeles Newspaper Group, 4-5-10**

PASADENA - U.S. researchers Monday scrambled to find out as much as possible about a 7.2-magnitude earthquake that struck south of the border Sunday leaving at least two dead and 230 injured.

Kate Hutton, a Caltech seismologist said scientists will have to act fast because wind, rain and other weather will quickly erase geological evidence at the site.

On Monday U.S. and Mexican researchers conducted helicopter flights over the area, tracking the ruptures in the ground and attempted to pinpoint the exact origin of the quake, said Lucy Jones, a U.S. Geological Survey seismologist.

"Some are in the air, some are in the ground," Jones said. "They are trying to learn whatever they can about the quake."

The Easter Sunday quake was centered near the city of Mexicali, just south of the U.S. border. Besides the two dead and 230 injured, the temblor destroyed dozens of structures, and caused blackouts and evacuation of hospitals and other buildings.

Though researchers are down in Mexico, it appears that Southern California aid workers are not.

Representatives of several local groups said that they have not been called on to assist.

Phillippa Herbert, an official with the local branch of the International Red Cross, said the Mexican branch of her organization is handling the relief efforts.

"We have teams in San Diego on standby, but we're not anticipating them being called in," Herbert said.

Although significantly stronger than the 7.0 quake that hit Haiti in January, researchers believe evidence will show that Mexicali avoided significant damage because Sunday's quake traveled northwest, away from urban areas and through lightly populated desert areas.

While scientists continued Monday to examine the origin of the Mexicali quake, Hutton said it is unlikely that the event will significantly increase the chances of a similar shake in the Southland.

She said that there is a theory among researchers that one large magnitude earthquake can increase the chance of another quake elsewhere.

At the same time, Hutton said, there are others who believe that is not the case.

"At this point it is just a guessing game," Hutton said at a press conference Monday.

The Mexicali area has been experiencing dozens of small aftershocks and will likely continue to have them for the next few days, Hutton said.

There may be several shocks of up to 6.0 in magnitude on the Richter scale, but most likely, Los Angeles County residents will not feel them, Hutton said.

She said that the fault line where the quake appears to have originated is about 70 miles long and runs parallel to the more noteworthy San Andreas Fault.

There has been seismic activity closer to Los Angeles since the quake, but nothing out of the ordinary, Hutton added.

The most important effect that the quake could have on Los Angeles, said seismologist Erik Pounders, is to hopefully remind people to prepare for when L.A. County is struck by another major quake.

He said that researchers often find it shocking how little concern people have about earthquakes.

"If you live in Florida and you aren't concerned about hurricanes people would think you are crazy," Pounders said.

Seismologists have warned that the Los Angeles area is likely to experience a major quake some time in the next 30 years. Residents should have water, food and first aid supplies to take care of themselves for several days in the event that happens.