

Californians cautioned against ‘misleading’ earthquake predictions

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Predictions on the Internet and social networking sites Facebook and Twitter that a magnitude 5.0-6.5 earthquake will strike California this week are baloney, says the California Emergency Management Agency.

“Although the broad scientific community has been working relentlessly to give us better information about earthquakes and their behavior, being able to predict when earthquakes will strike is not something they can do at this point,” says Cal EMA Secretary Matt Bettenhausen.

As with earthquakes of the past, recent seismic activity around the globe has spawned unofficial and misleading “predictions” of large scale disaster being imminent within specific hours or on a particular day, Cal EMA says.

While these types of non-peer-reviewed predictions surface following disasters such as earthquakes, the Internet has provided a medium through which misinformation can spread faster and more widely than ever before, it says.

“The fact is that we live in a very seismically active state where an earthquake may occur anytime. That means we must take steps now to prepare for any event,” says Mr. Bettenhausen.

One of the most common and essential items one can assemble to prepare for a disaster is an emergency preparedness kit, he says. The kit should contain enough food, water, and supplies to sustain each member of a household for a minimum of 72 hours. A battery-powered radio is also essential to have on hand.

“Rumors can be scary, but being prepared is something that can truly help you feel better about your ability to survive the next big quake,” says Mr. Bettenhausen.