

2008 National Awards in Excellence

Outreach

Seattle Fault Earthquake Scenario Project

Washington Military Department, Emergency Management Division (EMD) and
Earthquake Engineering Research Institute

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The Seattle Fault Earthquake Scenario project began in 2002 when public and private sector experts in the Central Puget Sound region of Washington State grew increasingly concerned in recent years about earthquake safety as they learned more about region's earthquake threat.

A 12-member multi-disciplinary project team of scientists, engineers, planners, emergency managers, and social scientists used recent geologic findings, other current research, and knowledge of land-use and development trends to forecast the impact of a scenario earthquake in the heavily populated region. The *Scenario for a Magnitude 6.7 Earthquake on the Seattle Fault* publication which resulted also made high-level recommendations to decision makers on improving earthquake safety. The target audiences of this project included local and state decision makers, public and private sector emergency managers, local land-use planners, engineers, and architects.

The Seattle Fault Earthquake Scenario Project Team unveiled its findings to public officials in the study area in early February 2005. The project was featured in a front page feature in the February 20, 2005 Sunday *Seattle Times*, and presented to a conference attended by nearly 500 individuals on the fourth anniversary of the 2001 Nisqually Earthquake Disaster, February 28, 2005. The scenario project and conference received region-wide and national media coverage.

Additionally, the project team made presentations to state legislative committees, transportation planners, a variety of professional organizations (e.g., engineers, architects), and to the 8th National Conference on Earthquake Engineering in 2006. The project and earthquake scenario was featured in a program for the "It Could Happen Tomorrow" series on The Weather Channel in early 2007.

More than 4,000 copies of the scenario publication were distributed, and it is available online through the Earthquake Engineering Research Institute (EERI) website. The scenario has been used by many companies and public agencies in their earthquake preparedness efforts, including emergency response exercises. The scenario is being used for a Central Puget Sound region-wide exercise called Sound Shake 08 in March that will involve public

and private sector participation.

EERI is developing a workshop on earthquake scenario development and will be using the Seattle Fault Earthquake Scenario as a template that communities can follow. The U.S. Geological Survey and Emergency Management Division are further looking at using the scenario as a template to develop other earthquake scenarios on earthquake faults in Western Washington.

The recommendations of the project team have helped obtain additional state and federal resources for expanding the seismic monitoring network in the Pacific Northwest; helped in the development of new and expanded public education materials and preparedness programs; helped expand and improve information and maps on earthquakes and related geologic hazards for state building codes, local land-use planning and development decisions, and local and state emergency response, recovery and continuity plans; and helped re-invigorate seismic safety policy planning and development in Washington State.