

Earthquake Information Made Accessible to Non-English Speakers

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Abstract

Science has made many advances in the field of seismology, earthquakes in particular. We have learned to live with earthquakes, but most of the general public still does not understand the nature and mechanisms of earthquakes. For this reason, the Southern California Earthquake Center (SCEC) in partnership with the United States Geological Survey (USGS), the Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA) and the California Earthquake Authority (CEA) have developed an earthquake handbook for the general public. Although the information provided in this handbook is accessible to the public, it has only been published in English. The goal of SCEC's Communication, Education, and Outreach Program is to translate and publish the content of the handbook into Spanish, so that more of the population would benefit from the information. The content was translated into Spanish the summer of 2004, as close as possible to the English text. Images, figures, and tables were also translated. After the Spanish handbook has gone through the revision and suggestion phase, it will be published and distributed to the general public.

The *Putting Down Roots in Earthquake Country* handbook has been a work in progress by the Southern California Earthquake Center (SCEC). New and improved information is added to the handbook as it arises. Recently, as of August of 2004, the handbook has been updated. New data, tables, and text have been incorporated to make earthquakes more understandable for the general public. One of SCEC's goals was to translate this handbook into Spanish. This was possible the summer of 2004. The translation itself is complete. However, the document must go through the revision phase. A committee will revise the handbook and make suggestions. It will then be sent back for editing and then be published.

The handbook is divided into three sections 1) Why should I care? 2) What should I do? And 3) what should I know? The first section deals with the seismic activity in Southern California and how it affects the common citizen. The second section applies to what we

should do in case of an earthquake. Lastly, the third section explains information about the nature and mechanics of earthquakes.

As residents of the Golden State we need to be informed about earthquakes. This section describes the frequency and location of Southern California earthquakes. There is an earthquake zone along the San Andreas Fault in a well-known area, the San Gabriel Mountains. This area is a compressional zone where the San Andreas Fault bends. Hence, the Big Bend. When earthquakes strike in a highly populated area disaster is at hand. Earthquakes are the costliest disasters in Southern California. The handbook compares earthquakes with other natural disasters such as fires and floods.

We cannot prevent earthquakes so we need to be prepared. SCEC has developed 7 steps to follow in preparing before, during, and after an earthquake. Before a disaster potential hazards need to be addressed. Disaster plans and supplies need to be emplaced. During an earthquake the plans need to be followed and we need to remain calm. After the tremor, we need to check for damage and injuries needing immediate attention.

In order to lose the fear of earthquakes we need to learn the basics behind earthquake mechanics. In the last section, SCEC included information on the study of earthquakes. Here, we are introduced to seismograms, epicenters, aftershocks, foreshocks, and faults. How do we study faults? To understand earthquakes, scientists have developed seismograms that show ground motion during an earthquake. Essentially what the

seismogram represents is the loss of energy of the earthquake the farther one gets from the epicenter.

Earthquake information is vital to the public and it already has been provided through this handbook in English. California's Latino population is constantly growing and it is our duty to provide information that is accessible to non-English speakers. Translating this handbook into Spanish is only one of the many steps we need to take in order to reach all the people of California.