

“WHOLE LOT OF SHAKIN’ GOING ON.”

We don’t live on the coast. Or close to it. Why should we care about the Cascadia Subduction Zone and the large tsunami that will destroy coastal cities when the expected magnitude 8.0 – 9.0¹ earthquake hits?

The Cascadia subduction zone runs for 700 miles, from Cape Mendocino in California to Vancouver, Island, Canada.



This is where the where the oceanic Juan de Fuca plate is being driven – or ‘subducting’ - below the North American tectonic plate that we live on. And the North American tectonic plate doesn’t like that very much ... it is resisting, but will eventually “give,” with repercussions familiar to anyone familiar with the Indian Ocean tsunami in 2004 and, of course, the one in Japan five years ago.

The zone has been mostly quiet for a long time, though the Cape Mendocino earthquake in 1992 (magnitude 7.1), the Nisqually earthquake (magnitude 6.8) in 2001, and the two earthquakes in Klamath Falls in 1993 (magnitude 6.0) are all related to the pressures building up below us. But, our concern should be with the “Big One,” a megathrust earthquake which, on average, occurs about every 243 years. The last time such an earthquake occurred was about 9:00 p.m., on January 26, 1700, or 316 years ago.

Why should we care?

Perhaps, if we’re over 50 years old, we may not need to. But our children, grandchildren, and great grandchildren, if they’re anywhere in the Pacific Northwest in the next 50 years. are increasingly at risk. Especially if the live on the coast or visit it ... or, actually, if they live anywhere west of the Cascades.

Setting histrionics aside, maybe we should do a little to prepare ourselves? Or, at least, our descendants? We’ll talk about that in our next newsletter.

¹ The Japan earthquake in March 2011 was magnitude 9.0; The Indian Tsunami in December 2004 was born of a magnitude 9.1 – 9.3 quake.