

SHOULD THE CITY OF SUBLIMITY PREPARE FOR THE INEVITABLE? A WHOLE LOT OF SHAKIN' GOING ON (PART III)

In our last two newsletters, we provided a brief history of the Cascadia Subduction Zone, and touched upon possible measures we – the City and its citizens – might want to take to prepare for the inevitable earthquake – which will affect us - and the resulting tsunami, which won't affect us directly perhaps, unless we are visiting the coast, or have friends, family, or neighbors who are or who live there.

And it *is* inevitable, possibly tomorrow, possibly one day in the year 2050. There is little doubt, however, that, given the frequency with which this Zone has experienced violent earthquakes (41 in the past 10,000 years or, on average, once every 243 years), we are overdue for something big. In the Pacific Northwest, "Big" last happened about 9:00 at night on January 26, 1700.

The Juan de Fuca oceanic plate has been more or less "stuck" on the North American tectonic plate ever since. In other words, the Juan de Fuca plate is wedged against the North American plate, and that plate is bulging and compressing. Eventually, however, it will "rebound" and the quake that results will be somewhere between 8.0 and 9.2, a quake that we have not experienced in this country since the 9.2 Alaskan earthquake in 1964. To quote and paraphrase from Wikipedia:

"Lasting four minutes and thirty-eight seconds ... this quake was the most powerful recorded in North American history. Two hundred miles away, some areas near Kodiak were permanently raised by 30 feet. Other areas dropped as much as eight feet. A 27 foot tsunami destroyed the village of Chenega. (Some tsunamis were estimated to be as large as 220 feet, and vertical displacement of up to 38 feet occurred, affecting an area of 100,000 miles within Alaska.) Post-quake tsunamis severely affected Whittier, Seward, Kodiak and other Alaskan communities, as well as people and property in British Columbia, Washington, Oregon, and California. *Evidence of motion directly related to the earthquake was also reported from Florida and Texas.*"

An earthquake of that size will affect us. What can we do? What should we do?

Everybody from Kathryn Schulz, who wrote *The New Yorker* articles, "The Really Big One," and "How to Stay Safe When the Big One Comes" in July 2015 that started a lot of people thinking, to a September 8, 2016, email from Oregon State Senator Brian Bosquit, have addressed the problem. And they have made suggestions.

This isn't the place to discuss what we should do as individuals, or what the City of Sublimity should do for its citizens.

It is the place to ask if we should start doing something? Or are the odds just so remote that we'll experience something like this in our lifetimes that it's not worth the time or the resources to prepare? If that's the case, then the same type of thinking also applies to thinking about other events – the sabotaging of the nation's electrical grid as discussed in Ted Koppel's recent book, "Lights Out: A Cyberattack, A Nation Unprepared, Surviving the Aftermath" being another example.

Should we, in other words, be concerned about;

- Having adequate water supplies?
- Being able to stay warm and dry?
- Having food to eat?

- Being able to communicate with family?
- Being safe and secure?
- Having emergency kits, tools, and “getaway” bags?
- Probably we won’t have to be concerned about visiting anyone, or traveling far ... many, if not most, of the bridges and overpasses will have collapsed or be unsafe to traverse.

Should we begin working with the Red Cross, FEMA, and our Oregon municipal, county, and state agencies, all of whom recognize the problem and are beginning to act vigorously to prepare?

Or should we do nothing?

It’s a pretty basic choice we need to make. What do you think?

If you have an opinion, please email it to the City Manager at david.marshall@cityofsublimity.org