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February is Earthquake Awareness Month

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Missouri - Each February, Missouri observes Earthquake Awareness Month to educate the public about the very real threat of another catastrophic earthquake occurring in the state. On Feb. 7, 1812, one of the country's most powerful earthquakes on record struck in southeast Missouri in what is now known as the New Madrid Seismic Zone (NMSZ). While no one can predict exactly when an earthquake will occur, many experts agree that large earthquakes in the NMSZ still pose a threat to the region.

“The New Madrid Seismic Zone is one of the most active seismic zones in the nation and experts tell us to expect another major earthquake in the future,” said Ron Walker, SEMA director. “It’s important for Missourians to prepare now and Earthquake Awareness Month is an ideal time to learn about earthquake hazards and the importance of emergency preparedness.”

Useful information and resources for families, schools and businesses is available on SEMA's Earthquake Preparedness Web page. Included are fact sheets, interactive maps and informational videos that show what to do in the event of an earthquake. Go to www.sema.dps.mo.gov/earthquake_preparedness.

On Oct. 16, 2014, more than 470, 000 Missourians participated in the annual Great Central U.S. ShakeOut earthquake drill. Each year the drill teaches participants to "Drop, Cover, and Hold On" – drop to the floor, cover under a desk or table and hold on in the event of an earthquake. Other simple earthquake safety steps that people can take, particularly those who live in or near the New Madrid Seismic Zone, are:

- Put together an emergency kit, including a flash-light, first aid kit, radio, drinking water and blankets.
- Develop a family communication plan. Identify a relative living at least 100 miles away; everyone can call to “check in” to tell family you’re safe.
- Bolt bookcases to wall studs, install strong latches on cupboards and strap your home’s water heater to wall studs—if it tips over it could start a fire or gas leak, and you could lose a valuable source of water.
- Know how to turn off your gas and water mains.
- Understand that earthquake coverage is not included in most homeowner insurance policies. It must be purchased as separate coverage, called an “endorsement.” This type of insurance requires that the earthquake is the direct cause of damage to the property. The Missouri Department of Insurance has more:
<http://insurance.mo.gov/consumers/home/EQTable.php>

Events scheduled during Earthquake Awareness Month include:

- Feb. 5 – The Missouri Seismic Safety Commission holds its quarterly meeting at 1 p.m. at the St. Louis Science Center, 5050 Oakland Avenue, St. Louis.
- Feb. 6 – The Seismic Safety Commission, the State Emergency Management Agency, and others sponsor the “QuakeSmart Business Summit” from 9 a.m. to 3 p.m. at St. Louis University, Il Monastero Meeting Room, 3050 Olive Street, St. Louis. Local businesses are encouraged to attend this free event to learn about the importance of preparing now for earthquakes.
- Feb. 21 – Emergency Preparedness Fair from 10 a.m. to 2 p.m. at Sikeston Latter Day Saints Church, 827 Euclid Avenue, Sikeston. The event is free and open to the public.
- Feb. 28 - “Shake and Quake: Earthquake Preparedness is in the Bag!” program at 11 a.m. at Onondaga Cave State Park near Leasburg. Representatives from SEMA and the Department of Natural Resources' Missouri Geological Survey will present a program about earthquake history, preparedness, and impacts on society. A video about earthquakes in the Midwest will be shown. Admission is free. Onondaga Cave State Park is located on Highway H, seven miles southeast of the Leasburg exit on Interstate 44.

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