

Earthquakes in New Mexico

Welcome to Earth Matters...field notes on the geology of New Mexico's enchanting landscapes. Celebrating Earth Science Week, I'm Mairi Litherland.

You've probably heard on the news about earthquakes happening in places like California or Japan, but did you know that New Mexico also experiences earthquakes? While the seismic hazard in New Mexico is much lower than it is in California, we still get numerous small earthquakes every year, and occasionally a larger one. The largest earthquake in recorded history in New Mexico occurred on November 15, 1906 in Socorro. It's estimated to have been magnitude 6.2, and was strong enough to damage buildings in Socorro as well as being felt throughout New Mexico. Even though earthquakes may not be particularly common here, it's always a good idea to be prepared!

In addition to naturally occurring earthquakes, it's also possible for fluid injection and other activities to cause man-made earthquakes, which are referred to as induced seismicity. States like Oklahoma and Texas have seen significant amounts of induced seismicity, and induced seismicity has also occurred near Raton and Carlsbad in New Mexico. Careful monitoring is key to ensuring that humans don't accidentally cause a damaging earthquake, which is why we're working hard to improve and expand our seismic network throughout the state.

If you're interested in knowing when and where earthquakes are happening in New Mexico, you can find out more at our website, geoinfo.nmt.edu/hazards/earthquakes. All

of the seismic data we record goes on our website so that you can follow along at home. And if you ever feel an earthquake, you can report it online to the USGS, which uses these felt reports to better understand the impact of an earthquake.

Celebrating Earth Science Week, I'm Mairi Litherland, seismologist with the Bureau of Geology at New Mexico Tech.