



#### WITH THE KIDS

## Life on shaky ground

By Brenda Rees  
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There'll be plenty shakin' Saturday at Caltech, and with children jumping up and down, rattling models of buildings, assembling puzzles and playing with Silly Putty, a lot of the activities will look like fun.

But there's a serious side to the institution's first-ever Earthquake Awareness Event, which is anchored by a battery of lectures and demonstrations for grown-ups. It aims to help educate kids about a very normal part of life in Southern California: living with and understanding earthquakes.

"Kids can often get a distorted view of how destructive earthquakes can be," says Dr. Elaine Rodino, a Santa Monica psychologist, noting the images from the recent temblor in Iran. "Parents often don't realize their children think about [earthquakes] but they do. They can worry, have nightmares, think that the road will swallow them up one day."

One of the best ways to allay fears, Rodino says, is to arm kids with knowledge. "It's good to give a child the science behind earthquakes," she says. "Also having them help create a family's own earthquake safety plan can give children a sense of control over something potentially fearful."

At Saturday's free event — on the 10th anniversary of the Northridge quake, a 6.7 temblor that rocked the Southland at 4:31 a.m. — scientists and emergency personnel will showcase state-of-the-art technology and the latest research about earthquakes.

The general public has a chance to hear firsthand from experts at Caltech, the United States Geological Survey (USGS), the Seismic Safety Commission and more.

Kids can check out the "Shake Zone," where they can assemble a giant tectonic-plate puzzle, observe how a seismograph captures jumping movements and give building models a seismic shake to see how various retrofitted construction holds up against tremors. Demonstrations with Silly Putty will show how earthquakes basically change the earth.

In addition, families can view two new, short earthquake films that will be shown continuously throughout the day. "Written in Stone: Earthquake Country — Los Angeles" depicts how different faults around the Southland created mountains, riverbeds and settlements. "Earthquakes in Space" showcases state-of-the-art animation graphics with Global Positioning System (GPS) technology.

The L.A. County Urban Search and Rescue team will also be on hand to answer questions and pose for pictures by emergency vehicles with the kids.

For adults, lectures from engineers, scientists and politicians will explore earthquakes and new technologies.

And some attendees will take home pieces of earth-shaking history — actual archival seismographs will be given away throughout the day as well as topographical and fault maps.

"Northridge was such a wake-up call to the scientific and emergency preparedness communities," says Wendy Shindle, geologist at the United States Geological Survey. "We have learned so much during these past 10 years and we want the public to know what we've been doing since Northridge to make Los Angeles safer."

### **Earthquake Awareness Event**

**What:** Kids' activities; lectures for adults at 9:15 a.m., 11 a.m. and 1 p.m.; "Ask the Experts" moderated by KFWB-AM's Jack Popejoy at 2:45 p.m.; movies, videos and demonstrations

**Where:** Beckman Auditorium and Beckman Institute Courtyard, Caltech, 332 S. Michigan Ave., Pasadena

**When:** Saturday, 9 a.m.-3:30 p.m.

**Price:** Free

**Info:** (626) 583-6801 or [pasadena.wr.usgs.gov/info/nr10](http://pasadena.wr.usgs.gov/info/nr10)