

Monroe hits it big with earthquake preparedness mock crisis in April

By KATHRYN ANDERSON

Monitor news editor

Editor's note: This is the last story in a three-part series in honor of Earthquake Preparedness Month. Many emergency agencies in East Snohomish County participated in Sound Shake 1995, an emergency communications exercise. This was only a mock crisis. It was not a real event. Descriptions of the story are only to create what could have happened if a real quake hit. This story only reflects individuals' reactions to the mock event.

THE MOCK CRISIS: AN 8.2 MAGNITUDE EARTHQUAKE STRIKES THE REGION AT 8:57 A.M. APRIL 26, 1995. THE EPICENTER WAS DUE WEST OF NEAH BAY ON THE OLYMPIC PENINSULA.

THE SEVERE GROUND SHAKING CONTINUED FOR TWO MINUTES. PEOPLE COULD FEEL IT FROM BRITISH COLUMBIA TO OREGON. IT SIGNIFICANTLY AFFECTS THE AREA FROM BILLINGHAM TO OLYMPIA.

THE EARTHQUAKE CAUSES WIDESPREAD CASUALTIES AND DAMAGE IN ALL WESTERN WASHINGTON COUNTIES. THE MAJORITY OF THE AFFECTED AREAS LOSE ELECTRIC POWER DUE TO DOWNED LINES OR FAILED EQUIPMENT.

TELECOMMUNICATIONS SYSTEMS ARE OUT, DISRUPTED, OR TOTALLY OVERLOADED BY CUSTOMER DEMAND. CELLULAR SERVICE IS AVAILABLE, BUT SEVERELY LIMITED OR OVERLOADED IN MANY AREAS DUE TO PROBLEMS IN TRYING TO ACCESS THE PUBLIC

SWITCHED NETWORK. THE MAJOR IMPACT OF TELECOMMUNICATIONS OUTAGES ARE EXPERIENCED IN KING, PIERCE, SNOHOMISH, KITSAP, THURSTON, SKAGIT, WHATCOMB AND MASON COUNTIES.

A MAGNITUDE 6.5 AFTERSHOCK OCCURS AT 10:17 A.M., LASTING 29 SECONDS, WITH THE EPICENTER DUE WEST OF WESTPORT. A SECOND AFTERSHOCK AT 2:20 P.M. MEASURES 5.5 ON THE RICHTER SCALE, LASTING 10 SECONDS WITH THE EPICENTER NEAR VANCOUVER ISLAND.

BRIDGES ARE OUT IN EAST SNOHOMISH COUNTY AND MONROE IS ISOLATED. A TRAIN DERAILS IN MONROE AND THERE IS A HAZARDOUS SPILL.

MONROE — Audrey Bradley, 13, lays on the chilly cement sidewalk in front of Frank Wagner Middle School. Three other students are sprawled out in various places on the sidewalk. A man, Rob Wolcott, is unconscious about 50 yards away.

Bradley was in science class at the time of the 8.2 earthquake that shook the ground for two minutes. A chair stuck in her chest and bruised her leg.

"It was bloody and awful," she says, trying to cover her face from the sun beating down. Above her, the American flag flies upside down, indicating an emergency.

Glen Lindley, an eighth-grade math teacher saved her life, she said. But he is nowhere in site.

"He must be saving more lives," she

says, breathing heavily.

"He saved all of us," a faint voice chokes. It was another wounded girl, appearing to be about 13 years old.

By this time several victims with various wounds are strewn throughout the area. Some are on tables. People are scattering everywhere.

Students that apparently seem to be O.K. have been evacuated to the back of the school. Teachers and other adults set up a blanket as a first aid station. One teacher, holding a burn arm, sits at the blanket.

"We have 15 injuries — five severe — 12 missing students and one staff missing," a man with a clipboard says.

Only one Monroe Police officer seems to be on the scene.

No medical help has arrived yet. Officer Tim Bussell is assessing the scene.

At the same time school officials check the building for more people and damage to the building. Ernie Allsup and Dan Sandvig, IJAM radio operators set up at Valley General Hospital, are scanning the air waves.

And over at the Monroe Fire Hall is the main command center. Monroe Police Chief Collette Wilson, City of Monroe Administrator Doug Jackson and Monroe Fire Chief Tom Henly secure the situation.

Other city employees assist, as they work as a team. City employees post the newest information of damage to any city, where people need medical assistance and what buildings appear to

be unsafe.

Finally at about 11:30 a.m., paramedics transport Frank Wagner Middle School students to Valley General Hospital.

A woman holding a clipboard and pen greets each patient at the door, making sure to write down names, times, injuries and condition of each patient. She does this for several reasons, including hospital records and so family members can find them.

A grey helicopter from Snohomish County circles the area several times. It checks for major damage in the area and reports back to the county command post.

Although this was only a mock crisis last week, city, county and state officials are urging people all over Washington state to be prepared.

To have supplies at home, at the office or even in the car to last about 72 hours is what they are urging.

City emergency officials participated in the mock crisis to not only prepare themselves in case of a real earthquake but to try out their plans to see if they will really work.

"It's nice to work it out as a drill," said Genevieve Jellinek, VGH emergency department nurse manager.

Students are taught to "drop, cover and hold." After the shaking stops, students would then be evacuated. Emergency officials are to assess the city and damage before making any steps, said Mark Walkerfield, Monroe Police Department sergeant.



Kathryn Anderson/Monroe Monitor

Emergency crews transport Kenes Bates, 13, of Frank Wagner Middle School, for the mock earthquake crisis last week. The earthquake preparedness crisis helped city, county and state agencies get ready for an earthquake that could hit this region at any time, reports say. Most City of Monroe agencies and others were involved with the crisis including the fire department, the city, the police department, utilities, schools, Valley General Hospital, and Regency Care Center of Monroe.