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Earthquakes

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Earthquake At the Earth's surface, earthquakes manifest themselves by shaking and sometimes displacing the ground. When a large earthquake epicenter is located offshore, the seabed sometimes suffers sufficient displacement to cause a tsunami. The shaking in earthquakes can also trigger landslides and occasionally volcanic activity. In its most generic sense, the word earthquake is used to describe any seismic event—whether a natural phenomenon or an event caused by humans—that generates seismic waves. Earthquakes are caused mostly by rupture of geological faults, but also by volcanic activity, landslides, mine blasts, and nuclear experiments. An earthquake's point of initial rupture is called its focus or hypocenter. The term epicenter refers to the point at ground level directly above this. Naturally occurring earthquakes Fault types Tectonic earthquakes will occur anywhere within the earth where there is sufficient stored elastic strain energy to drive fracture propagation along a fault plane. In the case of transform or convergent type plate boundaries, which form the largest fault surfaces on earth, they will move past each other smoothly and aseismically only if there are no irregularities or asperities along the boundary that increase the frictional resistance. Most boundaries do have such asperities and this leads to a form of stick-slip behaviour. Once the boundary has locked, continued relative motion between the plates leads to increasing stress and therefore, stored strain energy in the volume around the fault surface. This continues until the stress has risen sufficiently to break through the asperity, suddenly allowing sliding over the locked portion of the fault, releasing the stored energy. This energy is released as a combination of radiated elastic strain seismic waves, frictional heating of the fault surface, and cracking of the rock, thus causing an earthquake. This process of gradual build-up of strain and stress punctuated by occasional sudden earthquake failure is referred to as the Elastic-rebound theory. It is estimated that only 10 percent or less of an earthquake's total energy is radiated as seismic energy. Most of the earthquake's energy is used to power the earthquake fracture growth or is converted into heat generated by friction. Therefore, earthquakes lower the Earth's available elastic potential energy and raise its temperature, though these changes are negligible compared to the conductive and convective flow of heat out from the Earth's deep interior.[1]

Earthquake fault types Main article: Fault (geology) There are three main types of fault that may cause an earthquake: normal, reverse (thrust) and strike-slip. Normal and reverse faulting are examples of dip-slip, where the displacement along the fault is in the direction of dip and movement on them involves a vertical component. Normal faults occur mainly in areas where the crust is being extended such as a divergent boundary. Reverse faults occur in areas where the crust is being shortened such as at a convergent boundary. Strike-slip faults are steep structures where the two sides of the fault slip horizontally past each other ; transform boundaries are a particular type of strike-slip fault. Many earthquakes are caused by movement on faults that have components of both dip-slip and strike-slip; this is known as oblique slip. Earthquakes away from plate boundaries Where plate boundaries occur

within continental lithosphere, deformation is spread out over a much larger area than the plate boundary itself. In the case of the San Andreas fault continental transform, many earthquakes occur away from the plate boundary and are related to strains developed within the broader zone of deformation caused by major irregularities in the fault trace (e.g. the “Big bend” region). The Northridge earthquake was associated with movement on a blind thrust within such a zone. Another example is the strongly oblique convergent plate boundary between the Arabian and Eurasian plates where it runs through the northwestern part of the Zagros mountains. The deformation associated with this plate boundary is partitioned into nearly pure thrust sense movements perpendicular to the boundary over a wide zone to the southwest and nearly pure strike-slip motion along the Main Recent Fault close to the actual plate boundary itself. This is demonstrated by earthquake focal mechanisms. [2] All tectonic plates have internal stress fields caused by their interactions with neighbouring plates and sedimentary loading or unloading (e.g. deglaciation). These stresses may be sufficient to cause failure along existing fault planes, giving rise to intraplate earthquakes.[3] This article is about the natural seismic phenomenon. For other uses, see Earthquake (disambiguation). An earthquake (also known as a tremor or temblor) is the result of a sudden release of energy in the Earth's crust that creates seismic waves. Earthquakes are recorded with a seismometer, also known as a seismograph. The moment magnitude of an earthquake is conventionally reported, or the related and mostly obsolete Richter magnitude, with magnitude 3 or lower earthquakes being mostly imperceptible and magnitude 7 causing serious damage over large areas. Intensity of shaking is measured on the modified Mercalli scale. Shallow-focus and deep-focus earthquakes The majority of tectonic earthquakes originate at the ring of fire in depths not exceeding tens of kilometers. Earthquakes occurring at a depth of less than 70 km are classified as 'shallow-focus' earthquakes, while those with a focal-depth between 70 and 300 km are commonly termed 'mid-focus' or 'intermediate-depth' earthquakes. In subduction zones, where older and colder oceanic crust descends beneath another tectonic plate, deep-focus earthquakes may occur at much greater depths (ranging from 300 up to 700 kilometers).[4] These seismically active areas of subduction are known as Wadati-Benioff zones. Deep-focus earthquakes occur at a depth at which the subducted lithosphere should no longer be brittle, due to the high temperature and pressure. A possible mechanism for the generation of deep-focus earthquakes is faulting caused by olivine undergoing a phase transition into a spinel structure.[5]

Earthquakes and volcanic activity Earthquakes also often occur in volcanic regions and are caused there, both by tectonic faults and by the movement of magma in volcanoes. Such earthquakes can serve as an early warning of volcanic eruptions, like during the Mount St. Helens eruption of 1980.[6] Earthquake clusters Most earthquakes form part of a sequence, related to each other in terms of location and time.[7] Aftershocks Main article: Aftershock An aftershock is an earthquake that occurs after a previous earthquake, the mainshock. An aftershock is in the same region of the main shock but always of a smaller magnitude. If an aftershock is larger than the main shock, the aftershock is redesignated as the main shock and the original main shock is redesignated as a foreshock. Aftershocks are formed as the crust around the displaced fault plane adjusts to the effects of the main shock.[7] Earthquake swarms

February 2008 earthquake swarm near MexicaliMain article: Earthquake swarm Earthquake swarms are sequences of earthquakes striking in a specific area within a short period of time. They are different from earthquakes followed by a series of aftershocks by the fact that no single earthquake in the sequence is obviously the main shock, therefore none have notable higher magnitudes than the other. An example of an earthquake swarm is the 2004 activity at Yellowstone National Park.[8] Earthquake storms Main article: Earthquake storm Sometimes a series of earthquakes occur in a sort of earthquake storm, where the earthquakes strike a fault in clusters, each triggered by the shaking or stress redistribution of the previous earthquakes. Similar to aftershocks but on adjacent segments of fault, these storms occur over the course of years, and with some of the later earthquakes as damaging as the early ones. Such a pattern was observed in the sequence of about a dozen earthquakes that struck the North Anatolian Fault in Turkey in the 20th century and has been inferred for older anomalous clusters

of large earthquakes in the Middle East.[9][10] Size and frequency of occurrence Minor earthquakes occur nearly constantly around the world in places like California and Alaska in the U.S., as well as in Guatemala, Chile, Peru, Indonesia, Iran, Pakistan, the Azores in Portugal, Turkey, New Zealand, Greece, Italy, and Japan, but earthquakes can occur almost anywhere, including New York City, London, and Australia.[11] Larger earthquakes occur less frequently, the relationship being exponential; for example, roughly ten times as many earthquakes larger than magnitude 4 occur in a particular time period than earthquakes larger than magnitude 5. In the (low seismicity) United Kingdom, for example, it has been calculated that the average recurrences are: an earthquake of 3.7 - 4.6 every year, an earthquake of 4.7 - 5.5 every 10 years, and an earthquake of 5.6 or larger every 100 years. [12] This is an example of the Gutenberg-Richter law. The number of seismic stations has increased from about 350 in 1931 to many thousands today. As a result, many more earthquakes are reported than in the past, but this is because of the vast improvement in instrumentation, rather than an increase in the number of earthquakes. The USGS estimates that, since 1900, there have been an average of 18 major earthquakes (magnitude 7.0-7.9) and one great earthquake (magnitude 8.0 or greater) per year, and that this average has been relatively stable.[13] In recent years, the number of major earthquakes per year has decreased, although this is thought likely to be a statistical fluctuation rather than a systematic trend. More detailed statistics on the size and frequency of earthquakes is available from the USGS.[14]

Most of the world's earthquakes (90%, and 81% of the largest) take place in the 40,000-km-long, horseshoe-shaped zone called the circum-Pacific seismic belt, also known as the Pacific Ring of Fire, which for the most part bounds the Pacific Plate.[15][16] Massive earthquakes tend to occur along other plate boundaries, too, such as along the Himalayan Mountains. Humans can cause earthquakes for example by constructing large dams and buildings, drilling and injecting liquid into wells, and by coal mining and oil drilling.[17] With the rapid growth of mega-cities such as Mexico City, Tokyo or Tehran, in areas of high seismic risk, some seismologists are warning that a single quake may claim the lives of up to 3 million people.[18][19] Effects impacts of earthquakes 1755 copper engraving depicting Lisbon in ruins and in flames after the 1755 Lisbon earthquake. A tsunami overwhelms the ships in the harbor. There are many effects of earthquakes including, but not limited to the following: Shaking and ground rupture Shaking and ground rupture are the main effects created by earthquakes, principally resulting in more or less severe damage to buildings or other rigid structures. The severity of the local effects depends on the complex combination of the earthquake magnitude, the distance from epicenter, and the local geological and geomorphological conditions, which may amplify or reduce wave propagation.[20] The ground-shaking is measured by ground acceleration. Specific local geological, geomorphological, and geostructural features can induce high levels of shaking on the ground surface even from low-intensity earthquakes. This effect is called site or local amplification. It is principally due to the transfer of the seismic motion from hard deep soils to soft superficial soils and to effects of seismic energy focalization owing to typical geometrical setting of the deposits. Ground rupture is a visible breaking and displacement of the earth's surface along the trace of the fault, which may be of the order of several metres in the case of major earthquakes. Ground rupture is a major risk for large engineering structures such as dams, bridges and nuclear power stations and requires careful mapping of existing faults to identify any likely to break the ground surface within the life of the structure.[21] Landslides and avalanches Main article: Landslide Landslides are a major geologic hazard because they can happen at any place in the world, much like earthquakes. Severe storms, earthquakes, volcanic activity, coastal wave attack, and wildfires can all produce slope instability. Landslide danger may be possible even though emergency personnel are attempting rescue.[22]

Fires Fires of the 1906 San Francisco earthquake Following an earthquake, fires can be generated by break of the electrical power or gas lines. In the event of water mains rupturing and a loss of pressure, it may also become difficult to stop the spread of a fire once it has started. For example, the deaths in the 1906 San Francisco earthquake were caused more by the fires than by the earthquake itself.[23] Soil liquefaction Soil liquefaction occurs when, because of the shaking, water-saturated granular material

(such as sand) temporarily loses its strength and transforms from a solid to a liquid. Soil liquefaction may cause rigid structures, as buildings or bridges, to tilt or sink into the liquefied deposits. This can be a devastating effect of earthquakes. For example, in the 1964 Alaska earthquake, many buildings were sunk into the ground by soil liquefaction, eventually collapsing upon themselves.[24] Tsunami The tsunami of the 2004 Indian Ocean earthquake Main article: Tsunami Tsunamis are long-wavelength, long-period sea waves produced by a sudden or abrupt movement of large volumes of water. In the open ocean, the distance between wave crests can surpass 100 kilometers, and the wave periods can vary from five minutes to one hour. Such tsunamis travel 600-800 kilometers per hour, depending on water depth. Large waves produced by an earthquake or a submarine landslide can overrun nearby coastal areas in a matter of minutes. Tsunamis can also travel thousands of kilometers across open ocean and wreak destruction on far shores hours after the earthquake that generated them.[25] Ordinarily, subduction earthquakes under magnitude 7.5 on the richter scale do not cause tsunamis. However, there have been recorded instances, yet most destructive tsunamis are caused by magnitude 7.5 plus earthquakes.[25] Tsunamis are distinct from tidal waves, because in a tsunami, water flows straight instead of in a circle like the typical wave. Earthquake-triggered landslides into the sea can also cause tsunamis.[26]

Floods Main article: Flood A flood is an overflow of any amount of water that reaches land.[27] Floods usually occur because of the volume of water within a body of water, such as a river or lake, exceeds the total capacity of the formation, and as a result some of the water flows or sits outside of the normal perimeter of the body. However, floods may be secondary effects of earthquakes, if dams are damaged. Earthquakes may cause landslips to dam rivers, which then collapse and cause floods.[28] The terrain below the Sarez Lake in Tajikistan is in danger of catastrophic flood if the landslide dam formed by the earthquake, known as the Usoi Dam, were to fail during a future earthquake. Impact projections suggest the flood could affect roughly 5 million people.[29] Human impacts Earthquakes may result in disease, lack of basic necessities, loss of life, higher insurance premiums, general property damage, road and bridge damage, and collapse of buildings or destabilization of the base of buildings which may lead to collapse in future earthquakes. Earthquakes can also lead to volcanic eruptions, which cause further damages such as substantial crop damage, like in the "Year Without a Summer" (1816).[30] Most of civilization agrees that human death is the most significant human impact of earthquakes.[31] Preparation for earthquakes Today, there are ways to protect and prepare possible sites of earthquakes from severe damage, through the following processes: Earthquake engineering, Earthquake preparedness, Household seismic safety, Seismic retrofit (including special fasteners, materials, and techniques), Seismic hazard, Mitigation of seismic motion, and Earthquake prediction. Earthquakes in culture Mythology and religion In Norse mythology, earthquakes were explained as the violent struggling of the god Loki. When Loki, god of mischief and strife, murdered Baldr, god of beauty and light, he was punished by being bound in a cave with a poisonous serpent placed above his head dripping venom. Loki's wife Sigyn stood by him with a bowl to catch the poison, but whenever she had to empty the bowl the poison would drip on Loki's face, forcing him to jerk his head away and thrash against his bonds, causing the earth to tremble.[32] In Greek mythology, Poseidon was the god of and cause earthquakes. When he was in a bad mood, he would strike the ground with a trident, causing this and other calamities. He also used earthquakes to punish and inflict fear upon people as revenge.[33]

Popular culture In modern popular culture, the portrayal of earthquakes is shaped by the memory of great cities laid waste, such as Kobe in 1995 or San Francisco in 1906.[34] Fictional earthquakes tend to strike suddenly and without warning.[34] For this reason, stories about earthquakes generally begin with the disaster and focus on its immediate aftermath, as in *Short Walk to Daylight* (1972), *The Ragged Edge* (1968) or *Aftershock: Earthquake in New York* (1998).[34] A notable example is Heinrich von Kleist's classic novella, *The Earthquake in Chile*, which describes the destruction of Santiago in 1647. Haruki Murakami's short fiction collection, *After the Quake*, depicts the consequences of the Kobe earthquake of 1995. The most popular single earthquake in fiction is the hypothetical "Big One"

expected of California's San Andreas Fault someday, as depicted in the novels *Richter 10* (1996) and *Goodbye California* (1977) among other works.[34] Jacob M. Appel's widely-anthologized short story, *A Comparative Seismology*, features a con artist who convinces an elderly woman that an apocalyptic earthquake is imminent. [35] In *Pleasure Boating in Lituya Bay*, one of the stories in Jim Shepard's *Like You'd Understand, Anyway*, the "Big One" leads to an even more devastating tsunami.

See also Look up earthquake in Wiktionary, the free dictionary. Earthquake insurance Earthquake loss List of earthquakes List of all deadly earthquakes since 1900 List of earthquakes by death toll Seismotectonics References ^ Spence, William; S. A. Sipkin, G. L. Choy (1989). "Measuring the Size of an Earthquake". United States Geological Survey. earthquake.usgs.gov/learning/topics/measure.php. Retrieved on 2006-11-03. ^ Talebian, M. Jackson, J. 2004. A reappraisal of earthquake focal mechanisms and active shortening in the Zagros mountains of Iran. *Geophysical Journal International*, 156, pages 506-526 ^ Noson, Qamar, and Thorsen (1988). *Washington State Earthquake Hazards: Washington State Department of Natural Resources. Washington Division of Geology and Earth Resources Information Circular 85*. ^ "M7.5 Northern Peru Earthquake of 26 September 2005" (pdf). <ftp://hazards.cr.usgs.gov/maps/sigeqs/20050926/20050926.pdf>. Retrieved on 2008-08-01. ^ Greene, H. W.; Burnley, P. C. (26 October 1989). "A new self-organizing mechanism for deep-focus earthquakes". *Nature* 341: 733–737. doi:10.1038/341733a0. ^ Foxworthy and Hill (1982). *Volcanic Eruptions of 1980 at Mount St. Helens, The First 100 Days: USGS Professional Paper 1249*. ^ a b "What are Aftershocks, Foreshocks, and Earthquake Clusters?". earthquake.usgs.gov/eqcenter/step/explain.php. ^ "Earthquake Swarms at Yellowstone". USGS. volcanoes.usgs.gov/yvo/2004/Apr04Swarm.html. Retrieved on 2008-09-15. ^ Amos Nur (2000). "Poseidon's Horses: Plate Tectonics and Earthquake Storms in the Late Bronze Age Aegean and Eastern Mediterranean". *Journal of Archaeological Science* 27: 43–63. doi:10.1006/jasc.1999.0431. ISSN 0305-4403. water.stanford.edu/nur/EndBronzeage.pdf. ^ "Earthquake Storms". *Horizon*. 9pm 1 April 2003. www.bbc.co.uk/science/horizon/2003/earthquakestorms.shtml. Retrieved on 2007-05-02. ^ "Earthquake Hazards Program". USGS. earthquake.usgs.gov. Retrieved on 2006-08-14. ^ Seismicity and earthquake hazard in the UK ^ "Common Myths about Earthquakes". USGS. earthquake.usgs.gov/learning/faq.php?categoryID=6&faqID=110. Retrieved on 2006-08-14. ^ "Earthquake Facts and Statistics: Are earthquakes increasing?". USGS. neic.usgs.gov/neis/eqlists/eqstats.html. Retrieved on 2006-08-14. ^ "Historic Earthquakes and Earthquake Statistics: Where do earthquakes occur?". USGS. earthquake.usgs.gov/learning/faq.php?categoryID=11&faqID=95. Retrieved on 2006-08-14. ^ "Visual Glossary - Ring of Fire". USGS. earthquake.usgs.gov/learning/glossary.php?termID=150. Retrieved on 2006-08-14. ^ Madrigal, Alexis (4 June 2008). "Top 5 Ways to Cause a Man-Made Earthquake". *Wired News (CondéNet)*. blog.wired.com/wiredscience/2008/06/top-5-ways-that.html. Retrieved on 2008-06-05. ^ Global urban seismic risk ^ Earthquake safety in Iran and other developing countries ^ On Shaky Ground, Association of Bay Area Governments, San Francisco, reports 1995,1998 (updated 2003) ^ Guidelines for evaluating the hazard of surface fault rupture, California Geological Survey ^ "Natural Hazards - Landslides". USGS. www.usgs.gov/hazards/landslides. Retrieved on 2008-09-15. ^ "The Great 1906 San Francisco earthquake of 1906". USGS. earthquake.usgs.gov/regional/nca/1906/18april/index.php. Retrieved on 2008-09-15. ^ "Historic Earthquakes -1946 Anchorage Earthquake". USGS. earthquake.usgs.gov/regional/states/events/1964_03_28.php. Retrieved on 2008-09-15. ^ a b Noson, Qamar, and Thorsen (1988). *Washington Division of Geology and Earth Resources Information Circular 85. Washington State Earthquake Hazards*. ^ Wicker, Crystal. "Earthquakes". *Crystal Wicker Weather Wiz Kids*. www.weatherwizkids.com/earthquake1.htm. ^ MSN Encarta Dictionary. Flood. Retrieved on 2006-12-28. ^ "Notes on Historical Earthquakes". British Geological Survey. www.quakes.bgs.ac.uk/earthquakes/historical/historical_listing.htm. Retrieved on 2008-09-15. ^ "Fresh alert over Tajik flood threat". BBC News. 2003-08-03. news.bbc.co.uk/2/hi/asia-pacific/3120693.stm. Retrieved on 2008-09-15. ^ "Facts about The Year Without a Summer". National Geographic UK. www.discoverychannel.co.uk/earth/year_without_summer/facts/index.shtml. ^ "Earthquakes and Volcanoes". University of Michigan. www.globalchange.umich.edu/globalchange1/current/lectures/nat_hazards/nat_hazards.html. ^

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