

Grays Harbor County Emergency Management

Preparedness on the Harbor

Westport—Photo by Lisa Ballou

Volume 4, Issue 1

January - February 2018

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~ Moments of Misfortune ~

By Chuck Wallace

I knew it! Here he comes. Just like clockwork. He must have been waiting for me in the parking lot! My co-worker Matt dashes toward me in the pouring rain.

Trotting up, he loudly asks, "Hey, did you feel the [earthquake](#) last night?"

I heard him ask me something, but I was still leaning into my car to retrieve my briefcase, umbrella and cup of coffee when he asked.

I responded, "Sorry, Matt. I didn't hear what you said."

He breathlessly repeats, "Did you feel the [earthquake](#) last night?"

I reply, "I didn't. I just heard about it while driving into work this morning."

Excitedly, Matt exclaimed, "It was a 4.2 magnitude earthquake just offshore of the State Park, south of the Indian Nation. Lots of people felt it in the county!"

I answered, "Yeah, well, I didn't feel anything or even know until the radio news broadcast the information."

Matt further explained, "The radio said, there was no damage, but it was felt as far away as British Columbia and Oregon!"

I replied, "You do know we live in [earthquake country](#). We just don't have that many and the ones we do have, are fairly small. Hardly anyone feels them."

Matt pressed on, "Sooner or later we'll have a [really big one](#). That's what scares me the most."

Walking away, toward my office, I answer over my shoulder, "Yeah, well hopefully, we're all long gone when it does happen."

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I rub my forehead while sitting at my desk, fairly exhausted and semi-perturbed after answering the same questions about the earthquake all morning. The theme of the day continued during my morning phone call to my wife.

"Yes dear."

I continued, "I heard about it. Ever since I walked into the office, everyone has been talking about it. You'd think the world was ready to tilt off its axis."

"I know, but nothing even really happened, I mean, with the exception of a few people feeling the ground shake. It's just one of those things."

I tell her, “We’ve lived here for 10 years and nothing has happened even remotely impacting us. This is the first earthquake we’ve had close to us and we didn’t even feel it.”

Half listening to her questions and concerns about the earthquake, I patronizingly offer, “Hmm, yeah, right. Look, don’t worry about it. It’s over. Hey, I have to go, I have a conference call starting in a few minutes, ok? Yep, yeah, everything’s alright. Ok. See ya tonight. Good. I love you too.”

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Sitting at my desk, shuffling through the stacks of files to find the particular one I need, I think to myself, boy, am I glad I didn’t go to the meeting in Seattle today, I have too much to do. Thankfully, I don’t have to pay too much attention to this conference call. I can chime in from time to time, while responding to some of these never ending e-mails.

After half an hour of listening to the same exact issue we discussed last month, I unmute my phone and break into the meeting, “Yeah, I agree with what was just said, we need to begin working on the next objective of our strategic plan.”

Someone else comments, “I’d like to revisit the notes I have from the meeting two months ago.”

Not believing what I just heard, I make a strong recommendation to the conference members on the phone, “If we don’t begin moving forward...” --What the...?

My entire office lurches forward, shoving me against the edge of my desk. The shelves hanging along my wall all tear away with books and files bouncing and falling in complete disarray on the floor. My computer screen goes blank as the office lights flicker.

I jump up, “ahhh,” shouting out as my steaming hot cup of coffee goes flying cross my desk, spilling everywhere and over everything, including me, soaking my shirt and trousers, onto my stomach and into my lap.

A few ceiling tiles begin to fall on the other side of my office as I hang onto the desk, half standing, attempting to wipe the coffee and cool the blistering heat in my lap. Suddenly, the light fixture over my desk swings down and slams into the side of my head. I feel like I’ve been hit with a baseball bat. I grab the right side of my head and fall to my knees, knocked senseless from the blow.

The entire event ends after a few harrowing moments. My right ear has a constant ringing. I can hear others in the building yelling, but am unable to make sense of what they are saying. I look around my office, my right hand holding the side of my head, and see everything in disarray. Walking down the hallway, passing the other offices in my building, I see a mess of papers, books, pamphlets, tumbled file cabinets and fallen ceiling tiles.

The department head from down the hall asks all in the corridor, “Is everyone here? Are we all ok?”

One of the women from the office down the hall asks, “Aren’t we supposed to evacuate and get to high ground?”

A male voice responds, “Are we in an [inundation area](#)? I think we’re on high ground.”

Another person in the office calls out, “Where is the [Weather Radio](#)? Information should be broadcast on that.”

The woman answers, “I don’t think we have one. I’ve been here for 6 years and I’ve never seen one.”

A male voice from the middle of the crowd asks, “Well, what are we supposed to do?”

Half of the nine or so people in the second floor hallway are texting or trying to call someone.

A man from an office on the other end of the building shouts for all to hear, “The cell lines are busy.”

Another says, “I think I can text!”

The department head states in a loud authoritarian voice, “Let’s get outside. We’re supposed to go outside after an earthquake, then have the building checked to be sure it’s safe.”

Another woman in the building speaks up and exclaims, “I’m not leaving the building. If a [tsunami](#) is coming, I am not going to be on the street.”

Their babbling and indecisiveness is driving me crazy as my head continues to pound from getting hit with the light fixture.

I shout, “Yo! Hey! Listen Up! We are not in a tsunami inundation area. Let’s just go outside like the boss said, and make sure everyone in the building is safe. We can figure out what to do once we’re outside.”

Matt approaches from the other end of the hallway wearing a rain poncho and backpack. He slowly high steps through the debris, shuffling it with each step, as he walks around the overturned file cabinets and maneuvers himself along the wall.

He asks, “Is everyone all right?”

I reply, “We’re going to get out of here and see if everyone from the building is ok.”

A voice from the back shouts, “It’s pouring rain out there. Can’t we just stay here?”

Matt responds, “Actually, newer buildings are built so they don’t collapse during an earthquake onto the people inside, but I think this is a fairly old building. Either way, they are only designed to prevent collapse from one earthquake. I’m not sure what would happen if we have an [aftershock](#).”

The office manager asks “Where did you get that information?”

Matt replies, “I’ve read about it and have gone to a few conferences where they talk about building safety in earthquakes, non-reinforced masonry buildings, non-structural damage...”

Another worker cuts him off, “Yeah, well, I’d rather be wet than trapped in here if we have an aftershock.”

Hesitantly, the group agrees to leave and we begin exiting the building through the stairway at the end of the hall. My head is pounding as I follow the group and try to call my wife, worried about her and my kids. Attempting the call, all I hear is a busy signal.

I whisper out loud, “Unbelievable,” as I try twice more with the same busy signal. I think to myself, “I guess that’s why they’re called [family plans](#), when one phone won’t work, none of the others will either.”

Walking out of the building into a gusty, steady downpour, toward the assembly area, I see other employees from the building congregating in their pre-designated assembly areas in the parking lot, the same ones we use for a fire drill. Everyone looks drenched from head to toe. Glancing to my left, I look at Matt in his rain poncho and backpack and begin to chuckle. What is this guy doing?

I teasingly offer, “Did you pack for the weekend?”

He says, “It’s my [Go Kit](#). Don’t you have one?”

I look at him like he's crazy, "What are you talking about?"

He replies, "A Go Kit. Everyone should have one. In case of earthquake, [flooding](#)..."

I interrupt, not wanting to know any more, "Yeah, well I don't even know what you're talking about."

He responds, very concerned, "It's a necessity for everyone living around here. I have food, water, a radio, clothes and a first..."

I speak over him, "Yeah, sounds great. But I'm not carrying all that stuff with me all day." Changing the subject, I ask, "Where is our assembly area anyway?"

Matt replies, "Follow me. I know where we are supposed to go."

Rain water is running down my back as we move across the parking lot to join the others. I slowly begin to survey the area immediately surrounding us through the sheets of rain. The chimney has collapsed on the home across the street and one of the parked cars in front of our building has a large tree branch laying across the hood. This earthquake was worse than I thought. People are congregating on street corners and in other parking areas. It's almost surreal how quiet everyone is. All I hear is the rain and sound of the wind. Looking up, I see Harry, a first floor employee, limping toward us.

Someone yells out, "Oh my God, Harry has blood all over him!"

A small crowd gathers around him as he tells them he is fine. He explains how a cabinet in his office fell over and hit him on the corner of his eye, causing all of the blood.

Harry says, "It's just a cut. I'm all right."

Someone shouts out "I have a message! Texting works!"

Others begin confirming "Me, too!"

"Yeah, mine works."

I notice almost everyone around me texting on their phone. I pull mine from my pocket and begin to text my wife and kids,

Are you all ok?

Within seconds, my wife replies via text, *I'm ok. It was scary. House shook like crazy. Lights r flickering. Nothing from the girls - YES, your dog is fine!*

She continued, *Radio said EQ centered off coast. Some cities - Aberdeen have damage. That's where the school is & where Janie works!*

Adding, *No message from Katie's school. Hopefully, they r ok. I'm worried.*

I reply, trying to remain calm in the moment, but very worried about my kids. *We have a few minor issues. I don't think it was anything major. The girls will be fine. They know what to do.*

Impatient, frightened and very concerned, she texts, *Well, for knowing what to do, nobody's doing anything!*

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Matt, has been attending to the cut above Harry's eye with the first aid kit he stored in his Go Kit, walks over and hands me an extra rain poncho he is carrying.

"This will keep you dry."

I thank him but give the poncho back, "It's a bit late for that. I'm soaked!"

Matt nods and stores the poncho in his backpack.

With a concerned look on his face, he offers, "The [USGS](#) said it was a magnitude 6.3 earthquake about 6 miles off the Grays Harbor coast along the Cascadia Fault Line. I looked at some social media sites, and they say there is moderate damage to some homes and buildings along the coast."

I ask, "Do they say anything about people hurt?"

"Not really," he adds, as he scans the various social media sites.

Wiping the droplets of rain from my phone screen, I try to call my daughters, but the lines are still busy. I heard one person talking to someone on the phone, but I guess with the earthquake being local, everyone is trying to make a call.

The building manager comes out and asks all to gather around.

The drenched group huddles around as he starts, "We don't have anyone qualified to inspect the building for damages. There are a few cracks along the first floor storage areas and at this point, I don't believe it is safe to re-enter the building without someone with some engineering knowledge looking at the damage. My suggestion is for everyone to go home, check on your family and then for tomorrow, confirm whether the building will be safe to re-enter with your supervisor."

A voice comes from the middle of the pack, "Are we getting paid for this?"

The manager just looks at the person and shakes his head, apparently dumbfounded by the question.

The voice asks in a very irritated manner, "Are we still getting paid?"

The manager replies, much more composed than I would had been, "I don't know. Let's get out of the rain and attend to our families first. We can worry about money when the dust settles."

As the crowd begins to disperse, I start walking to my car and realize my keys are on my desk in my office.

Exasperated, I blurt out, "It figures."

Matt who is walking beside me asks, "What figures?"

I say, "My keys are on my desk."

Matt offers to take me home, but I'm hesitant to accept his offer. And then, realizing I'm cold, wet and there may not be any other solution I tell him, I'll take him up on his offer. Suddenly, half startling me, my phone rings. It's my wife.

"What's up kid?"

My wife begins talking a mile-a-minute, half sobbing. I can't make out what she's saying.

I say, "Slow down, I can't understand what you are saying."

She says, "Jack! Jack! Oh my God, Oh my God."

I realize something is terribly wrong and try desperately to focus on her words.

"Shar, you have to slow down. I can't understand."

She composes herself and says, "The [school](#) called. Part of the roof collapsed onto some classrooms. They think Katie is trapped under the roof!"

..... **To Be Continued!**



## The Day Before:



*"Because you never know when the day before ... Is the day before. Prepare for tomorrow."*  
—Bobby Akart ,  
Goodreads.com

NEW YEAR'S  
RESOLUTIONS

Assemble your  
**GO KIT**

Purchase a  
**NOAA Weather Radio**

Set up your  
**Family Emergency Plan**

Make sure you are  
**2 Weeks Ready**

Sign up for the  
**Notification System**

# 2018

NATIONAL SEASONAL  
PREPAREDNESS  
MESSAGING CALENDAR  
[ready.gov/calendar](http://ready.gov/calendar)

## WINTER (Jan. & Feb.)

### WINTER STORM AND EXTREME COLD

- Stay off the road during/after a storm.
- Extreme cold can be deadly. Stay inside where it is warm and bring pets indoors.
- Wear warm clothes in layers and change activities to stay safe.
- Use heating devices (e.g., space heaters) safely.
- Ensure you have a working carbon monoxide detector.

Look what you can find on the Grays Harbor County [Emergency Management Website](#) !!

- Registration for the Notification System
- Previous issues of the Preparedness Newsletter
- Road Closures
- River Gauges
- Link to the PUD
- Photo Gallery
- Current Information
- Tsunami Fact Sheets

How can you receive **FASTER** Emergency and Disaster notifications ?



**The Grays Harbor County & Pacific County NOAA All Hazard "ALERT" Weather Radio Campaign begins Monday, January 15<sup>th</sup>.**

## Disaster Preparedness

Emergencies come in many forms, and they may require anything from a brief absence from your home to permanent evacuation. Each type of disaster requires different measures to keep your pets safe, so the best thing you can do for yourself and your pets is to be prepared.



Click [HERE](#) for simple steps you can follow now to make sure you're ready before the next disaster strikes:

# 5 EMERGENCY & DISASTER PREPAREDNESS APPS



## App #1: National Weather Service



National Weather Service mobile enhanced Web page provides weather, hydrologic,... and climate forecasts and warnings for the United States.

## App #2: Earthquake – American Red Cross



Earthquake - American Red Cross app provides step-by-step instructions on what to do... before/during/after an earthquake. It also includes an "I'm Safe" feature to notify family and friends that you are okay.

## App #3: Flood – American Red Cross



Flood by American Red Cross app provides flood warning alerts, location of open... shelters, information about dealing with floods and power outages and a customizable "I'm Safe" notification.

## App #4: Monster Guard



This is an app created by the partnership between the American Red Cross, Disney, and Dreamking to educate children about preparing for emergencies. This app gives children an interactive game to learn about concepts of emergency preparedness and different types of emergencies in a fun platform!

## App #5: ASPCA – Disaster Prep and Emergency Alerts



This free app shows pet parents exactly what to do in case of a natural disaster. It also allows pet owners to store vital medical records, and provides information on making life-saving decisions during natural disasters.

# Looking Back . . . . .



## 1700 Cascadia Earthquake

On January 26, 1700, the largest earthquake known to have occurred in the "lower 48" United States, rocked Cascadia, a region 600 miles long that includes northern California, Oregon, Washington, and southern British Columbia.

The earthquake set off a tsunami--a series of ocean waves-- that not only struck Cascadia's Pacific coast, but also crossed the Pacific Ocean to Japan, where it damaged coastal villages. Written records of the damage in Japan pinpoint the earthquake to the evening of January 26, 1700. Scientists now call the event the 1700 Cascadia earthquake. They estimate its size as magnitude 9.

Only three earthquakes of magnitude 9 or larger occurred in the twentieth century. The largest, of magnitude 9.5, struck Chile in 1960. Second-largest was the 9.2 quake that hit Alaska in 1964. By comparison, the 1906 San Francisco earthquake was not quite magnitude 8. The very existence of the 1700 Cascadia earthquake was unknown just 20 years ago. The earthquake's discovery resulted from scientific sleuthing in the United States, Canada, and Japan.

An early breakthrough came in 1987, when U.S. Geological Survey geologist Brian Atwater reported geological traces of giant earthquakes along Washington's Pacific coast. These traces include groves of trees that were killed when an earthquake lowered forests into salt water.

Another important clue was reported a few years later, when the earthquake was dated to the decades between 1680 and 1720. This clue came from radiocarbon tests by Minze Stuiver of the University of Washington.

Meanwhile in Japan, several researchers were following these developments. They consulted their nation's archives of old writings about earthquakes and tsunamis. For the period between 1680 and 1720 they found one orphan tsunami that could have come from Cascadia. That tsunami occurred in January 1700.

Finally, a smoking gun was found in the groves of killed trees on the Washington coast. Using annual growth rings in the trees, David Yamaguchi of Seattle and Gordon Jacoby of Columbia University showed that the trees lived through the 1699 growing season but were dead by the following spring -- exactly the dates expected if the earthquake occurred in January 1700.

<https://archive.usgs.gov/archive/sites/www.usgs.gov/newsroom/article.asp-ID=658.html>



## West Coast MEGA Tsunami & Earthquake – Documentary

### *The Great Blowdown" strikes Washington coast on January 29, 1921*

On January 29, 1921, a hurricane-force windstorm with gusts of more than 100 miles per hour strikes the Washington coast. Mill stacks are toppled along with power and telephone lines. Water surges over riverbanks and ships and barges break moorings. So much timber is destroyed -- billions of board feet -- that the storm is called "The Great Blowdown" (Van Syckle, 194). One man dies, in Aberdeen.

At about noon on January 29, the wind hit Grays Harbor and A. A. Brown, chief engineer for the Anderson & Middleton mill at Aberdeen was killed. By 2:00 p.m. the Olympic Peninsula felt the storm. "Great spruces, some eight feet through, top-heavy and shallow-rooted, were particularly vulnerable. Tremendous stands of hemlock were literally torn from the ground and tossed into impenetrable tangles (Van Syckle, 194-195). An entire herd of 200 elk were killed by falling timber. Hundreds of farm animals were lost and killed.

Destruction was heaviest in the west end of Clallam County where the highway between Crescent Lake and Forks was blocked by downed trees. At La Push, 16 Native American homes were destroyed.

The loss to the timber industry was catastrophic. Three-to-seven-billion board feet of old-growth timber was destroyed and left a huge fire hazard. The U.S. Forest Service, the State of Washington, and the Washington Forest Fire Association deployed additional fire suppression crews to protect the region. National Guard troops limited access into the affected areas. The U.S. Army responded with air patrols, but the appropriation for fuel ran out. The State and the Washington Forest Fire Association responded with \$1,029.93 each to buy enough gasoline to keep the JN-4s from Camp Lewis flying.

<http://www.historylink.org/File/5249>

### . . . . . *Do You Remember?*

- [Inauguration Day Storm of 1993](#)
- [Nisqually Earthquake 2001](#)
- [The Superbowl Storm of 2006](#)
- [January 2015 Mudslide & Flooding](#)





# 2018 HAPPY NEW YEAR



## Contacts & Info



All Hazards Alert Broadcast (AHAB) Siren testing occurs the first Monday of every month at noon.

Did you know AHAB sirens are NOT designed to be heard indoors?

**Sheriff Rick Scott**  
Director Emergency Management  
(360) 249-3711  
[soadmin@co.grays-harbor.wa.us](mailto:soadmin@co.grays-harbor.wa.us)

**Chuck Wallace**  
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**Grays Harbor Emergency Management**  
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Fax (360) 249-3805  
[ghcdem@co.grays-harbor.wa.us](mailto:ghcdem@co.grays-harbor.wa.us)

### Article & Photo Credit

*Front cover photo of Westport  
Provided by Lisa Ballou*

*Front cover "Moments of Misfortune"  
By Chuck Wallace*

**ATTEND** the Grays Harbor Citizen Corp meetings the second Wednesday of every month at 9am, in the Grays Harbor County Forestry Building.  
**310 W Spruce St Montesano, WA 98563**

*Meet with other county agencies and organizations working on disaster preparedness in our county. Check out their Facebook page too.*  
[www.facebook.com/GraysHarborCitizenCorps](http://www.facebook.com/GraysHarborCitizenCorps)

**SIGN UP** for the Grays Harbor Emergency Notification System to receive Emergency & Disaster information on winter storms, earthquakes, flooding, from Grays Harbor  
[http://cms5.revize.com/revize/graysharborcounty/departments/emergency\\_management/DEMNotificationRequest.php](http://cms5.revize.com/revize/graysharborcounty/departments/emergency_management/DEMNotificationRequest.php)

**LIKE** the Grays Harbor Emergency Management Facebook page at  
[www.facebook.com/pages/Grays-Harbor-County-Emergency-Management](http://www.facebook.com/pages/Grays-Harbor-County-Emergency-Management)

**FOLLOW** Grays Harbor Emergency Management [@GHCDEM](https://twitter.com/GHCDEM) on Twitter

**VISIT** the Grays Harbor Emergency Management website at  
[http://cms5.revize.com/revize/graysharborcounty/departments/emergency\\_management/index.php](http://cms5.revize.com/revize/graysharborcounty/departments/emergency_management/index.php)

### Upcoming Events

January 16th

[American Sign Language for Emergencies](#)

January 17th - 19th

[CERT Training Seabrook](#)

February 24th

[CERT Members CPR and First Aid Class](#)

Jan. 25th & Feb. 22nd

Listen for Tammy Fairley of the Ocean Shores CERT Team at 9am on: **91.3FM** or at <http://koswradio.com>



### Upcoming Meetings

**Citizen Corps**

January 10th - 9:00am  
February 14th - 9:00am  
LEPC

January 10th - 10:15am  
February 14th - 10:15am