

April is Earthquake Preparedness Month: Is Your Investment Protected?

by Cliff Webb

There are over 200 Earthquake faults in Southern California that are capable of a 6.0m or greater and most people in the Southern California area live within 30 miles of these faults.

Experts agree that it is not a matter of if, but rather when the next damaging earthquake hits our region again. The recent spate of quakes in Southern California (in the past 12 months there have been 14 quakes of 4.0 magnitude or greater) further illustrates the region's geological instability.

Here are some facts from the 1994 Northridge Quake:

- Over \$42 Billion in property damage
- Over 20,000 left homeless
- Fire Departments reported over 50 gas related structure fires
- Southern California Gas Company responded to 14,062 consumer reported gas leaks (So Cal Gas – 1994)
- FEMA processed over 400,000 claims for water heater damage and over 700,000 claims for all gas appliances (Honegger, 1995)
- In Santa Monica, a 10-unit building was declared a total loss due to ruptured gas line explosion, causing 3 adjacent buildings to catch on fire.

Even though we are bombarded with these facts and statistics again and again, many people still have not taken even the basic steps necessary to protect their real estate investments, let alone their own family, home, and pets.

Safety information is widely accessible as there are innumerable earthquake and emergency preparedness guides and checklists available from many trusted sources.

Some of the best resources are:

Southern California Earthquake Center: www.scec.org/

California Seismic Safety Commission: www.seismic.ca.gov/

California Office of Emergency Services: www.oes.ca.gov/

The American Red Cross: www.redcross.org

Federal Emergency Management Agency: www.fema.gov

US Geological Survey: www.usgs.gov

USGS Earthquake Information: www.quake.wr.usgs.gov/

Fire Information: www.fire.ca.gov/cdf/incidents

Weather Information: www.weather.com/

California Earthquake Authority: www.earthquakeauthority.com/

Southern California Gas Company: www.socalgas.com

Affordable Safety Solutions: (Safety – Earthquake Valves): www.assiusa.com

As a property owner, there are a few very basic things you can do to help secure your real investments:

- Insure smoke detectors are working and in good condition. Many occupants will disable smoke detectors if they are not operating properly, like beeping and going off randomly.
- Properly brace water heaters and other large appliances.
- Install flexible pipe fittings to avoid water or gas leaks.

- Check to see if your structure is bolted. If not, look into what it may cost. Seismic retrofitting can save a building from complete destruction.
- Install **Earthquake-Activated Gas Shut-Off Safety Valves, (a.k.a. seismic gas shut-off valves)**, Automatically shuts-off the gas to your home or business in the event of a major earthquake, (5.1 to 5.4 in magnitude), protecting your family, pets and irreplaceable valuable from a gas fire after an earthquake, whether you are home or not. Why worry about shutting off the gas when these state of the art gas safety valves will do it for you.

As most of you know, LA City Ordinance 174478 requires that **seismic gas shut-off valves** be installed on designated buildings within the city. The ordinances apply to:

- All new buildings constructed after September 1, 1995
- Commercial buildings performing additions, alterations or repairs with a building permit issued after September 1, 1995 and a valuation of greater than \$10,000
- Residential buildings performing additions, alterations or repairs with a building permit issued after January 10, 1998 and a valuation of greater than \$10,000
- All buildings sold in the city after February 5, 1998. A seismic gas valve must be installed prior to entering an agreement for sale, or prior to the close of escrow when an escrow agreement has been executed in connection with the sale.
- Alterations or additions to the fuel gas piping system which involves the replacement of the gas meter.

Many other municipalities are in the process of adopting or considering similar mandates. Santa Monica, West Hollywood, and Inglewood are just a few. We expect soon it will become a statewide mandate, like the strapping of water heaters, and the installation of smoke detectors. However, when we speak of mandates and regulations, the cloud of bureaucracy and politics looms overhead. Your concerns should be safety and security, not simply waiting until local legislation and lobbying catch up with known methods of protecting your family and investments.

Are you ready for the big one? Earthquake preparedness and seismic gas shut-off valves saves lives, property, and mitigates damages. Act now, its earthquake preparedness month.

Prepared from information provide by the Los Angeles Department of Building and Safety and Earthquake Survival Program and **Safe Gas Services LLC**. For more information or to schedule a free EQV estimate, call SGS at (877) SAFE-002 or visit the website at www.safegasservices.com.