

La Plata Police Department –Emergency Operation Plan

	Title: Earthquakes		Annex: EOP-36	
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Approved by: Chief Carl Schinner			CALEA 5 th Edition	
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01 PURPOSE: The purpose of this annex is to supplement the *Natural-and-Man-Made Disasters* portion of the Emergency Operations Plan. Used in conjunction with the La Plata Police Department’s emergency plans, this annex provides general guidelines for use by first-responders to areas where an earthquake is occurring or has occurred. These guidelines are intended to be flexible since no two situations are the same, and to allow first-responders to adapt to rapidly changing conditions.

02 ASSUMPTIONS:

- A. Earthquakes can be among the most devastating and terrifying of natural hazards. Although floods, tornadoes, and hurricanes account for much greater annual loss in the United States, severe earthquakes pose the largest risk in terms of sudden loss of life and property.
- B. Most earthquakes occur when great stresses building up within the earth are suddenly released. The sudden release of this stored energy causes movement of the earth’s crust along fractures, called faults, and generates shock waves. These shock waves, also known as seismic waves, radiate in all directions (i.e., the ripple effect).
- C. The mid-Atlantic and central Appalachian region, including Maryland, is characterized by a moderate amount of low-level earthquake activity, but their cause or causes are basically a matter of speculation. In Maryland, there are numerous faults, but none are known or suspected to be active.
- D. The vibrations produced by earthquakes are detected and recorded by instruments called seismographs. The time of occurrence, duration of shaking, locations of the epicenter, and estimates of the energy released can be obtained from data recorded by seismographs around the world. Presently, there are no operational seismograph stations in Maryland, but there are 13 stations in bordering states.
- E. One scale that rates the magnitude or strength of earthquakes is the Richter Scale. The table below is the Richter Scale:

General Description	Magnitude	Distance Felt (Miles)
Microearthquake	Below 2.0	0
Perceptible	2.0 to 2.9	0
Felt Generally	3.0 to 3.9	15
Minor	4.0 to 4.9	30
Moderate	5.0 to 5.9	70
Large (Strong)	6.0 to 6.9	125
Major (Severe)	7.0 to 7.9	250
Great	8.0 to 8.9	450

03 PLAN:

- A. It is unlikely that supervisors will have time to develop pre-plans at the shift or squad level in anticipation of an earthquake. However, they may have some time to plan for aftershocks and rapidly changing conditions.
- B. In dealing with an earthquake from the perspective of a first responder, and directing the activities of responding officers, supervisors will have many concerns – chief among them crowd and traffic control and the substantial risk of fire due to gas main rupture, explosion, etc.
- C. ON-DUTY SHIFT SUPERVISORS SHOULD:
 - 1. If inside a high-rise building and not able to get outside, direct others who are not near desks or tables, to move against an interior wall and protect their head and arms.
 - 2. Discourage the use of elevators by police personnel and others.
 - 3. Be cognizant that sprinkler systems and alarm systems may activate.
 - 4. Be aware that glass windows may dislodge during the earthquake and may sail hundreds of feet.
 - 5. Be cognizant that the earthquake may develop into a Mass Casualty Incident and/or Hazardous Materials Incident.
 - 6. If outdoors, direct persons to move to a clear area away from trees, signs, buildings, electrical wires, poles, and any overhead structures.
 - 7. If in a vehicle, stop the vehicle and stay inside until the shaking stops. Avoid bridges, underpasses, and tall buildings or other structures that could topple or fall onto the vehicle.
 - 8. Establish a command post in close proximity to the fire command post. Since this incident has the potential to be major in scope, it is strongly urged that the police command post be established in conjunction with (as part of) the fire command post (known as a *unified command post*).
 - 9. Consider the need for allied agency assistance (Maryland State Police, Charles County Sheriff's Department, etc.).
 - 10. Consider activation of the Department's Emergency Mobilization Plan.
 - 11. Ensure notifications of command staff.
 - 12. Ensure notifications of and fire/rescue, as necessary.
 - 13. Direct officers to check for injured persons and fires or fire hazards.
 - 14. Be prepared for aftershocks and develop plans for such occurrences.
 - 15. Be aware that gas, water, and electric lines may have been damaged. If damaged and causing a life-threatening situation, utilities should be shut off. Police officers should not actively search for the shut-off switches or valves for utilities. This should be left for fire/rescue personnel, who are better equipped, and, in most cases, are more familiar with a building's floor plan. If gas is leaking, refrain from using matches, flashlights, appliances, or electric switches. Open windows and report the leak to the gas company.

16. When safe, begin evacuations from damaged buildings and ensure that damaged buildings are secured to prevent re-entry of persons (until the buildings are determined to be safe), and the looting or theft of property.
17. Establish inner and outer perimeters and assign officers accordingly. Although not a crime scene, the area must be protected and preserved for investigators, utility representatives, etc.
18. Be aware that some flooding may occur downstream in low-lying areas near creeks, ponds, lakes, etc.
19. Ensure notification of appropriate Town Code Enforcement inspectors (i.e., Fire Marshal, building inspectors, and electrical inspectors).
20. Discourage persons from turning on utilities that had been previously shut off due to damage, especially electric and gas utilities. These should be turned on only after being inspected by representatives from the appropriate utility.
21. Security for Town facilities is essential to guard Town assets, and to protect against looting and theft. An ample number of personnel should be assigned to survey damage to these facilities and to provide security.
22. Have the station monitor local news broadcasts on radio or TV (local news is preferred over network news because of the media attention this event will get from local network affiliates –

INFORMATION SOURCES

Earthquake Preparedness Handbook. Los Angeles:
Los Angeles Town Fire Department, 2001

Emergency Preparedness U.S.A. Federal Emergency Management Agency
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(Pamphlet) Baltimore: Maryland Geological Survey, 2002