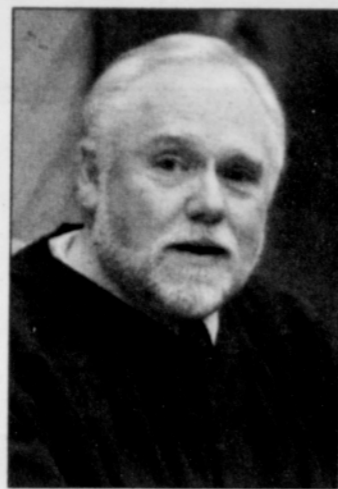


The



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Earthquake!

Emergency officials work to get you ready

BY MINDY COOPER

THE PORTLAND OBSERVER

In an effort to alleviate both the fear and stigma surrounding earthquakes and tsunamis, emergency management officials are on a mission to inform the public about how to be prepared after a natural disaster.

The fear of natural disasters is often perpetuated by a lack of information, according to Dr. Althea Rizzo, geological hazards specialist with the Oregon Management Office.

To help prepare residents to be practically ready to face the aftermath of a major earthquake or tsunami, the state office and various agency experts are stepping up to provide free preparedness workshops to inform the public.

Rizzo recounts the story of an eighth grade girl who saved hundreds during the 2004 tsunami in Thailand because of her lesson in geography.

Tilly Smith, an eighth grade student on holiday with her family from the United Kingdom, had just taken a geography class where she learned about earthquakes and tsunamis, before she saw the tide rush out in Phuket, Thailand seven-years ago.

"Because she had just studied this in school, she was able to evacuate the beach and save about 250 people's lives," said Rizzo. "You don't have to live on the coast to make the information useful."

Throughout the past several years, Oregon has suffered considerable damage from winter storms and last year's tsunami off the coast of Japan.

"Scientific evidence indicates that Oregon is at risk for much larger and potentially more damaging tsunami created by an earthquake associated with the Cascade Subduction zone," said Rizzo.

Once individuals become informed, they can prepare, she said, which helps families take the action they need to



PHOTO BY MINDY COOPER/THE PORTLAND OBSERVER

Water is sold in large containers (above) at a local supermarket. Being prepared for natural disasters means having a safe supply of drinking water that can last three weeks, according to emergency management officials.

An emergency kit (right) has first aid, a flashlight, and other supplies to be ready in case of a natural disaster.



Althea Rizzo

ensure they will be safe after a tsunami or earthquake.

In the past two weeks, Oregon has experienced 10 to 12 earthquakes, said Rizzo. "This is about average," she said. "Oregon is very seismically active."

Just last month, Rizzo said an earthquake with a magnitude of 6.0 occurred merely 15 miles off of the coast. "That was pretty big, but luckily, it was far enough off shore that it was felt by only a few," she said.

Rizzo said, however, it was the same size of earthquake, known as the Spring Break earthquake, which went underneath Scott Mills in 1993 and caused the Capital building to crumble in Salem.

"A misconception is that most buildings are built to a seismic standard, and that they won't fall down," she said. "But it might not be usable afterwards, and a lot of our building stock will need to be demolished unless people take action beforehand."

Although we are the only state that has programs and grants towards schools and critical facilities for seismic and retro-fitting, Rizzo said there is still an issue of funding to make sure

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