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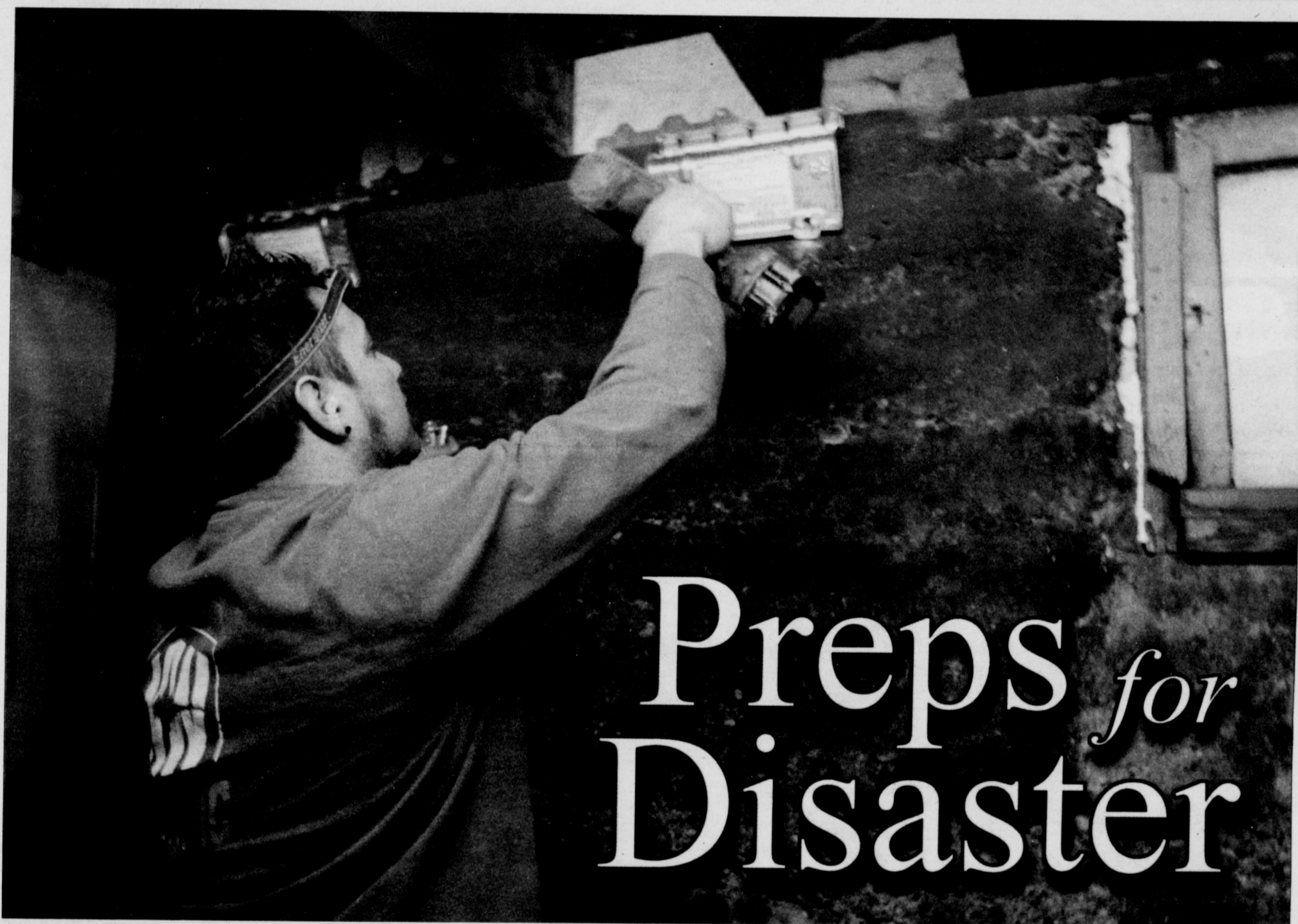
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Preps for Disaster

PHOTO BY CARI HACHMANN/THE PORTLAND OBSERVER

A Portland contractor uses steel plates to bolt down a 100-year-old home to its foundation as part of a seismic upgrade to keep the home from collapsing during a massive earthquake. March is earthquake awareness month in Oregon.

Retrofitting houses to protect life and property

BY CARI HACHMANN
THE PORTLAND OBSERVER

March is Earthquake Awareness Month in Oregon. It also marks the month a massive 8.9 magnitude earthquake struck the coast of Sendai, Japan two years ago, creating a devastating tsunami, killing thousands and causing a nuclear reactor meltdown.

Two years later, as debris from the quake still washes up along our coastline, the Portland Bureau of Emergency Management is reminding Portlanders to prepare for a subduction zone earthquake of similar nature and size that scientists expect to hit home anytime.

An Oregon Seismic Safety Policy Advisory Commission report for Gov. John Kitzhaber's office has estimated that statewide damage from such an event would total in the tens of billions of dollars.

The report also illuminates how Oregon's public and private sectors are unprepared for such a disaster, and underscores the work needed to protect life and property.

At the top of the city's priority list is educating homeowners about how to seismically upgrade their homes to withstand massive lateral shifting from a devastating earthquake.

The city demonstrates our vulnerability to disasters by its

commitment to construct a new 30,000-square foot emergency coordination center, located near Portland's 911 Center at 3732 S.E. 99th Avenue. Slated for completion later this year, the new center will serve as a multi-agency coordination hub supporting on-scene response to an emergency.

Some Portlanders are taking initiative to prepare. For many, their home is their biggest asset.

Not wanting to take any chances, southeast Portland resident David Moro just seismic retrofitted his 100-year-old house in hopes that it will remain on its foundation during such an earth-shifting event.

"I'll sleep better knowing that I tried," said Moro, a retired building maintenance supervisor who lives with his wife and one of four children.

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