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ACIC Says Northridge Earthquake's 20th Anniversary Reminds Californians to Financially Prepare

SACRAMENTO, CA – Twenty years ago today, the 6.9 magnitude Northridge Earthquake rocked Southern California causing more than \$23 billion in insured losses. The anniversary serves as an important reminder that California is earthquake country and residents should make financial and physical preparation part of a regular routine, says the Association of California Insurance Companies (ACIC).

"California has not experienced a major earthquake for 20 years and it's easy to become complacent," said Mark Sektnan, ACIC president. "Geologists say it is not a question of if a major quake will occur in this state, but when. A silent economic threat hangs over California because only 11 percent of homeowners have purchased earthquake insurance. Too many residents think an earthquake won't affect them or that the government will somehow provide a bail out. The 20-year anniversary of this devastating quake should be a wakeup call for Californians to look at their risk and consider buying earthquake insurance to protect their homes."

The Northridge earthquake remains the most expensive quake in U.S. history resulting in 57 deaths and 8,800 injuries. Northridge changed how insurers cover earthquakes in California and led to the creation of the California Earthquake Authority (CEA). Insurance companies are required to offer earthquake insurance to policyholders every two years, but coverage is always available. Private insurers and the CEA offer the coverage.

"Californians should not wait until it is too late. Talk to your agent or company about earthquake insurance," said Sektnan. "New products are available in the market place that give homeowners more options. A home is the largest asset most people have and it should be protected."

FEMA offers some tips on how to prepare for an Earthquake:

- To begin preparing, you should build an emergency kit and make a family communications plan.
- Store breakable items such as bottled foods, glass, and china in low, closed cabinets with latches.
- Fasten heavy items such as pictures and mirrors securely to walls and away from beds, couches and anywhere people sit.
- Brace overhead light fixtures and top heavy objects.
- Repair defective electrical wiring and leaky gas connections. These are potential fire risks. Get appropriate professional help. Do not work with gas or electrical lines yourself.
- Install flexible pipe fittings to avoid gas or water leaks. Flexible fittings are more resistant to breakage.
- Secure your water heater, refrigerator, furnace and gas appliances by strapping them to the wall studs and bolting to the floor. If recommended by your gas company, have an automatic gas shut-off valve installed that is triggered by strong vibrations.
- Repair any deep cracks in ceilings or foundations. Get expert advice if there are signs of structural defects.
- Be sure the residence is firmly anchored to its foundation.
- Store weed killers, pesticides, and flammable products securely in closed cabinets with latches on top and bottom.
- Locate safe spots in each room under a sturdy table or against an inside wall. Reinforce this information by moving to these places during each drill.
- Hold earthquake drills with your family members: Drop, cover and hold on.

The Association of California Insurance Companies (ACIC) is part of the Property Casualty Insurers Association of America (PCI). ACIC is PCI's California Voice representing 363 property casualty insurance companies doing business in California. These members write \$20.2 billion in premium in California insuring 36 percent of the property casualty insurance sold in the state. California members write 44 percent of personal auto insurance, 29 percent of homeowners insurance, 33 percent of commercial lines business insurance and 40 percent of private workers compensation insurance sold in California.

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