

Eleven Quakes Jolt Alaska Seismic Belt

COLLEGE — Eleven earthquakes of Richter magnitude four or greater jolted Alaska's seismic belt during September while overall activity continued the decline in frequency first during August, according to a monthly advisory issued by the University of Alaska's seismological observatory at the Geophysical Institute.

The strong shocks represent nearly a three-fold increase over August quakes of comparable magnitude.

Only 121 earthquakes were recorded and located last month in the active zone monitored by UA seismologists, which includes the Southcentral and Interior regions of the state. This represents a slight decrease from the 125 quakes which were recorded during August.

The report gave no explanation for the relative quiescence, other than noting that past records have established a normal pattern of 150 earthquakes per month with one of magnitude five or greater on the Richter scale.

The strongest earthquakes logged during September both registered 4.9 on the Richter scale.

The first shook Fairbanks on the afternoon of Sept. 1.

The second occurred a week later 50 miles south of Seward off the Kenai Peninsula.

Another quake jarred Fairbanks Sept. 16. Although it registered 4.5 on the observatory's instruments, many local residents claimed it felt stronger than the

4.9 shock logged at the first of the month.

The second Fairbanks tremor may have seemed more intense than the first, the report explained, because the 4.9 quake took place at an approximate depth of 20 miles — much deeper than normal—while the second occurred only eight miles beneath Fairbanks the depth usually associated with the Interior city's earthquakes.

September's strongest concentration of tremors again centered on the Badger Road area near Fairbanks.

The report regionalized the state's seismically active zone, breaking down the monitored region into five geographic areas, and reporting the number of earthquakes recorded in each during September.

They were: Interior, 20; Alaska Range, 32; Anchorage-Cook Inlet, 34; Kenai Peninsula-Prince William Sound, 13; and Kodiak Island region, 5.

The remainder of September's 121 tremors were isolated events, the report said, and could not be included in any of the five regional categories.

Hundreds of small tremors go unreported each month, the UA institute's report said, because many shocks occur too far from recording instruments to be plotted. A minimum of three recording stations are needed to accurately triangulate an earthquake epicenter.

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