

Earthquake could have a magnitude of 7.9

## **Scientists urge the population to be prepared for an earthquake**

**By Oliver Pérez**

A few days ago the *Observatorio Vulcanológico y Sismológico de Costa Rica (OVSICORI)* confirmed scientific expectations that an earthquake with a magnitude of 7.9 will affect the Nicoya Peninsula on an undefined date in the future. The warning was made by Marino Protti, the *OVSICORI*'s director.

Thanks to instruments that were donated by the Japanese government, researchers have been able to study the deformity in the plate that has such an important effect on the peninsula's seismicity as well as on its size, allowing researchers to determine the area's seismic potential.

Protti explained that the Cocos Plate is located beneath the Nicoya Peninsula and therefore, an earthquake must occur for this territory to readjust. According to scientific estimates, after the earthquake Nicoya could rise up to a meter and a half.

Protti also explained that stating that this seismic movement could take place in Nicoya is certainly not a prediction, since they are unable to tell exactly on which date and at what time an earthquake will occur.

Thereby, we must be prepared to react in the best possible way in case of an earthquake. For this reason the *Comisión Nacional de Emergencias (CNE)* has recommended that everyone applies the following instructions:

-Remove heavy objects that could fall from high places and secure all furniture so that it won't fall over during an earthquake.

-It's important to keep the following objects handy: a battery-operated radio, a flashlight, a first aid kit with basic medical supplies such as acetaminophen, blankets, canned goods, a can opener and bottled water (the food and water must be changed frequently).

What to do during the earthquake?

-Keep calm, stay in previously determined safe areas such as beneath a door frame, a table or a desk.

-Stay away from windows, mirrors and glass objects that could break. Do not lean against walls.

-If you are inside a vehicle calmly keep driving until you reach a safe place, away from bridges, in which you can park safely.

-In public and crowded places refrain from screaming, running or pushing others. Calmly walk out of the place if the exits are not too overcrowded, and if this is not possible, stay in your own seat and place your arms over your head while leaning forward towards your knees.

Once the earthquake is over, if you are trapped inside stay calm and try to make noises with any object that's available in order to attract attention from the outside. If you are able to, look for any wounded or trapped people. If possible, carry out a detailed inspection of the damages and, if these are severe, refrain from staying inside or making use of the premises.

In addition, do not attempt to light any matches, candles and open-flame or electric devices until you are certain there are no gas escapes or problems with the electric system.

Do not consume any food or drinks that have been near any broken glass, debris, dust or any other pollutants. It is also advisable that you turn on the radio to stay informed on the latest news.

Always pay attention and follow the instructions of the authorities and rescue personnel. Mario William Acosta, local coordinator of the *CNE*, mentioned that they have been in touch with the Samara, Garza and Nosara committees with the purpose of strengthening and preparing them.

For the moment, radio bases have been installed in Samara, Nosara, at the Nicoya fire station and at the *Hospital de la Anexion*.

Acosta added that in November they will be holding a workshop in which the town councils (*municipalidades*), as well as the area's private and public companies will participate.

"The idea is to raise awareness about the importance of being prepared. We will be providing them with a series of guidelines that must be followed in such a situation", explained the official.

Currently the *CNE* has a warehouse in Cañas, in which they keep a supply of chainsaws, mattresses, bottled water, water-storing tanks, camping tents, blankets, motorboats and canned goods, among other supplies.

They have also set up the warehouse located at the sports center (*polideportivo*) in Nicoya.