

Four Earthquakes – Two Noticeable – Struck Monday

by Lynda Lohr

Aug. 15, 2006 - Drop, cover and hold, advised V.I. Territorial Emergency Management Agency Director Howard Baker on Tuesday as he discussed what to do when an earthquake hits.

Monday saw four earthquakes in the area. Two of them got the attention of residents. A 5.2 magnitude hit the Virgin Islands at 9:09 a.m., with a magnitude 4.5 earthquake shaking residents at 9:30 p.m. The other two registered at magnitude 3.7 and magnitude 3.6.

All were located in the Sombrero fault zone near Anegada. The smaller two struck at 5:19 a.m. and 10:31 a.m. respectively. No damage was reported from any of the earthquakes.

Christa G. von Hillebrandt-Andrade, director of the Puerto Rico Seismic Network in Mayaguez, said Tuesday that there's no cause for alarm.

"What you've seen is very typical, and less than we've seen on other occasions," she said.

She said the Sombrero fault is very active, with the Seismic Network on occasion recording over 150 earthquakes in a two-day span.

Hillebrandt-Andrade said that when people feel several earthquakes in a short space of time, they get nervous. She said the Seismic Network gets calls all the time with people reporting earthquakes that didn't happen. She said that often, they've felt something like a big truck go by.

"They're more sensitive," she said.

Because the territory sits in an earthquake zone, it is vulnerable to larger earthquakes as was experienced in 1867 when an earthquake and subsequent tsunami caused extensive damage.

Should a big one hit, Baker urged residents to stay inside but to take shelter under a table or door frame.

"If you're driving, pull over, but stay in your vehicle," he said.

He said people in stadiums should stay put. And he said do not use elevators.