

The Northridge, CA, Earthquake 20 Years After: Facts, Figures and Perspectives

January 10, 2014
Northridge at 20



Damaged portion of the Golden State Freeway at Gavin Canyon, January 17, 1994.

Source: FEMA/Wikipedia

Affecting much of southern California, the Northridge, California, earthquake of January 17, 1994 was the costliest earthquake in U.S. history in terms of insured losses (both actual and adjusted for inflation). The event, which triggered the fastest ground acceleration rates (intensity of shaking) ever recorded up to that time, caused 57 fatalities, approximately 8,800 injuries, and more than \$20 billion dollars in property losses (2013 USD) to buildings and public infrastructure.

As 20 years have passed since the Northridge earthquake, numerous advances have changed how we deal with seismic activity in developed areas. Advances in civil and structural engineering, as well as emergency preparedness and rescue efforts have helped to mitigate the human toll of earthquakes. More effective communications, and widespread use of digital media and the Internet in particular, have fostered greater awareness of earthquake safety, and have changed how people share and consume information before, during and after catastrophes. Yet, in spite of these advances (or maybe because of them), fewer than 10 percent of California property and business owners today opt to purchase earthquake insurance coverage.

On the anniversary of the Northridge earthquake, the Insurance Information Institute offers resources, facts and statistics on earthquakes and insurance.

Top 10 Costliest World Earthquakes And Tsunamis By Insured Losses, 1980-2015 (1)

(\$ millions)

Rank	Date	Location
1	Mar. 11, 2011	Japan: Aomori, Chiba, Fukushima, Ibaraki, Iwate, Miyagi, Tohoku tsunami.
2	Feb. 22, 2011	New Zealand: Canterbury, Christchurch, Lyttelton
3	Jan. 17, 1994	U.S. (CA): Northridge, Los Angeles, San Fernando Valley
4	Feb. 27, 2010	Chile: Concepcion, Metropolitana, Rancagua, Talca, Temuco, Valparaiso. Includes tsunami.
5	Sep. 4, 2010	New Zealand: Canterbury, Christchurch, Avonside, Otago
6	Jan. 17, 1995	Japan: Hyogo, Kobe, Osaka, Kyoto
7	Jun. 13, 2011	New Zealand: Canterbury, Christchurch, Lyttelton
8	May 20 and May 29, 2012	Italy: Emilia-Romagna, San Felice del Panaro, Cavezzo, Ferrara. Series of earthquakes.
9	Dec. 26, 2004	Sri Lanka: Indonesia, Thailand, India, Bangladesh, Myanmar tsunami.
10	Oct. 17, 1989	U.S. (CA): Loma Prieta, Santa Cruz, San Francisco, Oakland

(1) As of March 2016. Ranked on insured losses when occurred.

(2) Based on property losses including, if applicable, agricultural, offshore, marine, aviation and National Flood Insurance Program losses in the United States and may differ from data shown elsewhere.

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- [White Paper: California Earthquake Authority](#) [4]

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Apps

- I.I.I. Apps and Software

The [I.I.I. Toolkit](#) [12] is a handy, free app suite that puts everything you need to plan, prepare, respond, and restore in the palm of your hand.

Outside Resources

- [IBHS: Earthquake](#) [13]
- [Northridge 20 Symposium](#) [14]
- [?Reaching New Heights? 20th Anniversary Northridge Earthquake Conference and Workshops, California State University, Northridge](#) [15]

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