



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

Catastrophes

January 10, 2014

IN THIS ARTICLE

Top 10 Costliest World Earthquakes And
Tsunamis By Insured Losses, 1980-2020 (1)

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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, 1980-2020 (1)

(US\$ millions)

			Losses	
				In
Rank	Date	Location	Overall	When occurred
1	Mar. 11, 2011	Japan: Aomori, Chiba, Fukushima, Ibaraki, Iwate, Miyagi, Tochigi, Tokyo, Yamagata. Includes tsunami.	\$210,000	\$40
2	Feb. 22, 2011	New Zealand: Canterbury, Christchurch, Lyttelton	24,000	16
3	Jan. 17, 1994	USA (CA): Northridge, Los Angeles, San Fernando Valley, Ventura, Orange	44,000	15
4	Feb. 27, 2010	Chile: Concepcion, Metropolitana, Rancagua, Talca, Temuco, Valparaiso. Includes tsunami.	30,000	8
5	Sep. 4, 2010	New Zealand: Canterbury, Christchurch, Avonside, Omihi, Timaru, Kaiapoi, Lyttelton	10,000	7
6	Apr. 14-16, 2016	Japan: Kumamoto, Aso, Chuo Ward, Mashiki, Minamiaso, Oita, Miyazaki, Fukuoka, Yamaguchi	32,000	6
7	Jan. 17, 1995	Japan: Hyogo, Kobe, Osaka, Kyoto	100,000	3
8	Nov. 13, 2016	New Zealand: Canterbury, Kaikoura, Waiau, Wellington, Marlborough, Picton	3,900	2
9	Jun. 13, 2011	New Zealand: Canterbury, Christchurch, Lyttelton	2,700	2
10	Sep. 19, 2017	Mexico: Puebla, Morelos, Greater Mexico City	6,000	2

(1) Data for property, casualty, and life insurance losses are based on data from the United States and may differ from data shown elsewhere.

Source: © 2021 Munich Re, Geo Risks Research; Wikipedia.

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Background Papers

- [Earthquakes: Risk and Insurance Issues](#)
- [Catastrophes: Insurance Issues](#)
- [White Paper: California Earthquake Authority](#)

Facts and Statistics

- [Earthquakes and Tsunamis](#)
- [Catastrophes: U.S.](#)

Video

- [Protecting Your Home from an Earthquake](#)

Articles

- [Preparing for an Earthquake](#)
- [In Case of an Earthquake](#)
- [Recovering from an Earthquake](#)
- [The San Francisco Earthquake of 1906: An Insurance Perspective](#)

Apps

- [I.I.I. Apps and Software](#)

The [I.I.I. Toolkit](#) 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](#)
- [Northridge 20 Symposium](#)
- [‘Reaching New Heights’ 20th Anniversary Northridge Earthquake Conference and Workshops, California State University, Northridge](#)

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