

Not My Fault: Get ready to be shaken at the Humboldt County Fair

Lori Dengler/For the Times-Standard

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The 2022 Humboldt County Fair opens on Thursday. The most unusual ride is not on the Midway. The Redwood Coast Tsunami Work Group (RCTWG) and the California Office of Emergency Services (OES) have teamed up to bring the State's Shake Trailer to the Fair. From Thursday August 18 through Sunday August 21, the trailer will be ready to shake you from 12 noon to 8 PM.

Dubbed the "Quake Cottage," the trailer simulates what you might experience in a moderate to strong California earthquake. The simulator is mounted on a trailer and can accommodate four people at a time. Each simulated quake lasts up to three minutes. The interior is furnished to resemble a small living room or den and gives you a safe preview of what a real earthquake might feel like.

The Humboldt county Fair has provided the RCTWG a venue for earthquake and tsunami preparedness displays since 1999. We've skipped the last two years due to COVID restrictions and this year are trying something different. The Humboldt county Fair Association was no longer able to allow us the space in Hindley Hall where we've had exhibits in the past. But this year the State Office of Emergency Services is offering us something that will be fun, informative, and get you talking about how to live earthquake and tsunami safe.

The shake trailer is part of California's MyShake outreach. MyShake is the State's earthquake early warning system. Unveiled in October 2017, MyShake detects earthquakes in the first few seconds after a fault starts to rupture. Fast algorithms are able to estimate the earthquake location and size in another few seconds and transmit this information via cell phones to people in the area likely to feel noticeable shaking. Many people are likely to get a few seconds heads up before the strongest seismic signals arrive, enough time to Drop, Cover, and Hold On. Just as important is the few moments it give you to mentally prepare for shaking.

Many of us on the North Coast had the chance to experience MyShake on December 20 of last year when a 6.2 earthquake rattled the Mendocino triple junction area near Petrolia. I was in the kitchen when my phone began to buzz and a voice announced EARTHQUAKE, EARTHQUAKE, DROP, COVER, AND HOLD ON. A few seconds later the ground did indeed begin to tremble. That few second heads up really made a difference for me. I could brace myself on the ground next to the cabinet (no table nearby so the next best thing is to get down next to an object that will deflect falling objects).

The OES shake trailer is intended to give you a taste of earthquake shaking and get you thinking about what you can do to make yourself and your loved ones safer before the next earthquake strikes. The MyShake App is only one part of the outreach message. You don't need to come to the fair to learn about MyShake. It comes preinstalled on Android phones and can be downloaded for free from your iPhone App store. One caveat – you must enable location services for it to work. Alerts are only sent to people likely to feel noticeable shaking and the system needs to know where you are to do that.

In addition to the simulator, the RCTWG will also have an earthquake/tsunami information booth with much of the information we used to have in the Hindley Hall exhibit. You will be able to sign up for Humboldt Alert, the County's notification system to let you know if a tsunami, flood, or wildfire is headed towards you and if you need to evacuate. You can also check out tsunami hazard zones for the County, get how-to's on making your home and workplace more resistant to shaking damage, and pick up a Living on Shaky Ground earthquake preparedness magazine. And as always, our knowledgeable volunteers will be on hand to answer your questions.

If you can't make the fair this year, please visit our virtual fair. We won't be able to shake you, but you can experience much of our Hindley Hall exhibits at <https://rctwg.humboldt.edu/virtual-fair>. I will be there to greet you (virtually). A simple click will take you to an interactive display of Humboldt County's current tsunami hazard maps and another click to real-time earthquake information. You can relax in our virtual tsunami theater and bring your children to the Kid's Corner and hear the heartwarming story of Kamome, the little boat that connected children in Japan and Crescent City. We've even got a link to Humboldt's own tsunami boat, the Tai Shou Maru that spent more than three years adrift in the ocean after the 2011 tsunami before beaching at Dry Lagoon.

I hope you will do more than just browse. Stop #4 has important preparedness trips including easy ways to sign up for emergency notification, the MyShake alert system, ShakeOut and Humboldt's emergency notification system. Download brochures and other materials for you to take home at Stop #9. You can even take a trip into the past with our archives of past RCTWG fair displays at #10.

Virtual isn't quite the same. I would still prefer to talk to all of you in person and experience the wonderful give and take of face-to-face interaction. But I think you will still find our virtual fair to be worth spending some time visiting. And you can still ask me questions – it just might take a little more time to get your virtual answer back.

The simulator will only be at the fair for the first four days, so please plan your visit accordingly. A big shout out to Andi Evans, Amanda Admire, and Todd Becker for all the heavy lifting to coordinate this year's exhibit.

Of course, our virtual fair is open all year – so please drop by.

Lori Dengler is an emeritus professor of geology at Cal Poly Humboldt and an expert in tsunami and earthquake hazards. The opinions expressed are hers and not the Times-Standard's. All Not My Fault columns are archived online at <https://kamome.humboldt.edu/resources> and may be reused for educational purposes. Leave a message at (707) 826-6019 or email rctwg@humboldt.edu for questions and comments about this column, or to request a free copy of the North Coast preparedness magazine "Living on Shaky Ground."