

Exhibit dates: March 17–July 15, 2007

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LIVING ON THE EDGE LIVING ON THE EDGE

Earthquakes, landslides, fires, floods – the unique geography of inland Southern California makes our region especially prone to natural disasters. In fact, it was prehistoric cataclysms created today's geography—but prehistorically, natural disasters affected only the land. Today we have a human factor to consider in natural disasters: we are living on the edge.

"Living on the Edge: natural disasters in San Bernardino County" is a special exhibit at the San Bernardino County Museum that will explore the science behind natural disasters and their relationships to the human population, historically, today, and in the future. The exhibit will run from March 17 through July 15 and is free with museum general admission.

The exhibit's focus will be on earthquakes, floods, and fire, with exciting detours into landslides and winds. Visitors will see evidence of mountain-building that results from uplift and strike/slip faulting on the San Andreas Fault system along the southern margin of the San Bernardino Mountains. We will revisit earthquakes, discuss the propensity for deadly debris flows after fire events and debris flows that are the result of the rocks themselves failing. Flooding will be put into the context of weather and the incredibly steep gradients of the streams that emerge from the mountains. Fires and their relationship to Santa Ana winds will also be explored.

Images from the museum's history archives will help put these events into human perspective, as will written reminiscences from people who have lived through them.

"We want to make the case that these events occur, again and again, and they

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impact the humans that happen to be in the way,” said Kathleen Springer, senior curator of geological sciences. “The inhabitants of this region aren’t going away any time soon. Rather, we will continue to encroach on the areas most prone to these events. It is probable that one or more of these events will impact all of us at some point.”

Among the natural disasters featured in the exhibit are the Landers and Hector Mine earthquakes; the 1957 fire, the 1980 Panorama Fire, and the 2003 Old Fire; the 1938 and 1969 floods and debris flows in Wrightwood in 1941; and damage related to Santa Ana winds and fires.

The exhibit will also include preparedness procedures and protocols.

“Floods, fire, winds, mud flows, and earthquakes are a fascinating part of our region’s natural history, recent, and long ago,” said Michele Nielsen, curator of history. “The human experience in these events is an important part of the story. Today, just as in the past, communities and individuals deal with forces in the natural world, and continue to live on the edge. It is a balancing act really—individuals weigh the risks against the many benefits of living in the region, and perhaps try to mitigate the potential for personal disaster through preparedness.”

The San Bernardino County Museum is at the California Street exit from Interstate 10 in Redlands. The museum is open Tuesdays through Sundays and holiday Mondays from 9 a.m. to 5 p.m. Admission is \$6 (adult), \$5 (student or senior), and \$4 (child aged 5 to 12). Children under five and Museum Association members are admitted free. Parking is free. For more information, visit www.sbcountymuseum.org.

The museum is accessible to persons with disabilities. If assistive listening devices or other auxiliary aids are needed in order to participate in museum exhibits or programs, requests should be made through Museum Visitor Services at least three business days prior to your visit. Visitor Services’ telephone number is 909-307-2669 ext. 229 or (TDD) 909-792-1462.

