

### Bill for quake-warning system goes to governor

David Perlman

Updated 8:23 pm, Friday, September 13, 2013

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Development and operation of an early-warning system that would swiftly alert Californians when a damaging earthquake ruptures the ground anywhere in the state received unanimous approval by the state Legislature on Thursday.

The bill by Sen. Alex Padilla, D-Pacoima (Los Angeles County), is expected to be signed by

Gov. Jerry Brown, legislative aides said.

Early versions of an earthquake early-warning system similar to one that is already operating in Japan have been under development and testing by scientists at UC Berkeley and the U.S. Geological Survey in Los Angeles for the past 15 years.

Padilla estimated a full-scale system would cost about \$80 million to build and his bill, SB135, directs the Office of Emergency Services to find the money.

Elements of a partial working system under development since 2002 have been financed by private and public grants of more than \$15 million, said Richard Allen, director of UC Berkeley's Seismological Laboratory.

"We're extremely delighted that the legislators are aware how important it will be to have a full-scale early-warning system operating in seismically active California," Allen said.

When a quake occurs, an array of seismometers and other sensors throughout the state would detect its ground-shaking strength and the arrival time of its first seismic waves.

It could give residents up to 60 seconds of advance warning before the first ground shaking.

In Southern California, a partial system under test worked successfully last March when sensors detected a 4.7-magnitude quake in the Riverside County desert and Los Angeles seismologists received the detailed warning 30 seconds later.

Padilla said he is hopeful the governor will sign the bill.

"It's hugely important because we know there's a 'next big one' on the way," he said. "We may not know when and where it will hit, but we'll know when it's coming.

"Every major earthquake that we've lived through comes with it billions of dollar of damage, untold numbers of injuries and too many fatalities.

"The good news is that the technology now exists that can give us a little heads-up that

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allows us to take cover, help loved ones, power down industrial equipment, slow down trains or bring them to a stop and minimize the damage."

In Japan's system, a recent major quake touched off alarm bells in buildings and sent out cell phone alerts. It gave time for trains and vehicles to stop, passengers to evacuate and schoolchildren enough time to obey their "duck and cover" instructions, Allen said.

Grants for development and testing a partial system have come from the [Gordon and Betty Moore Foundation](#), the U.S. Geological Survey and California's Office of Emergency Services, Allen said.

*David Perlman is The San Francisco Chronicle science editor. E-mail: [dperlman@sfgate.com](mailto:dperlman@sfgate.com)*

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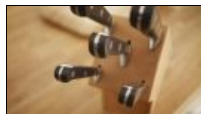
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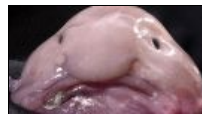
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