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Earthquake early warnings may be possible

BERKELEY, Calif., Nov. 10 (UPI) -- Scientists believe early earthquake warnings might be possible through an analysis of the frequencies of the initial seismic waves all quakes generate.

Researchers say the first seismic waves generated when an earthquake begins may allow them to predict how strong the full-scale quake will become, the San Francisco Chronicle reported Thursday.

In an article in the journal Nature, researchers Richard Allen of the University of California-Berkeley's Seismological Laboratory and his former graduate student, Erik Olson, say they've developed a computer-based formula that analyzes the first pulse of high-speed seismic waves generated by a developing earthquake.

The scientists say their computer formula can, within seconds, predict the size of the violent high-energy waves that will follow.

Such advance warning is enough time for utilities to shut down or isolate gas and electric services, for airports to halt takeoffs and landings, for emergency crews to spot potential trouble areas and for residents to seek shelter, the Chronicle reported.

Teams of scientists at the United States Geological Survey and at other earthquake research centers are evaluating the work.



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By MARTIN WALKER

UPI Editor

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By MARTIN SIEFF

UPI Senior News Analyst

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