

Six new monitoring stations to study state's earthquakes

By David Creamer

Nebraska: the land of Husker football, tremendous stretches of farm land, an occasional tornado and . . . earthquakes?

Absolutely. Since 1866, Nebraska has experienced at least 34 earthquakes, ranging from 1.5 to 3 on the Richter scale, with their epicenters in the state. An epicenter is an area on the earth's surface directly above the focus point where the earthquake's energy is released.

The federal Nuclear Regulatory Commission is interested in trying to determine the causes behind these earthquakes, and if possible, discover some way to prevent them from occurring.

Hence, the NRC is providing the University of Kansas with a three-year, \$203,000 grant to establish six earthquake-monitoring stations in Nebraska.

These sites are Beatrice, Wahoo, Johnson, Clay Center, Platte Center and Loup City.

Ray Burchett of the UNL Conservation and Survey Division said the reason KU received the grant over UNL is that

KU has three seismologists on its staff and UNL doesn't have any.

UNL is oriented more toward the geologic areas, and KU's interests are more toward seismic activity, Burchett said.

Another reason the grant was awarded to KU is because information can be relayed directly to Don Steeples of the Kansas Geological survey instead of first coming through UNL and then being mailed to KU as was done in the past, he said.

According to Steeples, the six Nebraska stations will be used to supplement the six already in existence in Kansas, and will allow him to study smaller quakes with improved accuracy.

Steeples also said that since this project has been going on for about six years, the stations will be set up in locations already found to be slightly active.

Monitoring stations will be scattered along the Humboldt Fault, which extends from the Omaha area all the way down to Oklahoma City. The six Nebraska sites are to be between Douglas and Richardson counties.

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