Little damage in county quake

By Steven Charm
Staff Writer
A moderate earthquake, measured at 4.6 on the Richter scale, rattled most of San Luis Obispo and Santa Barbara counties Wednesday night but caused no major damage, authorities reported.

Seismologists at Cal Poly said the quake, which hit at 8:36 p.m. was centered about 5 to 10 miles west of Point Sal at the southern end of the Hojogi Fault in the Pacific Ocean.

No major aftershocks were reported. Political aftershocks may come, however, as the Hojogi Fault runs within three miles of the nearly completed Diablo Canyon nuclear power plant.

Opponents of Pacific Gas & Electric Co.'s nuclear plant near Avila Beach have claimed the facility is not solid enough to withstand a major earthquake along the Hojogi. There were no reports of damage at the plant after Wednesday's quake, PG&E officials said today.

Residents of San Luis Obispo, Paso Robles, Cambria, Pismo Beach, Grover City and Morro Bay reported feeling a strong shake, police and fire officials said.

Donna Meredith of the California Institute of Technology Seismology Lab in Pasadena, said there was no connection between the moderate trembler and the recent series of major quakes that jolted the Mammoth Lakes region in the Sierra Nevada.

County residents reported windows shook, chandeliers swayed, and boxes fell from some living room shelves during the quake, which rocked the Central Coast from Santa Barbara to Gardnerville.

In Avila Beach, Cal Poly gymnastics coach Andy Proctor was recapping his team's reason during a women's sports banquet at the San Luis Bay Inn when the quake hit.

Marilyn McNeil, the women's basketball coach, then asked Proctor: "Would you talk at all our pre-game meetings next year?"

In Morro Bay, Dave Fales said several bookshelves in the department's office on Morro Bay Boulevard were knocked down, but no injuries were reported.

In rural Arroyo Grande, Jim Burton was walking home from baseball practice. He said he saw height start to sway in the Village area of the city.

"I knew right away it was an earthquake," the Arroyo Grande High School sophomore said.

Steve Hodges of Grover City saw his large where we were back, and forth, he said this morning. "I haven't felt one like that here in years," he said.

Other South County residents reported loud rumbling noises, dishes rattling and feelings of extreme swaying.

About 500 persons were attending a planning commission meeting at San Luis Obispo City Hall when the quake rattled the building. The discussion — on hillside subdivision — came to an abrupt halt and a few audience members left the meeting to stand under a doorway.

Moments later, City Clerk Joan H. Fitzpatrick who was working late in his office, interrupted the meeting to make doors to the council chambers were unlocked.

Fitzpatrick is the city's Civil Defense coordinator. He was in City Hall working on a countywide earthquake evacuation plan when the quake hit.

In the North County, residents were startled by the rolling sensation, but no major problems were reported.

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Associated Press

San Francisco Chronicle
Thursday, May 29, 1980

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Associated Press
Cover-up alleged on quake danger at Diablo nuclear plant

SAN LUIS OBISPO (AP) — Charging a $100 million suit was filed Wednesday against Pacific Gas & Electric Co. by the man who leased the property to PG&E.

Robert Marre's Superior Court suit alleges that the company defrauded him and damaged the value of his 8,000-acre ranch on the coast southwest of San Luis Obispo. "PG&E defrauded Marre, the Marre Ranch and Cattle Co. . . . because it promised Marre that it would conduct a complete geological survey of the area and that the nuclear plant would be constructed only if the Marre ranch site proved suitable," Marre attorneys Anthony Glassman and David Hinden said in Beverly Hills.

According to San Luis Obispo attorney Jim Duewe, representing PG&E, Marre and the utility agreed to the lease in 1966. In exchange for access to some 545 acres of land, PG&E agreed to guarantee loans for Marre and his business entities, with the amount Marre could borrow depending upon value of certain other land.

More tremors rattle fault

SAN LUIS OBISPO, Calif. (UPI) — Minor earthquakes continued to jolt the Central Coast, with an offshore tremor in the area of recently discovered fault network rattle a nuclear power plant.

Experts said the 4.6 Richter scale tremor was not related to a series of heavier quakes that shook Sierra Reservoir areas earlier in the week.

The quake Wednesday occurred only hours after a $100 million suit was filed against the utility that owns the still unused nuclear plant. The lawsuit charges that earthquake studies were not adequate.

The suit was filed by the Marre Ranch and Cattle Co., owners of the land that Pacific Gas & Electric Co. leases for the Diablo Canyon Nuclear Power Plant. A spokesman for Caltech's seismology lab said the quake was in the area of the Hosgri fault, which only last year was found to be connected to a network of faults leading to the San Andreas fault and thus capable of more severe damage than was earlier thought.

"We're not willing to say it was the Hosgri fault, but it was fairly close to it. It's definitely a possibility," the spokesman said.

Rob Leslie, a graduate student at University of California at Santa Cruz, last year found the Hosgri fault, situated 3.5 miles offshore from the $1.6 billion nuclear facility, was connected to the San Simeon fault and from there to the San Andreas fault.

Leslie said at the time a fault network of that length — about 250 miles — was capable of an earthquake with a magnitude of 8 on the Richter scale. His estimates was disputed by UCLA scientist Clarence Hall Jr. who said the maximum earthquake would be 7.5.

A note from EERI Member B. Rinal, Cal Poly University, San Luis Obispo:

Magnitude 4.6 (Physics Bldg Seismograph)

Location: 25 miles west of Santa Maria

11 mi north of Diablo Canyon. Felt well.

Atascadero: Only damage broken windows.
Arroyo Grande & Solyang: Power outages.

San Luis Obispo County: Hazard Coordinator reported "no damage to speak of."