

■ Southern California Nuclear Medicine Departments Picking Up Pieces After Quake

Collapsed apartment buildings. Water lines spewing their contents skyward. An intricate highway system cut to shreds by the sheer power of nature. These images of the earthquake that shook southern California in the early morning hours of Monday, January 17 are certainly hard to forget.

Also unforgettable are the experiences of members of southern California's nuclear medicine community who were also affected by the quake which registered 6.6 on the Richter scale. Some departments were rendered unusable by the disaster while others emerged virtually unscathed. After almost five months, life has pretty much returned to normal, or at least a close facsimile.

The Nuclear Medicine Department at Cedars-Sinai Hospital in Los Angeles was fortunate. "We were lucky because the nuclear medicine section is in the basement," said Jim Bietendorf, CNMT, Manager of the Nuclear Medicine Department. "Since we were underground, we were well insulated from the shaking. We only had one filing cabinet fall over. Our imaging department on the eighth floor, however, sustained pretty major damage."

On the upper floor housing Cedars' imaging department, computed tomography and ultrasound equipment were rattled quite extensively because they were not bolted down, and water damage was severe due to ruptured pipes in the ceiling.

Bietendorf cites California's strict seismic laws as a contributing factor to the lack of damage in Cedars' nuclear medicine department, as all the equipment was bolted into concrete. Two of the facility's main buildings were rendered uninhabitable and were condemned, a parking lot was demolished and research and office staff had to be relocated.

Whereas Cedars' nuclear medicine department was up and running later that same day, it took almost a week before the nuclear medicine section at Northridge Hospital in Northridge, CA was functional. Northridge had the misfortune of being at the quake's epicenter. According to Steve Kolbauer, CNMT, Coordinator of Nuclear Medicine at Northridge, the nuclear medicine department had around \$10,000 in damage. "We had a lot of water damage but the actual quake did its fair share of destruction as well," he said. "A Siemens Orbiter was knocked out of alignment and two computer monitors were destroyed. Damage was extensive throughout the entire hospital."

Kolbauer says that had it not been for the portable cameras, Northridge's nuclear medicine department would not have functioned during the aftermath. "Power was out for about three or four days after the quake and none of the cameras were on the emergency circuits," he said. "The portables weathered the disaster extremely well."

After Northridge, Granada Hills Community Hospital in Granada Hills, CA was the closest hospital to the quake's epicenter. Unlike its neighbor, the nuclear medicine section at Granada Hills had mostly cosmetic damage and was set up as a trauma center treating earthquake victims from throughout the region. "I came in two hours later and was glad to see none of my equipment had fallen over!" said nuclear medicine technologist Susan Ballard, CNMT. "At first I felt like crying because when I arrived it looked like the department was destroyed, but on closer inspection I discovered that it looked much worse than it really was." Aside from the camera getting moved around the room, lead shielding falling over and files scattered everywhere, the nuclear medicine department only needed to be cleaned up, Ballard said.

Since the power was out, Ballard was not able to assess the damage on her equipment, but after a week with-

out power she was glad to find that her camera was still in good condition. "Nothing of value was damaged," she said. "There were a few cracks in the wall and things scattered about, but once I took inventory I was relieved that nothing had been lost."

Until power in her department was restored, Ballard worked in the x-ray department. However, Ballard notes, business was never slow because of the overflow from Holy Cross Hospital, as well as Northridge. "I think I only did two lung scans on a portable camera," she said. "But most procedures were x-rays to determine the extent of injuries." Once the nuclear medicine department was back up and running, Ballard says that the number of scans she performed has been the same, if not more, than before the quake.

Syncor Corporation, located in Van Nuys, supplies most of the nuclear medicine departments in southern California with their radiopharmaceuticals. The damage at Syncor was relatively severe because walls buckled and ceilings collapsed, according to Blaine Ikeda, Syncor's pharmacy manager and radiation safety officer.

"The mayhem looked much worse than it really was as far as it affected our day-to-day operations," Ikeda said. "It was pretty much business as usual after the first day when we had no power." In order to keep the other nuclear medicine departments in the southern California area operating at full speed, Syncor transferred some of its operations to nearby Torrance and USC until their own facilities were functional again, which took about 10 days.

Since Syncor's first delivery run is at four in the morning—only a half hour before the earthquake struck—Ikeda says that some of the delivery people were stalled when the highways and roads became impassable but, Ikeda added, all of Syncor's delivery people completed their rounds.

According to Judith Rose, MD, director of nuclear medicine at Valley

Presbyterian Hospital in Van Nuys, the oddest thing about the earthquake was the fact that in her department there was a sharp decrease in business. "Usually we have a pretty steady flow of patients," she said. "But the funny thing about earthquakes is that people feel like they have better things to do than go to the doctor."

Dr. Rose commented that all hospitals have specific plans for disasters, but these plans go awry when the hospital is part of the disaster. "We all know what to do in the event of a plane crash when we might get a hundred or so people in at once," she said. "But when the actual facility is involved in the disaster, the rules change a little bit." Dr. Rose said that one of the biggest obstacles in coordinating the disaster routine was the lack of communication.

Although most of the destruction at Valley Presbyterian was cosmetic, there was still more than \$3 million in damage, most of which is structural and must be corrected in order for the building to meet safety standards. "The elevators and the hot water tanks were broken and there were cracks in the wall that you could put your hand through," Dr. Rose said. "But since we're a nonprofit hospital, FEMA will pay 90% of our repair costs and we're hoping the state will pay for the rest."

Valley Presbyterian's was the first nuclear medicine department in the valley to be up and running after the earthquake. "Patients who needed to be imaged were coming from all over the valley to our department," Dr. Rose said, citing as an example patients who were being treated for thyroid cancer.

For the most part, normalcy has resumed in southern California. The nuclear medicine professionals have busied themselves with getting their departments in order, overseeing minor repairs and just generally picking up the pieces, hoping that these pieces won't be shaken down again any time soon.

Mark A. Newman
Executive Editor, JNMT

■ 41st SNM Annual Meeting Underway in Orlando

The Society of Nuclear Medicine's 41st Annual Meeting will take place in the heart of the Sunshine State in Orlando, Florida, among a plethora of entertainment attractions that will no doubt tempt all attendees to make a trip to the Magic Kingdom.

Technologist Section activities promise to be a very eventful part of the annual meeting and the theme throughout will be Total Quality Management/Continuous Quality Improvement. This year there will be over 70 scientific papers for oral and poster presentations out of almost 90 submissions, not including the 13 student papers that were accepted.

Technologist Section Highlights

"The Scientific and Teaching Committee has compiled a program that we feel will provide an outstanding educational experience for technologists this year," says Jackie Bridges, CNMT, Technologist Program Chair. "We're offering a special categorical program called Marketing Strategies for Nuclear Medicine in the Changing Environment which will provide those attending with the necessary tools to promote a service organization."

Bridges added that this all-day session will be offered on Monday.

With over 70 hours of clinical updates, the role of the nuclear medicine technologist will be explored in the Technologist Program, especially as that role changes and gains importance in the ever-changing health care arena. These updates will provide technologists at all levels with the latest information in basic, intermediate and advanced skills and will broaden and enhance their overall contribution to nuclear medicine.

The continuing education sessions have been organized around organ systems, including tracts on cardiology, oncology, neurology, orthopedics and abdominal imaging. In addition, sessions on SPECT imaging and pediatrics will be offered. A session entitled Alterations in Biodistribution of Radiopharmaceuticals, which describes the pharmaceuticals used in conjunction with radiopharmaceuticals and provides information on drug interactions with radiopharmaceuticals and biohazardous waste management, will also be offered.

"Just like last year, CME and VOICE credits will be offered for all continuing education programs," Bridges said. "The technologist tract will follow the traditional 90-minute topic format."

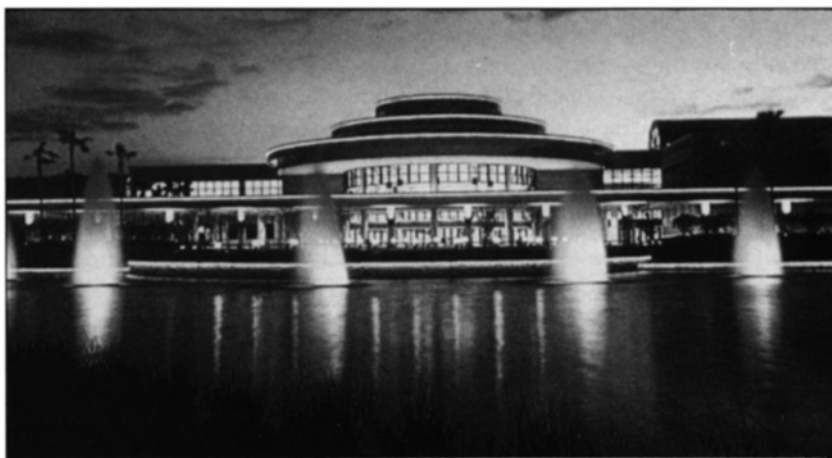


FIGURE 1. The Orange County Convention Center in Orlando, Florida, site of the 41st Annual Meeting of the Society of Nuclear Medicine.

The Cardiovascular Technologist Investigator's Competition will be held on Sunday beginning at 10 a.m. The six best cardiac papers will be presented and scored by the Technologist Awards Committee. The final results will be announced at the Cardiovascular Council Membership Meeting. The awards provided are in the amounts of \$500, \$300 and \$200. Additional awards will be presented by the Awards Committee at the Technologist Business Meeting.

Other Annual Meeting Features

Annual Meeting attendees will also be treated to a special speaker from the federal government. Department of Energy Secretary Hazel O'Leary will speak at the business meeting on Sunday, June 5 about her department's research programs.

The Energy Department has been one of nuclear medicine's longtime proponents, serving a pivotal role in such issues as molybdenum supply, the National Biomedical Tracer Facility and the issue of informed consent. Sec. O'Leary's talk promises to be of great interest to clinicians and technologists alike.

One of the most popular attractions at the Society's Annual Meetings is the SNM Publications Booth. This year, the booth will be set up at the entrance of the Orange County Convention Center, making it easily accessible as attendees register or enter the exhibit area.

Along with a booth displaying the Society's many books, there will also be booths set up for *The Journal of Nuclear Medicine* and *The Journal of Nuclear Medicine Technology* manned by the journals' editors to answer questions regarding articles or procedures and guidelines for future submissions.

This year, however, the SNM Publications Booth will be combined into one big unit in order to have a representative from all of SNM's publishing

arms in the same area. This consolidation should prove to be more convenient for attendees' easy access to the publication of their choice. In the past, individual booths were set up for books, *JNM* and *JNMT* in separate areas of the convention hall.

"By combining the SNM Publications' booths, members or visitors will not have to traverse the length of the exhibit hall in order to find their particular publication of interest," says Eleanore Tapscott, Senior Managing Editor of SNM Publications. "This arrangement makes it easier to serve members and journal readers by allowing them to discuss any issue dealing with past, present or future articles or answer their questions regarding future Society or Tech Section Publications."

The Publications Booth will also be stocked with copies of *Radiation Protection of the Patient in Nuclear Medicine*, the latest publication from the International Commission on Radiological Protection. This free pamphlet will not be displayed, so attendees should request it from one of the editors staffing the booth.

The exhibition hall of the convention center will be the home of all the leading manufacturers of nuclear medicine products and services. Over 100 vendors will be present to explain and demonstrate the latest breakthroughs in their most technologically advanced equipment. For a more in-depth understanding of some of the products displayed, several companies will also conduct User Meetings.

Peter Walsh, Director of Marketing for SNM, promises that attendees will be in for a real treat in Orlando. "In addition to our traditional exhibitors unveiling new products, we will be hosting several first-time exhibitors," he said. "Every technologist will profit by spending a day touring the exhibit hall."

Over 8,000 professionals in nuclear medicine are expected to attend this year's Annual Meeting.

■ News Briefs

SNM Sponsoring PR Star Contest

The Society of Nuclear Medicine and Syncor Pharmacy Services are co-sponsoring the 1994 Nuclear Medicine Week "PR Star" contest.

The purpose of the PR Star contest is to recognize and encourage the efforts of nuclear medicine professionals in educating the public, promoting and marketing nuclear medicine.

Entries will be judged by a committee of Syncor representatives and Nuclear Medicine Week subcommittee members. Submitted entries will be available for review at the Nuclear Medicine Week Booth at the 1995 SNM meeting. Submissions must be postmarked by January 31, 1995 to be eligible.

The first place winner will receive a \$1,000 award for their department, a \$350 personal honorarium and airfare to the 42nd Annual SNM Meeting in Minneapolis next June where they will be recognized for their accomplishments. The second place winner will receive \$500 for their department and a \$250 personal honorarium. The third place winner will receive \$250 for their department and a \$100 personal honorarium.

Entrants must be SNM members with their primary job responsibility in a nuclear medicine department, clinic or section. Information packets about the contest have already been mailed to most nuclear medicine departments and will be available at the Annual Meeting in Orlando. If you don't receive the packet by October, or for more information, contact Denise McKay, SNM, 136 Madison Ave., New York, NY 10016-6760, (212) 889-0717.

October 2-8, 1994 has been designated as the official Nuclear Medicine Week, but individual departments may celebrate whenever they choose, as long as it is before December 31, 1994.

World Federation of Nuclear Medicine and Biology to Meet in Australia

The Sixth World Congress of the World Federation of Nuclear Medicine and Biology will meet in October in Sydney, Australia.

This meeting will provide an opportunity for nuclear medicine professionals from around the world to share their knowledge, as well as collectively review the various advances in the field that have occurred over the past few years.

The Congress has been organized to appeal to as many people as possible, encompassing a wide range of interests. The scientific program has been designed around definite subjects providing an opportunity to concentrate on one subject while also moving to any other session of interest. Presentations in cardiology, neurology, psychiatry, oncology, PET, SPECT, physics and radiopharmacy will run for the duration of the Congress, accompanied by smaller sessions on a

variety of topics. A state-of-the-art review by eminent specialists will be given on each topic, with a special review for technologists.

A series of symposia topics will be covered as recommended by the track chairmen and International Advisory Council where controversial or topical subjects will be presented and discussed by a panel of experts. Formal teaching sessions have also been organized to cover an introduction to filters and their application in SPECT; SPECT quality control for single-headed and multiheaded systems; understanding monoclonal antibodies; and understanding neuro-receptors.

In recognition of the contributions of the late Professor Masahiro Iio to nuclear medicine and the Federation, an award will be given in his name. The \$5000 (U.S.) award will be given to the author of the paper judged to be the best submitted by an investigator under 40 years of age. The Iio award and the winning paper will be presented at the closing ceremony.

Additional awards totalling \$3000 (Australian) will be presented by Radpharm Scientific for the best entries in case study presentations prepared by technologists.

Call for Site Visitors

The JRCNMT is looking for site visitors from all regions of the country. Site visitors participate in the accreditation review process by virtue of their experience, training and orientation.

If interested, send your CV, a letter explaining why you want to be a site visitor and some assurance that your employer will allow you time for site visits to:

**Academic Affairs Committee
Society of Nuclear Medicine
136 Madison Avenue
New York, NY 10016-6760**

A Site Visitor Workshop will be held on Saturday, June 4 from 8:30-11:00 a.m. at the Annual Meeting in Orlando. Physicians and technologists are invited.

**TECHNOLOGIST
JOB
NETWORK**

The **Mideastern Chapter** of the SNM-TS will provide a referral network for technologists seeking employment and for hospitals in need of technologists. Interested individuals should call Robert Steinman at **(302) 421-4365**. Please leave your name, address, phone number, and a brief description of your request.

The **New England Chapter** of the SNM-TS provides a "Job Hotline," a national toll-free hotline for nuclear medicine. The hotline is designed to provide a quick link for technologists seeking jobs and for hospitals seeking technologists. Institutions seeking technologists should call the hotline number, leave the name of the institution, title of the job opening, and name and number of the contact person. Data are then stored for three months in a database for anyone who calls the hotline seeking employment. Technologists seeking employment should call the hotline number, specify states which are of interest, specify type of job desired, and leave a name and address. A listing will be sent out in 48 hours; all inquiries are kept confidential. If an opening has not been filled within three months, the institution should call again to have it relisted. The institution should also call if an opening has been filled so that it can be deleted from the database. The hotline numbers are **1-800-562-6387 (1-800-JOB-NETS)** or **1-990-4212** in Maine. Questions or comments should be directed to: Tom Starno, Manager, Job Hotline, SNM-TS New England Chapter, at **(207) 945-7186**.

Editor's Note: SNM Chapters are invited to submit job referral service listings for publication. Send pertinent information, such as name, a brief description of the service, telephone numbers, addresses if desired, and name and number of contact person for inquiries to *JNMT*, Society of Nuclear Medicine, 136 Madison Avenue, New York, NY 10016-6760.