

Experts disagree about earthquake risk

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Three independent analyses of the New Madrid seismic zone centered in Missouri indicates the fault line indicates little or no movement.

The study by three universities involved analyses of global positioning system stations monitored for a decade.

The results contradict a study by scientists at the University of Memphis that made headlines in June when it stated two GPS stations on opposite sides of the Reelfoot fault -- one of several in the New Madrid seismic area -- had moved closer to each other at a rate that rivaled faults in California, the St. Louis Post-Dispatch reported.

One critic of that study, geophysicist Eric Calais of Purdue University, said the results were likely a statistical anomaly possibly stemming from an instrumental error.

"It's not fair in a scientific paper to scare people with things like that," he said.

Michael Ellis, one of the University of Memphis authors, told the newspaper his group was only trying to show the motions are consistent with the level of seismic hazard that geologists have already established for New Madrid.

The debate among the groups appears in the current issue of the journal *Nature*.

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