

Istanbul warned of potential earthquake

January 5 2006

Researchers say a major earthquake is likely to strike Istanbul over the next 30 years, and are recommending immediate action to protect the city.

A team of engineers and scientists warned Turkish Prime Minister Recep Tayyip Erdogan in November that thousands of people could be killed and as many as 50,000 buildings destroyed.

The group said an earthquake with a magnitude of 6.8 to 7.5 is likely to strike the city within the next three decades.

"Based on recent seismic activity and the history of the North Anatolian fault south of Istanbul, there is definitely a very high probability that the city will be hit with a major earthquake over the next three decades," said Purdue University engineering professor Mete Sozen. "Istanbul is the economic and cultural center of Turkey, and there must be an organized effort to protect the city and its people."

Upgrading buildings, bridges and other elements of the city's infrastructure would cost billions of dollars, said Sozen. He said the Turkish government has begun preliminary steps to earmark funds for the project.

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