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OCTOBER 3, 2015

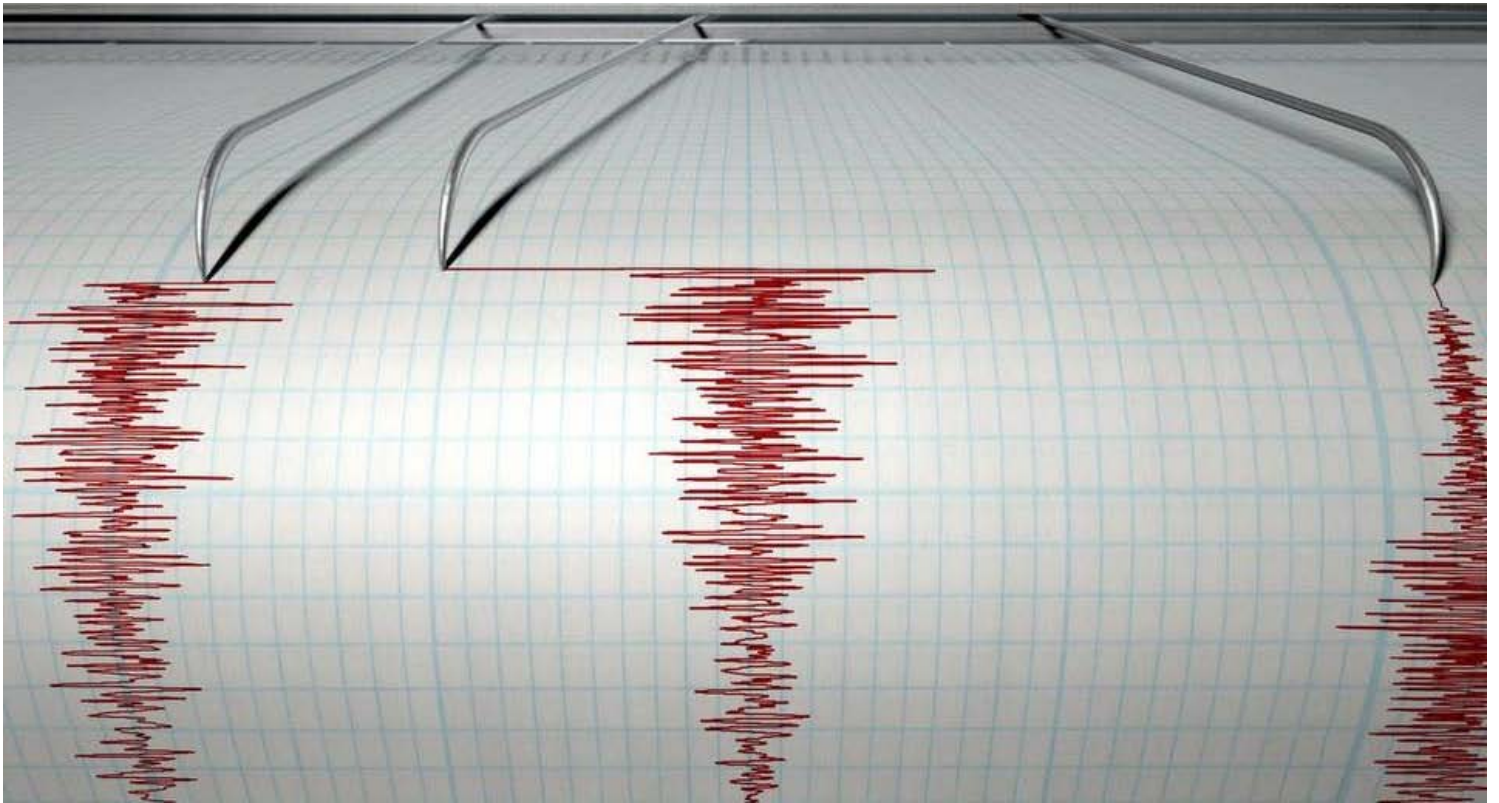
Scientists working diligently on earthquake monitor system

HIGHLIGHTS

State officials working diligently on designing on monitor network

Lawmakers approved \$4.5 million for the equipment and study

Researchers don't necessarily link earthquakes in the Fort Worth area with drilling



Researchers from the University of Texas at Austin's Bureau of Economic Geology are completing bid documents for the equipment and interviewing scientists to oversee the \$4.5 million comprehensive earthquake study approved by Texas lawmakers earlier this year. ThinkStock - Getty Images/iStockphoto

By Max B. Baker

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Scientists expect to have a network of seismographs up and running sometime next year to help determine what's shaking under the surface of North Texas.

Researchers from the [University of Texas at Austin's Bureau of Economic Geology](#) have been working on bid documents for buying the equipment as they interview scientists to oversee the \$4.5 million comprehensive earthquake study approved by Texas lawmakers this year.

The complexity of writing specifications for the so called TexNet system — 22 permanent seismograph stations and 36 portable stations — is being worked on diligently every day, said Michael Young, associate director of the economic geology bureau.

"We need to do it right. We don't want to rush into it," Young

said. "This is not Wal-Mart equipment we can buy off the shelf."

Lawmakers approved the money for the study after a rash of earthquakes plagued North Texas residents in recent years, the largest one a 4.0-magnitude temblor near Venus and Mansfield in May.



Remi Oldham, a student at Southern Methodist University, places a seismograph near Willow Park as part of its earlier studies. Hillsman Stuart Jackson - Southern Methodist University

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Mike Young, associate director of the Bureau of Economic Geology

While some contend that a rash of earthquakes northwest of Fort Worth were linked to oil and gas drilling processes, and a peer-reviewed scientific study by [Southern Methodist University](#) scientists suggested a link, the state's geologist has said there is no "substantial proof" they are connected. State examiners recently cleared two wastewater injection wells near Reno and Azle of triggering earthquakes in that area from November 2013 to January 2014.

Scientists also don't necessarily believe earthquakes in Irving and West Dallas are being caused by drilling. There were 97 earthquakes from January 2013 to October 2015 in an area stretching from Reno to Dallas Love Field and from Alliance Airport to Interstate 30, the [U.S. Geological Survey](#) reported. The earthquakes were 1.6 to 3.6 in magnitude.

As of Friday, the latest tremor recorded by the geological survey in that area occurred Thursday.

97

The number of earthquakes in an area of North Texas from 2013 to 2015

In the supplemental budget appropriation approved by lawmakers in June, \$2.47 million was dedicated to be spent on the necessary equipment and \$2 million to study the results.

The system will be operated by the geology bureau, the oldest and second-largest organized research unit at the University of Texas at Austin. In addition to functioning as the State Geological Survey of Texas, the bureau conducts research focusing on the intersection of energy, the environment and the economy, its website says.

The bureau is looking to hire a senior research scientist, a project manager and a research engineering

associate for the earthquake study, according to job postings on its website.

Young said officials have talked to scientists from SMU and the U.S. geological agency about the new system, which would augment the 16 seismograph stations that are in place. He said they've also talked to people across the country who have conducted similar studies.

"It is a complicated system so we want people who have done this before," Young said. "We have high expectations. ... We have no illusions and there is a lot of focus on this.

"We are moving as quickly as we can to purchase the equipment and to hire the talent to run the network," he said.

Not all of the seismographs or portable stations will necessarily be placed in North Texas since researchers want to keep some of them available to study events in other areas, Young said.


As part of the earthquake study, Gov. Greg Abbott is supposed to appoint a nine-member technical advisory committee, with at least two members representing higher education institutions, and two from the energy industry.

Young said that officials have made recommendations to the governor about who should serve on the committee but that the process of appointing members continues. He said the bureau would want to consult that group before placing the monitors.

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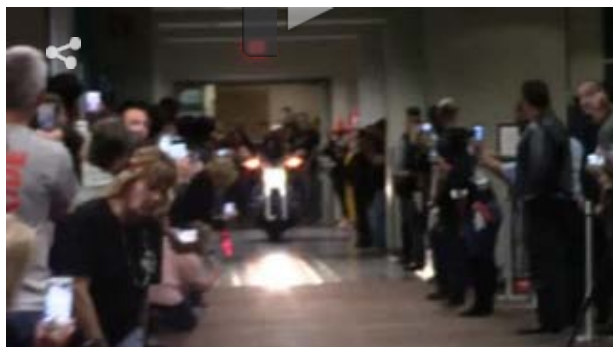


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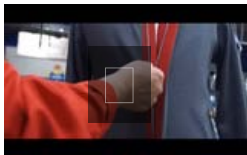
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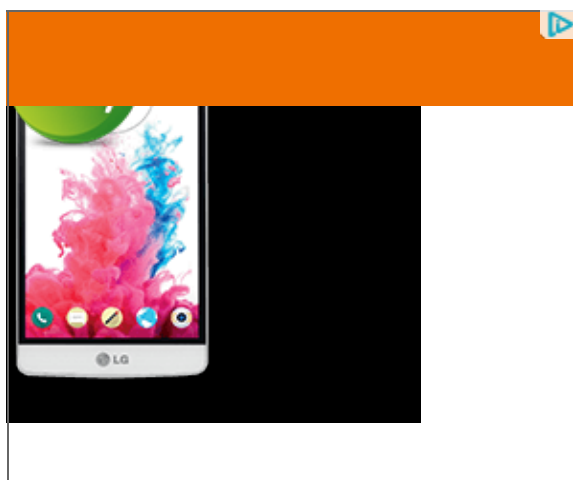
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