



BUSINESS JANUARY 12, 2016 4:47 PM

State will begin to install earthquake monitors in the spring

HIGHLIGHTS

Lawmakers approved funds for the TexNet system in the last legislative session

Twenty-two permanent and 36 portable seismographs will be placed across Texas

System will augment 16 seismographs already in place across the state



A speaker at a public meeting in Azle, in January 2014, discussing area earthquakes.

A speaker at a public meeting in Azle, in January 2014, discussing area earthquakes. RON T. ENNIS - Star-Telegram

By Max B. Baker
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AUSTIN — Researchers hope to begin locating a network of seismographs by March to help determine what's causing the earth to move across the state, including under North Texas.

Scott Tinker, director of the Texas Bureau of Economic Geology, on Tuesday said a vendor for providing the equipment has been selected and a new project director, Alex Savvaids, a researcher who did similar work for the Greek government, will start in February.

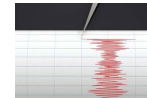
"It takes time to get great people and great equipment and to put together a (system) that is reliable," Tinker said at a University of Texas workshop for journalists.

Placing the 22 permanent seismograph stations and 36 portable stations that make up what is called the TexNet system will occur throughout the year, Tinker said.

The network, along with seismographs already operating in the state, will go a long way in helping scientists understand "what is triggering these events," he said.

"There is a suite of possibilities," Tinker said.

Lawmakers approved \$4.5 million for a comprehensive earthquake study last year 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.



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OF THE \$4.5 MILLION IN STATE FUNDING, \$2.47 MILLION IS DEDICATED TO BUY EQUIPMENT AND \$2 MILLION TO STUDY THE RESULTS.

Of the \$4.5 million, \$2.47 million is dedicated to buy 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.

The system will augment 16 seismograph stations that are already in place. Not all of the seismographs or portable stations will necessarily be placed in North Texas since researchers want to keep some available to study events in other areas.

While some contend that a rash of earthquakes in 2013 and 2014 northwest of Fort Worth was linked to oil and gas drilling processes, and a peer-reviewed scientific study by Southern Methodist University scientists suggested a link, state examiners subsequently cleared two wastewater injection wells near Reno and Azle last year.

Craig Pearson, the geologist hired by the Texas Railroad Commission to help study the issue, also has been reluctant to link oil and gas drilling processes to the earthquakes.

Cliff Frohlich, associate director and senior research scientist who works at the University of Texas' Jackson School of Geosciences, scoffed at that blanket dismissal.

He agreed that hydraulic fracturing does not cause earthquakes, and that there are 10,000 wastewater injection wells where no seismic activity has been recorded. But Frohlich said he has done peer-reviewed articles showing that sometimes the two are linked.

"Read my papers," Frohlich said. "Craig Pearson should know better."

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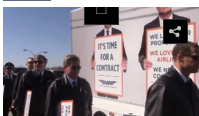


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