

ROCK AND ROLL !

Did you feel it? Did the earth move for you?

The Rock & Roll we are discussing here is not that dangerous music your parents warned you about in the 50's and 60's. Instead the issue is that natural kind of rocking and rolling, an earthquake.

Just to set the background, there was a magnitude 5.8 earthquake at 1:51 PM on Tuesday 8/23/2011 in central Virginia. Cathy and I were in Marriottsville and the earth moved for us at 1:52 PM. We missed the P-Wave but caught about 8 seconds of the S-Wave as it rolled under the lower range house classroom at the Associated Gun Clubs of Baltimore facility.

We were sitting there eating a lunch sandwich, waiting for some guests to arrive for their very first lesson in pistol shooting. Suddenly the table started a small slide left and right - north and south from the way it was oriented. Cathy asked, "did you do that?" I replied, "nope" and we both said "it's an earthquake".

A new experience had happened, a sudden event of potential hazard had begun and we reacted instinctively to it. Fortunately it was relatively mild and ended just a few seconds after we realized what had occurred, but we were still not sure. We left the room looking for any further signs of the event, any damage or other witnesses. Out on the rifle line several folks confirmed the event with one shooter complaining that it messed up his last shot. We did a quick walk through the building but found nothing amiss and only other folks who also felt it. From our point of view an earthquake had been confirmed, but there was no immediate damage or hazard.

Now we had information to be reported so we called a friend who could use and act on it. When the phone was answered he asked, "did you feel it?" So much for reporting an event, he already knew. It had shaken him over 40 miles away to our south with a bit more force by his description. We both had more information, it was a big event and it occurred to the south of us (it could have been north or south based on our observed ground motion). He already had the preliminary magnitude pegged at 5.8 from his sources but it was too early to calculate the epicenter or depth, but he was now looking south.

Based on this we knew that an event had occurred but it posed no hazard at our location and most likely caused no damage at our home location, so we had nothing to react to. We went into stand-down mode for this event and went on with our pistol class.

Beside being just an interesting earthquake story, what does this tell us?

We must all be ready at any time to; Observe, Analyze and React. Whatever the event; robbery, rape or any natural or man-caused mayhem, be ready to observe its EARLY WARNING SIGNS if any - at least observe the early events, analyze what is happening and might happen in the immediate future and then React to the event.

Stay in Condition Green, aware of your surroundings and that no hazard is present. When the ground starts to move you jump to Condition Yellow to analyze and react into Condition Red if needed. Just four days after this we will have the opportunity to react to an east coast hurricane. How did you do? Think about the future events that may affect you, any possible events. Rehearse it in your mind and plan on what you should do.