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# 1989 SAN FRANCISCO EARTHQUAKE



On October 17, 1989, a magnitude 6.9 earthquake hit the San Francisco Bay Area, killing 67 people and causing more than \$5 billion in damages. Despite the fact that the disaster was one of the most powerful and destructive quakes ever to hit a populated area of the United States, the death toll was relatively small. The disaster is known as both as the San Francisco-Oakland earthquake and the Loma Prieta earthquake because it was centered near Loma Prieta Peak in the Santa Cruz Mountains.

On October 17, the Bay Area was buzzing about baseball. The Oakland Athletics and [San Francisco Giants](#), both local teams, had reached the World Series. The third game of the series was scheduled to begin at 5:30 p.m. at San Francisco's Candlestick Park. Just prior to the game, at 5:04 p.m., with live cameras on the field, a magnitude 6.9 quake rocked the San Francisco Bay region. The quake was centered near Loma Prieta Peak (approximately 60 miles south of San Francisco) in the Santa Cruz Mountains. Though the stadium withstood the shaking, other parts of the Bay Area were not as fortunate. Sixty-seven people perished as a result of the quake, which lasted around 15 seconds, while more than 3,000 others were injured.

San Francisco's Marina district suffered extensive damage. Built on an area where there was no underlying bedrock, the liquefaction of the ground resulted in the collapse of a number of structures. Additionally, gas mains and pipes burst, sparking fires. A 1.25-mile segment of the two-level Cypress Street Viaduct along the Nimitz Freeway (Interstate 880), just south of the San Francisco-Oakland Bay Bridge, collapsed during the quake, resulting in 42 fatalities when the upper level of the road crashed onto the cars on the lower level. One person was killed when a portion of the upper deck of the Bay Bridge—which had been scheduled for a retrofitting the following week—collapsed onto the lower level.

Another hard-hit area was Watsonville, located several miles from the quake's epicenter. More than 30 percent of Watsonville's downtown and 1 in 8 houses were destroyed. Total damages from the earthquake were estimated at more than \$5 billion. In the quake's aftermath, San Francisco and other communities enacted strict regulations requiring unreinforced masonry buildings to be retrofitted.