

Man-made Earthquake?

A strong earthquake that rocked Denver April 10 may have been an after effect of unwitting geological lubrication by the nearby Rocky Mountain Arsenal.

For several years, the Arsenal disposed of toxic wastes from the manufacture of chemical warfare agents by pumping them into underground rock formations through deep wells.

This, seismologists think, lubricated layers in the formations, making it easier for them to slip under geological stress. More than 1,000 small earthquakes hit in the area between 1962 and 1966 (SN: 4/8).

The April 10 quake, which registered 4.6 on the Richter scale, was apparently centered almost directly under the Arsenal in Commerce City, a suburb five miles northeast of Denver.

The Arsenal stopped its underground disposal practices just over a year ago in response to Congressional pressure; the incidence of small quakes has fallen off since.

Prior to 1962, according to a spokesman for the National Earthquake Information Center in Washington, D.C., the Denver area had practically no strong quakes. Since then, it has had several, of which the April 10 quake was the strongest.

Smallpox Scare

Smallpox is on the increase in India and can be considered epidemic in Bombay, the Communicable Disease Center of the Public Health Service reports. Three cases have been introduced into Europe by returning tourists, one of whom was a German dermatologist.

The Morbidity and Mortality Report states that a total of 15 passengers known to have been on Air India flight 107 subsequently entered the United States and proceeded to destinations in Maryland, Texas, Wisconsin, Virginia and Puerto Rico. Three others traveled to Canada and Venezuela after intransit stopovers at the John F. Kennedy International Airport in New York.

Names and addresses of persons bound for each state were provided to the state epidemiologist, who immediately arranged with local health officers to locate the individuals and start surveillance. Pertinent health agencies in other countries also were notified.

By April 8 the danger was considered over, 16 days after the last exposure to smallpox.



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