

Metchosin earthquake house rattles public



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Standing inside the aftermath of a home shook up by a large earthquake may be all it takes for people to get prepared.

The Metchosin Fire Department built a temporary house on the municipal grounds for a Metchosin Day demonstration last month. Now, with the annual event over, fire Chief Stephanie Dunlop is getting calls from various agencies seeking access to the earthquake house for educational purposes.

"The feedback I've gotten back has been huge," Dunlop said.

Charlene Humphries is among those impressed with the tour. During her visit, a woman in front of her kept pausing and stopping, slowing down the foot traffic. It turned out the woman was in a large earthquake when she was young.

"The woman was taken aback and said the fire department had done a remarkable job. The (simulation) was so close to what had happened to her house," said Humphries, who has already earthquake-proofed her home.

Humphries works at Northern Saving Credit Union in Victoria and would like to have all of her co-workers see the house to prompt them to earthquake proof their homes.

Images in the house are hard to forget, such as stepping over broken eggs and other food strewn around the house due to an unsecured refrigerator seal.

A microwave and computer shook out of place and dishes, books and picture frames thrown on the floor.

Even larger, more dangerous items left in ruins included a hot water heater spraying water, a wood stove chimney disconnected from the fire and a large book shelf falling off the wall.

Dunlop would like to help inform more people about the importance of being prepared, but the earthquake house is not moveable.

"It's a temporary structure," Dunlop said.

The house was built for about \$2,000, volunteer hours and donated items.

For ideal teaching situations, Dunlop thinks the best option would be to build a new earthquake house on a trailer that could be mobile and tour the region. The project would cost about \$6,000.

"I'd love to have a company sponsor this," Dunlop said.

Already the fire department has been contacted by the insurance companies, mortgage lenders, Western Communities Fire and Life Safety Expo and Capital Regional Emergency Awareness Network all who would to incorporate the earthquake house into safety training programs.

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