

Earthquake

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nothing, but nobody was hurt. We're all safe," said Al McNeil, whose home in Granada Hills was destroyed by fire.

Sirens wailed as smoke from building and gas main fires drifted across the valley, 20 miles northwest of downtown Los Angeles. Firefighters raced to rescue people believed to be trapped in the rubble of collapsed buildings.

Officers patrolled streets in the early morning darkness to guard against looting as police helicopters aimed their spotlights on shattered storefronts below.

Residents unsettled by continuing aftershocks huddled on sidewalks, holding candles, and packed their belongings into cars. Many drove aimlessly on darkened streets and freeways.

The quake struck at 4:31 a.m. and was centered in Northridge in the San Fernando Valley. It measured a preliminary 6.6 on the Richter scale, said Kate Hutton, a

seismologist at the California Institute of Technology.

The jolts shook buildings in San Diego, 125 miles south, and in Las Vegas, about 275 miles to the northeast. Brief power outages caused by the quake were reported as far north as British Columbia and western Wyoming.

Gov. Pete Wilson and Mayor Richard Riordan declared emergencies, and President Clinton dispatched Federal Emergency Management Agency chief James Lee Witt to California to supervise relief efforts.

"We intend to do everything we possibly can to help the people of Los Angeles and Southern California to deal with the earthquake and its aftermath," Clinton said in Washington, D.C.


The city Department of Water and Power urged residents to boil drinking water contaminated by broken mains. At midday, at least 625,000 customers were without power in Central and Southern California.

California National Guard troops were sent in, and the Office of Emergency Ser-

vices sent about 300 search-and-rescue teams equipped with fiber-optic sensors and other gear to detect structural flaws and find possible victims.


A 75-foot-high overpass connecting two highways in suburban Sylmar collapsed, killing a Los Angeles police motorcycle officer, said city fire department spokesman Jim Wells.

At least 14 people were killed when an apartment building collapsed in Northridge, and firefighters searched for any other victims.



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