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## Nepal Fatalities Will Climb: Could reach substantially more than predicted 10,000 & Lessons for U.S.?

The tragedy in Nepal after the 7.8 Richter scale earthquake that struck on Saturday is passing a crucial window. In general, **72 hours is the limit** to rescue quake victims trapped under rubble before fatality rates climb dramatically. At that point dehydration and injury complications are overwhelming.

In a very mountainous and poor country, like Nepal, rescue efforts are complicated by (a) lack of infrastructure and accessibility (many roads totally impassable) in many badly hit remote regions of the country; (b) severe lack of search and rescue equipment and personnel; and, (c) limited health care response capacity. In addition, Nepal has many brick and mortar buildings highly susceptible to collapse with any large earthquake, poor building code enforcement and large numbers of vulnerable people including children and older citizens.

U.S., while in sharp contrast to Nepal in terms of resources and capacity, has substantial unmet needs in terms of preparedness for large scale quakes on West Coast and in the middle of the country around the New Madrid seismic zone. This latter could devastate cities like Memphis, TN. Many buildings in this and surrounding cities and towns have never been retrofitted to improve earthquake resiliency. Even Nepal's tragedy, literally on the other side of the world, should be a wake-up call and reminder to more developed countries like the U.S. Earthquakes are potential "no warning" megadisasters. Major investments in building resiliency and preparation are required, but, so far, getting ready for the "big one" is moving slowly, leaving many high-risk areas in peril.