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EARTH: Earthquake? Blame it on the Rain

Alexandria, VA – The U.S. Geological Survey’s website states it in no uncertain terms: “There is no such thing as ‘earthquake weather.’” Yet, from at least the time of Aristotle, some people have professed links between atmospheric conditions and seismic shaking. For the most part, these hypotheses have not held up under scientific scrutiny and earthquake researchers have set them aside as intriguing but unfounded ideas. However, in the last decade new efforts to identify effects of weather-related, or in some cases climate-related, processes on seismicity have drawn new interest.

Researchers are beginning to take a closer look at the Main Himalayan Thrust in northern India and Nepal, inland regions of Taiwan and seismically active semi-tropical regions like Haiti for evidence of weather-induced seismicity. These groups postulate that tremendous excesses of rainwater falling over short amounts of time may alter the stresses acting on faults, potentially triggering earthquakes to occur sooner than they otherwise would. How will this research affect earthquake preparedness in the future? Read the full story online at <http://www.earthmagazine.org/article/blame-it-rain-proposed-links-between-severe-storms-and-earthquakes>.

Make sure to check out this story and more in the November issue of EARTH Magazine. Pluto takes its revenge; a new catalyst shows promise for methane oxidation; and geoscientists reveal their own “Earth telescope” all in this month’s issue.

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