

Preface

Earthquake - The most terrifying natural disaster known to mankind

Earthquakes can be violent and strike without warning yet, but since old times, societies have tried to mitigate earthquake hazards through the research of the best solutions of the problems posed by destructive earthquakes.

In the last twenty years special attention is paid to the assessment of earthquake hazards, the nature and the characteristics of strong ground motions, the behaviour of building structures during earthquakes, the earthquake-resistant design of structures and the earthquake preparedness. The performance of the life lines (water and sewage systems, gas, electricity, fuel distributions and communications systems) during earthquakes is raising difficulties when designing an adequate methodology for the mitigation of this kind of disasters.

Relevant information about the occurrence and generation of destructive earthquakes has been considered very important, not only because it provides real data, but also because it reports the behaviour of the social-economic structures as well as the decision-makers reactions.

The 1st November 1755 Lisbon earthquake was probably the largest seismic disaster first time studied with a scientific approach.

The collected data, the numerous reports and designs to rebuilt, were detailed studied, carefully analysed and object of decisions at the highest level (Prime Minister). This Lisbon 1755 event seems to represent a valuable contribution for any kind of studies about management of urban areas, including urban safety and welfare, reflecting the local seismic culture and the response of the authorities in such a case.

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