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## WHAT IF? FEAR OF QUAKE GIVES N.Y. THE SHAKES

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New Yorkers are in for a shock — it *could* happen here.

If it does, the disaster could make the San Francisco tragedy look like a cake walk, experts say. "I hate to think what would happen if we had a major earthquake here. The city is absolutely unprepared for it," quake expert Dr. Charles Mer-

guerian told The Post yesterday.

That possibility is not so remote, according to Merguerian, a geology professor at Hofstra University in Hempstead, L.I.

The city is being "squeezed in a vise" between major faults to the east and west, he cautioned.

"Whether that stress goes in small tremors or in one big earthquake is hard to say," he said.

City officials are trying to prepare, persuaded to take action after the Armenian earthquake. They're drafting a plan coordinating 15 agencies to deal with

multiple fires, water shortages, emergency shelter, gas line explosions and hospital mobilization.

But there's no plan to deal with collapsed bridges.

So far, the only key portion of the plan in place is a two-story command post on the eighth floor of police headquarters in lower Manhattan — a building plagued by structural problems.

Capt. Eugene Guerin, executive officer of the city's Office of Emergency Management, said yesterday that the city's buildings commissioner gave him his personal assurance that the building could withstand an earthquake.

"We have a lot of emergency . . . equipment, and for better or worse, this is our command post," he said.

Buildings Commissioner Charles Smith said structures here already are "designed in such a way that we feel they would resist a significant tremor."

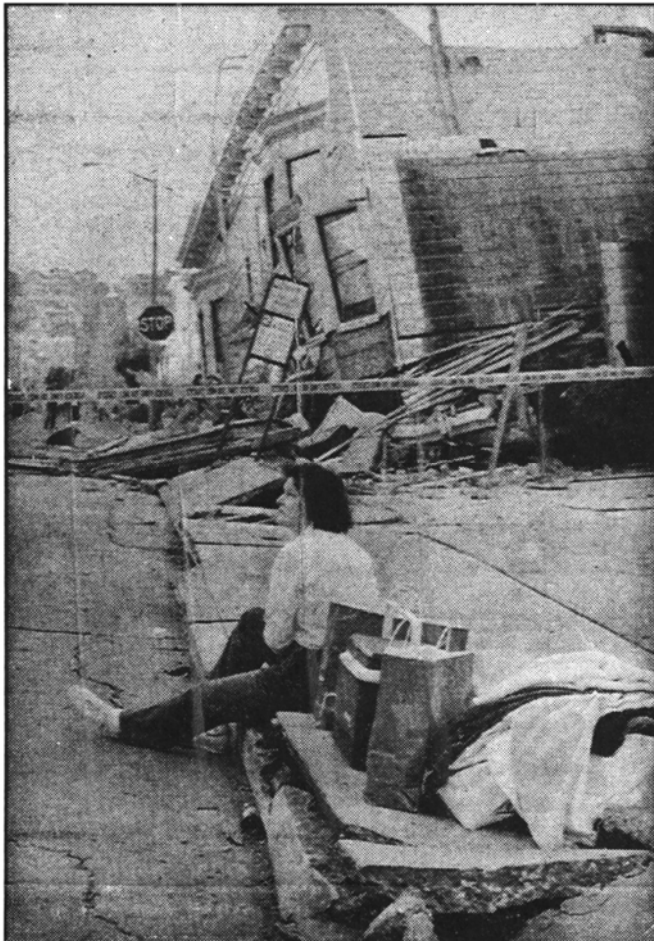
Still, he plans to propose building codes making future structures more earthquake resistant.

Dr. T.T. Soong of the National Center for Earthquake Engineering Research at the State University of New York in Buffalo, which studied city buildings said:

"It's obvious a large percentage of the city's structures could not withstand a quake. If an earthquake the size of San Francisco's happened here, it would be a much, much bigger disaster."

Three faults cross the city — 125th Street through the East River, Inwood in upper Manhattan and into The Bronx and the third farther north in The Bronx.

After studying subway and water tunnel construction two years ago, Merguerian discovered new faults crossing the others, creating an ominous gridwork of fissures.



Associated Press

**HOMELESS:** A woman whose home was destroyed by the quake sits on the sidewalk with the few items she's managed to salvage.