



Partners in Prevention

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Mark Benthien, Southern California Earthquake Center

California native Mark Benthien knew what he wanted to do with his life from a young age, and he never looked back.

He earned a degree in Geophysics from the University of California Los Angeles in 1995, and a Master of Public Policy degree from the University of Southern California in 2003. Since 2001, he has served as Director for Communication, Education, and Outreach for the [Southern California Earthquake Center](#) (SCEC) at the University of Southern California.

"I was interested in science as well as community service and when I was 14, so I decided to focus on earthquake science with the goal of helping people be safer in future earthquakes," he said.

At first, Benthien wanted to learn how to predict temblors, but in college he realized that goal may never be reached. He then shifted his focus to communicating earthquake science and preparedness information to support decisions that improve safety and resiliency.

In his role at SCEC, Mark serves as executive director of the [Earthquake Country Alliance](#), a California public-private-grassroots partnership. He also serves as global coordinator of the wildly successful [Great ShakeOut](#) Earthquake Drills. Participants in the annual event include businesses, households, government agencies, neighborhoods, nonprofits, organizations, and schools. All take time each year to practice the key protective action, "Drop, Cover, and Hold On."

Most drills take place the third Thursday of October, and the effort is growing each year, with more than 54 million people from 70 countries registered to participate in 2016. Growth in participation includes reaching all at risk, including those with access and functional needs. "We are working on expanding our resources, so everyone can participate in ShakeOut drills," he said.

In addition to serving as a thought leader and change agent for the earthquake preparedness message, Mark is a strong advocate for resilient building and rebuilding as well.

SCEC and Earthquake Country Alliance partners collaborate with FEMA, FLASH and many other NEHRP supported organizations to drive awareness and support for resiliency initiatives. He has worked with FLASH since 2010 when he served as a content reviewer for FLASH Cards and other earthquake resources. "Since then we have partnered on the development of the *QuakeSmart Community Resilience Program*, ShakeOut promotions, the *2016 National Earthquake Conference*, and more," he said.

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In 2012, Mark was recognized by the White House as a “Champion of Change” for his role in managing the California ShakeOut, and for supporting the many other states and countries who now participate.

When asked for words of wisdom, Benthien refers to the Earthquake Country Alliance motto. “We’re All in this Together.”