



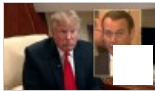
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'Supermoon' Has No Connection to Japanese Earthquake

Moon Affects Tides, Not Earthquakes

BY BEN FORER AND KI MAE HEUSSNER

March 11, 2011



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Although it's more than a week away, some people say the devastating 8.9-magnitude earthquake that hit Japan today could be caused by the supermoon.

During the supermoon, expected to occur March 19, the moon won't just be at its closest approach to Earth in its elliptical orbit, enthusiasts say, it will be closer to Earth than it has been in 18 years.

Scientists, including Paul Walker, senior meteorologist for AccuWeather Inc., said there is no connection between the moon's position and Japan's earthquake.

"I don't think you can attribute it to being a full moon, which is still eight days away," Walker said. "These moon events can cause the tides to run higher than normal, but I've not heard of any correlation between them and extreme weather events."

NASA astronomer Dave Williams agreed.

"At the time of the earthquake in Japan, the moon was actually closer to its furthest point in orbit from Earth than it was to its March 19 closest point, so the

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gravitational effect of the moon was, in fact, less than average at that time," Williams wrote in an e-mail to ABCNews.com. "It was basically a normal day on Earth as far as the lunar gravity and tidal forces were concerned. Unless the Earth somehow 'knew' the supermoon was coming, I can't imagine any scientific connection between the two events."

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Where Did 'Supermoon' Come From?

AccuWeather blogger Mark Paquette said he thinks the phrase "supermoon" originated on the website of astrologer Richard Nolle and spread to astronomers online.

In a blog post earlier this month, Paquette said a new or full moon at 90 percent or more of its closest perigee qualifies as a "supermoon." The moon's orbit around us is slightly elliptical, and when the moon is at the near point, it is known as a lunar perigee.

Next weekend's full moon won't just be a supermoon but an extreme supermoon, he said, because the moon will be almost

precisely at its closest distance to Earth.

According to "new age" forecasts, he said, the supermoon brings strong earthquakes, storms or unusual climate patterns.



"There were supermoons in 1955, 1974, 1992 and 2005," Paquette wrote. "These years had their share of extreme weather and other natural events. Is the Super Moon and these natural occurrences a coincidence?"

"Some would say yes; some would say no," he added. "I'm not here to pick sides and say I'm a believer or non-believer in subjects like this, but as a scientist I know enough to ask questions and try to find answers."

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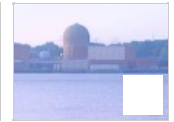
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Member Comments (51)

I used to have a lot of respect for ABC News. It is clear that, at least on this web site, stupidity reigns. Some of this stupidity seems to be spilling over onto Diane Sawyer, though, as during last night's World News she referred to the disaster as a storm - TWICE! Get some sleep, Diane. And when you get back, perhaps you can find someone to knock some sense into the twenty-somethings that are running your web site.

fuego007 Mar-15

DANPARIS100: "Increased gravitational pull on ocean water increases the weight on underwater land mass and plates. Thus increased compression and decompression every 12 hours of underwater plates leads to land movements at or near full moons and so-called 'Supermoons'. Also close approach of other planetary objects like 'MARS' ----- The moment you claimed Mars is relevant is the moment you invalidated anything you've said as coming from an astrologer. There is absolutely no way Mars' gravity would have any significant effect on tectonic activity.

almightygozar Mar-14

One thing is clear. Blaming the earthquake on the "supermoon" is akin to ancient humans blaming a volcanic eruption on not having thrown a beautiful virgin maiden into a lava pit to appease the fire god. That only shows that in our facebook, cellphone, google age know as much, as little rather, as the ancients did about the dynamics of our heaving earth and the fiery bowels within.. On the other hand, i do not criticize those that would investigate the possible influences of tidal forces by the sun and moon on the earth crust, whether they can indeed serve as a trigger for seismic events. (A serious study into the statistical correlation between supermoons and seismic events throughout history would be sensible [of course backtracking the earth's seismic data with the necessary degree of accuracy for analysis from the era before modern accurate instrumentations is quite a tall order]) Anyways... Mere sarcasm and outright dismissal without any scientific investigation by so called 'experts' of the scientific mainstream does not help and only exposes our civilization's ignorance in the matter. Of course, by truthfully confessing "we dont understand a damn thing when it comes to earthquakes, just like any other human being", would only undermine their prestige as 'scientists'.

dakirsch501 Mar-14

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