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Subject: Re: Regaining Momentum

Posted by [artisticrainey](#) on Tue, 24 Jul 2012 00:38:59 GMT

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Everyone said it would happen. A massive earthquake in the heartland of the United States, caused by the movement of the New Madrid fault line, would damage and destroy cities that thought themselves beyond an earthquake's reach. It was supposed to happen by 2040, but that deadline passed without its appearance. The seismologists became more and more sure of a devastating earthquake, and as a result, the states of Illinois, Tennessee, Arkansas, Kentucky and Missouri put measures in place to ensure that new construction would be as quake-proof as modern technology would allow.

Fast forward nearly 30 years more, and the quake-proofing programs are widespread. Every architect and builder has been thoroughly indoctrinated with the need for such precautions. Even a sprawling, four-story shopping mall has the technology built into it... or does it?

xxxx

Wednesday, October 10, 2068, 9:50 a.m., local time, outside of Covington TN (Thursday, October 11, 3:30 a.m., Tracy Island)

Jim D'Angelo frowned as he compared the plans on his data pad to what he saw in front of him. Taking out a laser measure, he did a quick comparison of the distance between two of the supports that were taking shape and what his data pad said. The results deepened the frown on his face, and he strode over to the builder's trailer, tucking the pad under his arm, and the measure back in his pocket.

The interior of the trailer was slightly cooler than the day outside; October in Tennessee was usually temperate, and sometimes even warm. The leaves had finally decided to change color, and since the building site was surrounded by young forest, Jim had found ample opportunity to appreciate them. But what drew his attention now were the daily reports by the construction boss, Terry Nicks.

What he read in the computer made his eyes widen in disbelief. He printed it out, and went in search of Terry.

He found the construction supervisor conferring with a couple of the workers. "Terry!" he called, waving.

Terry, a big dark-skinned man in denim shirt and work pants, finished his conversation with the workers and turned to face Jim. "What's up, Jim?" he asked.

"Look at these figures!" Jim was trying to keep his consternation and outrage from his tone as he showed Terry what he'd printed out. "These pilings aren't set deep enough, and the support columns are too close together. What's going on here?"

Terry bristled. "The pilings are just fine, and the columns are within limits," he replied sharply. "We used this same configuration at the mall in Raleigh, and the inspectors didn't say a word."

"That wasn't in an earthquake zone, or on top of an old landfill, was it?" Jim shot back. "The pilings need to be deeper because of the ground we're working on. And what about the MR dampeners? They're supposed to be ready and operational now."

The crew boss scowled. "They'll be online when they're needed."

"But the seismologists predict..."

"I know what they predict. 'Eighty-five percent chance of a major earthquake within the next six months'. That was four months ago and we haven't had it yet." Terry huffed out a breath. "If it'll make you feel better, I'll have them online tomorrow afternoon. But it'll take us all day to wire them up. That'll put us behind schedule."

"And what about the pilings, and the columns?" Jim was barely containing his anger. "You going to do something about those, too?"

"There's nothing we can do about them at this point, D'Angelo; you know that. The building will be fine." Terry took on a cajoling, soothing tone. "Just let me do what I do best. We'll bring this project in on time, on budget, and satisfy the brass, too."

Jim shook his head. "I'm not working with you again, Nicks. Nor is my firm. Believe me, these deviations are going on record!" With that last shot, he stalked off toward the trailer.

"Pencil pusher," Terry snorted, shaking his head. He turned back to yell at the men who were positioning a prefabricated slab on a set of cross beams. "Be careful with that!"

Posted by Tikatu on December 1, 2007

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