



The work of the Earthquake Unit at the University of the West Indies, Mona, in monitoring the country's seismic activities, has been enhanced with a donation of US\$30,000 by the Office of Disaster Preparedness and Emergency Management (ODPEM).

The money, which will be used to facilitate the installation of four motion seismographs (accelerometers), was handed over on Monday (January 14), during a press conference to launch Earthquake Awareness Week 2013, at the ODPEM headquarters in Kingston.

Designed to measure high seismic activity, the motion seismographs will be located on buildings to help monitor the response of the building and other structures during major earthquakes, as well as provide ground motion information that can be used in site characterisation in major development projects. The devices will also provide pertinent information that can help to improve the characterisation of seismic vulnerability across the island.

According to an ODPEM press release, the installation of the device will complement the organisation's mandate, along with its partners, towards achieving a high standard of readiness to high magnitude earthquakes.

Director General of ODPEM, Ronald Jackson, said the organisation's assistance "will reap maximum benefit as these devices will build a network for improved data on the site specific behaviour of buildings, further informing the revision of the building codes."

"That information will also go into the process of the contingency plans that the first responders develop from time-to-time to fully understand what is likely to happen in specific areas – what buildings will stand up, what buildings will fail, how many persons we will have to plan for in terms of casualties," he said.

Head of the Unit, Dr. Lyndon Brown, said the equipment is important as “when earthquakes happen, we need instruments that can measure the whole event so that in the long term, we can have improved data for future research.”

“These are instruments that can measure the whole range of an earthquake - the very small to the very large earthquake - and these are very important for measuring the activity of faults, measuring the intensity and magnitude of earthquakes and help us in terms of understanding as much as we can, earthquakes and earthquake activity in Jamaica,” he said.

Dr. Brown thanked ODPEM for supporting “this movement towards improvement in terms of our earthquake resistance, helping us to understand more about earthquakes, helping us to improve our research, so that this can help future development in the country.”

Earthquake Awareness Week is being observed from January 20 to 26 under the theme: ‘7.8 Wi ready...Yuh Ready?’.