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WEST VALLEY STUDENTS STUDY EARTHQUAKES IN THEIR BACKYARD

West Valley, New York -- Seismologists at the Lamont Doherty Earth Observatory (LDEO) of Columbia University have joined with the West Valley Central School (WVCS) District in West Valley, New York, and the New York State Energy Research and Development Authority (NYSERDA) to install a modern, broadband, three-component seismographic station at the West Valley Central School (WVCS) to improve earthquake detection capability in Western New York.

The high-quality digital seismic data collected by the new station is being used by seismologists and other earth scientists to detect, locate and characterize earthquakes in Western New York, the Northeastern United States and Southern Ontario. The data and monitoring software will also be used by WVCS students as a hands-on component of their Earth Science curriculum.

LDEO operates a modern earthquake-monitoring network with seismographic stations deployed throughout the northeast. Installation of the new West Valley station, which was connected to the network in August, was led by Dr. Won-Young Kim, a senior research scientist at LDEO. NYSERDA provided \$25,000 to LDEO to purchase the earthquake monitoring equipment for the WVCS station.

The integration of the seismic station with the science program at the West Valley Central School is being done as part of a collaborative, state and national program designed to increase awareness and understanding of the Earth for students, teachers and the public in the surrounding community.

“West Valley Central School is excited and honored to host the seismographic station through cooperation with LDEO and NYSERDA. Since September, our school has been monitoring earthquake data with computer equipment in our Earth Science class,” said Hillary Bowen, Superintendent of the district. “In January, the students will learn the process of determining the location and depth of earthquakes, and as more data is analyzed, understand the implications of earthquake-related events,” added Ms. Bowen.

According to NYSERDA’s scientists at West Valley, the data collected by the station will be

used to more accurately locate the small earthquakes that occur in this area, and to measure the local effects of larger earthquakes that occur outside of our area, like the June 23, 2010 earthquake in Ottawa that was felt throughout Western New York.

“This initiative is an important addition to the monitoring programs we conduct as part of NYSERDA’s work to safely manage the Western New York Nuclear Service Center,” said Lee Gordon, a geologist with NYSERDA’s West Valley Site Management Program.

A media event showcasing the seismic monitoring station will be held at the West Valley Central School, 5359 School Street, West Valley, New York, at 10:00 am on October 15, 2010. Officials from NYSERDA, LDEO and the WVCS will provide a short briefing and tour of the station, a classroom demonstration and answer any questions.

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