

Prof. Max Wyss, PhD

Max Wyss grew up in Zuerich, Switzerland, where he earned a Diploma in geophysics at the Federal Institute of Technology. He obtained his MS and PhD in seismology at the California Institute of Technology, Pasadena in 1970. Currently he is a senior researcher at the non-profit foundation International Centre for Earth Simulation, Geneva, Switzerland.



After working as research scientist at the Scripps Institute of Oceanography in La Jolla, California and at the Lamont-Doherty Observatory, Palisades, New York, he joined the Cooperative Institute for Research in Environmental Sciences at the University of Colorado, Boulder. There he worked from 1973 through 1991, advancing from Assistant to Full Professor. In 1991, he joined the Geophysical Institute of the University of Alaska, Fairbanks occupying the endowed chair of the Wadati Professor of Seismology. From 1993 to 1995, he was State Seismologist of Alaska. From 2001 to 2014 Wyss served as the Director of the World Agency of Planetary Monitoring and Earthquake Risk Reduction in Geneva. In 2015 he joined the International Center for Earth Simulation in Geneva as a scientific expert. He is Professor Emeritus of the University of Alaska.

Max Wyss' 200+ scientific publications deal with: Seismic hazard and risk, earthquake losses, population exposed, composition of the built environment, earthquake source parameters, crustal deformation, stress/strain tensors, pore pressure related to earthquakes, seismicity patterns, earthquake prediction, seismotectonics, historic seismicity, seismicity related to volcanoes. He invented the earthquake closet for protection and discovered that 90% of earthquake fatalities are from rural areas, a fact important for mitigation.

The awards he received included the Humboldt Senior Scientist award and a number of awards for specific research papers and proposals. For 15 years, he served as editor of Pure and Applied Geophysics. The most important chairmanship of an international committee he held was that of the IASPEI Sub-commission on Earthquake Prediction during the years 1987-2002. As a member of the European Evaluation Committee for Earthquake Prediction, Wyss was asked to criticize the false claim of a prediction method. Wyss also served on review panels of NASA, the National Science Foundation (USA), the US Geological Survey, and the German Geotechnologien Program.

During his career, Wyss, worked in a number of countries and a number of institutions as visiting scientist, including the University of Tokyo, the National University of Mexico, Tohoku University, the Federal Institute of Technology in Zürich, the National Research Institute for Earthquake Prediction in Tsukuba, the Geoforschungszentrum in Potsdam, the University of Kiel, the University of Karlsruhe, the Seismological Observatory in Erlangen, and he collaborated with scientists in the USA, Switzerland, Germany, France, Italy, Belgium, Japan, China, Iceland, Greece, India, Iran, Mexico, the UAE, Egypt, Algeria, Romania, Spain, Peru, Pakistan, Nepal, Kyrgyzstan, Turkey, Russia, Georgia, and Honduras.

On an international external review team, Max Wyss twice evaluated the national seismology program of India and twice the performance of five national research laboratories

in Greece. His consulting activity include seismic hazard analyses for dam sites and oil fields in South America, Central America and Asia. Wyss served on numerous external review panels of scientific projects, including the annual review panel of GEOFON at the GeoForschungsZentrum, Potsdam.

Wyss founded the GPS consortium of American Universities, UNAVCO and he led the team that assembled the tool to estimate earthquake losses from 2005 to 2014. The data set for population and the built environment in QLARM includes nearly 2 million settlements including all countries of the world. Since 2003 Wyss has distributed more than 1,300 near-real-time alerts for large earthquakes worldwide, estimating the number of fatalities within less than an hour. Wyss has published 200+ scientific articles, with about 50 of these on seismic risk.