New Earthquake Machine produces simulated earthquake on first test —...
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New Earthquake Machine produces simulated earthquake on first test

Ireland Blouin

The UT Earthquake Machine, a device built by UT scientists to simulate the shifting of the tectonic plates, made its first earthquake during its pilot test in a lab on Nov. 7.

The machine was created by the UT Institute for Geophysics in the Jackson School of

Shreedharan said the earthquake machine is made up of two main components. The first is a large-scale device that allows the researchers to study how rocks, faults and fractures form under realistic conditions. The other component of the machine records data from the simulation, such as different earthquake frequencies.

“In nature, it’s often not easy to observe all the systematics, all the features, all the properties of an earthquake, partly because you don’t know when and where it’s


“Going to happen,” Shreedharan said. “So in the lab, by generating earthquakes in this large-format device, we’re able to control all these things.”

Bolton said how the machine will be used for educational purposes is still undecided, but the goal is to allow all types of students interested in the subject access to it to learn from it for their own research.

“We want to be able to make it accessible to anyone and everyone who’s interested in working on it, so I think we’re still kind of at the early stages of trying to iron out all the details,” Bolton said. “The idea would be to get students — undergrads and grad students — and postdocs who are interested in work in the lab interested in earthquakes, getting those folks interested in doing research there with the machine.”
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