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Activities

Reading a Seismogram

Name: _____ Date: _____

To the untrained eye, a seismogram looks like random wiggles. With a bit of practice, you'll see important clues about an earthquake in these wiggles. You'll find out more in this Planet Diary activity.

Directions

- Start with a look at a sample seismogram to find out how to read its wiggly lines. Use the information to answer Workspace questions 1 through 3.
- Read this Planet Diary report of the huge Chile earthquake in 2010. Then look at the seismogram data from the quake. The locations of stations that recorded the quake are represented by colored triangles above the seismograms. Info about the stations appears below. Use the data to answer questions 4 through 6.

Workspace

1. Give the order in which different types of seismic waves appear on a seismogram.

2. Explain why there might not be any S (secondary waves) on the seismogram of a big earthquake.

3. Which type of seismic wave corresponds to the most violent shaking?

4. Which station (colored triangle) is closest to the epicenter of the Sumatra quake? Which station is farthest from the epicenter?

5. Compare the strength of the shaking at the two stations you listed in question 4.

6. Estimate the time after the earthquake struck that the two stations you listed in question 4 had their strongest shaking.

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