

Instructions: An earthquake occurred close to Laffrey (Isère) on 11th January 1999. The following day, the inhabitants of various counties were asked about what they had felt.

- Read various testimonies and determine the intensity of the earthquake in each county (by using the MSK scale table).
- Place these intensities on the map on the following sheet, and link the counties where the earthquake had the same intensity.
- The curves drawn are called "isoseismal" curves. Which form do they have?
- According to you, where was the earthquake most intensely felt?

In Saint-Martin-d'Hères

"The jolt awoke me, but not my wife. It was especially the shaking of the windows that I noticed. I really wonder what happened..."

The observations were same in the neighbourhood (Saint-Martin-D'Uriage, Seyssinet-Pariset), in some counties more towards the south (Château-Bernard, Corrençon-in-Vercors and Villard-de-Lans), in the area of La Mure (La Mure, Nantes-in-Rattier), in Monestier-de-Clermont and in the massif of Taillefer (Livet-et-Gavet, Ornon, Oulles).

In Méaudre

"I was already awake and lying in my bed, when I heard a very deafening noise, as occurs when snow falls from the roof. I also felt a very faint swaying. At the time, I did not think of an earthquake. It is only by listening to the radio in the morning that I put the two together..."

Some people had similar experiences at Engins, Sassenage, Sainte-Agnès, Allemont, Le Perrier and Valbonnais.

In Champagnier

"I was not yet in bed. I was in the kitchen when suddenly there was a deafening noise and the door which leads to the sitting room opened. The chandelier started to swing and the radio fell. I immediately understood that it was an earthquake because, when I was a kid, in the early Sixties, several had been felt and that had marked me. That awoke my wife and my kids who believed that it was me who had made all this row..." The observations were same in Jarrie, Séchilienne, Vaulnaveys-le-Bas, Vif, as well as at La Motte-d'Aveillans and Monteynard.

A Sappey-en-Chartreuse

Nobody felt the earthquake.

At Saint-George-de-Commiers

"We really had the jitters! In the village, there are quite a few who emerged from their homes to see what was happening. It made a terrible noise like a gunshot, very deafening. Everything shook. At home, the cupboard in the room fell and there were small cracks on a wall which I had just redone. My neighbor, up the road, found, on the bed covers, small pieces of plaster which had fallen from the ceiling..."

The observations were the same in Champ-sur-Drac and Notre-Dame-de-Commiers.

Source: François Thouvenot, of the seismological Network of the Alps, based on an investigation carried out by the French seismological central Office.