

# Half of U.S. homes at risk from natural disaster

By Constantine von Hoffman, Money Watch

More than half of all U.S. homes are located in areas prone to tornadoes, earthquakes or hurricanes.

About 71 million housing units, or 55 percent of the nation's total, fall into the high risk category, with 10.6 million of these, or 8 percent of the total, classified as very high risk, according to a report from RealtyTrac.

The report is based on historical and predictive data from the U.S. Geological Survey and the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration regarding the likelihood of a given county being hit by a 5.0 magnitude or greater earthquake over the next 50 years or highly destructive hurricanes and tornadoes.

"It's fairly obvious from looking at the map that these high-risk areas tend to be places where a lot of people want to live, like along the coast," said Daren Blomquist, vice president at RealtyTrac, which provides real estate data. "While we're not expecting this to cause a mass exodus from those areas, at least when home buyers are looking at a house they should take it into consideration along with the other factors that can affect home value."

Higher-risk areas around the country – such as San Diego and Riverside counties in Southern California, Manhattan and Brooklyn in New York, and the Boston metro area – generally have higher home prices than lower risk regions. Median home prices in the eight counties adjudged as being at low risk for natural disasters averaged \$161,000 in April, while prices in the 12 high-risk counties averaged \$377,483, according to RealtyTrac.

**Read the whole story**