

In the news

Monday 29th October 2012

Scientists charged with manslaughter after failing to predict an earthquake

Six scientists and one government official in Italy were sentenced to six years in prison for making “falsely reassuring” comments before the 2009 earthquake.

There was an increase in small earthquakes before the larger one, which is why a press conference was called. During this press conference, the experts said that there was nothing to worry about and that people should stay at home. As it turned out, this may have caused more deaths, as people were trapped in their buildings.

The scientists did actually say that the risk of a large earthquake had increased, but only slightly. When the number of small earthquakes increases, 99% of the time there is not a larger earthquake. However, the public thought they would be 100% safe.

Should independent scientists have been prosecuted for giving their best advice?
Or were they convicted because they failed to effectively communicate the change in risk?

The countdown to the US election

The election campaign is entering its final stages, with the budgets of both Romney and Obama set to exceed \$1 billion each. Opinion polls put the candidates neck-and-neck, and both are campaigning feverishly in key swing states like Florida and Ohio.

Did you see any of the live TV debates? Which candidate has impressed you most?
What is your opinion of the election process in the USA?

Did you hear about the court case involving a bank robber?

The court gave him back the €63,000.— that he had stolen, because no-one else wanted it!

This is a true story: 19 years ago Mr Neuman stole €180,000 worth of money plus some gold bars from a bank. The police have only just been able to charge him, and they took the €63,000 in cash and the gold. But in the meantime, the bank received compensation from an insurance company, so it can't take the money. The gold belongs to the insurance company, but its significant increase in value means that it more than covers the original costs. They didn't want the cash either! So the court had no choice but to let Mr Neuman keep all €63,000 of it.

National Holiday...and the weather!

Did you enjoy your long bank holiday weekend? Did you take advantage of the free entry to museums and art galleries?

The first blast of winter has arrived, bringing snow across half of Europe. Has it affected you at all? It must be better than the hurricane which is threatening New York.
What preparations are being made there?