

1979 - An Earthquake Brings the End to Oasis Palms

The fateful year of 1979 brought the final blow to Oasis Palms. On October 15th, a powerful 6.5 magnitude earthquake struck the region, with its epicenter located south of Oasis Palms near the Mexico–United States border. The seismic shockwave rippled across an astonishing area, spanning roughly 128,000 square miles. Reports poured in of people feeling the tremors as far away as Yuma, Arizona, and Las Vegas, Nevada. This event was the most significant earthquake to hit the contiguous United States since the 1971 San Fernando earthquake, which had occurred eight years earlier.



Oasis Palms bore the brunt of the quake's impact. Power lines were severed, and the aging brick structures in town showed visible cracks, some starting to crumble. In the following weeks, structural damage intensified as cave supports collapsed, triggering a chain reaction that caused portions of the elevated train superstructure to fail. These fallen rail sections, in turn, wrought destruction upon multiple buildings in town. Over the ensuing months, the entire elevated railway crumbled to the ground, leaving Oasis Palms in ruins, a catastrophe that authorities did not immediately attribute to the earthquake.

Remarkably, there were no reported injuries among Oasis Palms' remaining residents. Although the initial quake caused

infrastructure damage, the more extensive destruction occurred over an extended period after the seismic event. As a result, those who remained were compelled to gather their belongings and vacate the town in the wake of the disaster.