

opening the possibility of informing the initial emergency response management with the best scientific assessment of the spatial distribution of hazard. It is notable that the second magnitude-6.4 event occurred in the centre of the southeastern lobe of increased stress.

There is no doubt that much more work on the physics and geology of triggered earthquakes is required to reduce the uncertainty of near-real-time forecasts of aftershock probability and to integrate estimates of the resulting strong ground-motion. Analysis of the Ziarat earthquake sequence, however, shows that useful forecasts of the probable locations of triggered earthquakes can be made and disseminated globally within a few hours

using current scientific understanding and existing communication technology. In parallel with the development of more sophisticated earthquake-interaction techniques, scientists must move to an era of routine prospective testing of near-real-time earthquake hazard forecasts. In spite of the considerable problems associated with communicating a developing and uncertain science, they should also begin the difficult process of engaging with civic agencies to explore the use of such techniques for the benefit of populations at risk. □

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## Open access?

**To the Editor** — From the editorial ‘Globalizing quake information’ (*Nature Geosci.* **1**, 803; 2008), I could not tell whether the Global Earthquake Model (GEM) requires participating nations to open their data sets. If it does not, then I hope GEM will reconsider and call for open data, to allow independent investigators to test or

replicate the GEM analyses. If the output reports are always open, as GEM promises, then specialists could probably infer the broad contours of the input data from these reports, even if the input data are not open themselves. Hence, nations unwilling to make their data public may be unwilling to participate in the project even with closed data. If so, then the GEM needs to

make the argument for open data as part of its case for worldwide participation. □

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**GEM reply** — The most enduring value of the GEM will be its open data, models and software, all of which will be available at [www.globalquakemodel.org](http://www.globalquakemodel.org). Transparency and open exchange is critical for GEM to achieve its goals of widespread scientific participation, political credibility and acceptance by users, particularly governments and the public. Under this guiding principle, the GEM will integrate open information wherever possible. In

limited cases where only private sources are available, all data will be referenced, and any enquiry can then be addressed to the data holder. For the purpose of rigorous model-validation, we anticipate working closely with holders of private data. □

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