

## **WSSPC Policy Recommendation 06-1: Developing Earthquake Risk-Reduction Strategies**

WSSPC strongly encourages the development of long-term, comprehensive statewide and community-level earthquake risk-reduction strategies as part of an all-hazards plan to reduce injury, loss of life, property damage and economic disruption from earthquakes.

WSSPC believes comprehensive statewide and local plans and strategies should include the following elements:

- Assessment of all seismic hazards to quantify and define the risk to communities;
- Implementation of land-use and development policies to reduce exposure to earthquake hazards;
- Adoption and enforcement of the International Building Codes for the seismic design, inspection, and construction of new buildings and structures;
- Adoption of the International Existing Building Code for the maintenance and retrofit of seismically "at risk" structures;
- Development and implementation of retrofit, redevelopment, grant, and abatement programs to help strengthen existing structures, where necessary;
- Support of [ongoing] public-education efforts and public/private partnerships to raise awareness of seismically induced threats and build constituent support for earthquake hazard reduction programs.

### **Background**

WSSPC has long supported reduction of losses from seismic events through policy recommendations and annual conferences. One of the WSSPC Policy Recommendations (PR04-4) states that WSSPC supports the adoption and enforcement of the International Building and Residential Codes to reduce vulnerability to earthquakes. Given the high seismic activity in the western United States, Pacific territories, and Canada, mitigation of earthquake hazards is a common interest among all the western states, territories, and provinces. FEMA's Report 366, "HAZUS 99 Estimated Annualized Earthquake Losses for the United States", clearly shows that the western states are most at risk, with 88% of the nation's estimated annual dollar losses from earthquakes. WSSPC, as a consortium of 13 western states, 3 Pacific territories, and a Canadian territory and province, is the ideal organization to promote the benefits of earthquake risk-mitigation policies, to promote collaboration among its members and the federal government, and to share mitigation successes between WSSPC and other organizations. WSSPC should mentor parties who are responsible for public safety about the necessity and benefits of earthquake risk-mitigation policies and activities. WSSPC should promote the development of educational materials on mitigation for the general public.

WSSPC encourages private and public organizations to form partnerships that will develop earthquake risk-mitigation plans and risk-reduction strategies that will

benefit local communities. Mitigation policies and activities are long-term, multifaceted processes where effective coordination, collaboration and communication among partners are critical. WSSPC is partnering with various organizations to promote these processes.

The Seismic Safety Boards and Commissions of the various states are important WSSPC partners. Each member state, territory and province has other affiliations with potential partners, such as the Oregon Natural Hazards Workgroup (ONHW), the Partners for Disaster Resistance & Resilience: Oregon Showcase State Program, and the Cascadia Region Earthquake Workgroup (CREW).

WSSPC should encourage its partners to seek potential outreach activities, mitigation plan development, or construction projects that can be submitted for funding through FEMA's various mitigation program grants. These efforts complement FEMA's Pre-Disaster Mitigation initiatives.

### **Facilitation and Communications**

This policy recommendation will be sent to all identified policy and decision makers (elected officials, heads of key departments, such as emergency managers, building officials and planners and chairs of the State Seismic Safety Commissions and Boards) as well as to WSSPC representatives in the member states. Policymakers' decision to support earthquake risk mitigation and foster partnerships is the key to effective mitigation in their state.

### **Assessment**

Successes in policy implementation are occasions when mitigation actions or requirements are incorporated into public policies and decisions, and subsequently integrated into important public or private projects.

This statement of earthquake risk-reduction strategies should be adopted by all WSSPC partners. Successes should be submitted in a timely manner to WSSPC for posting on its website.

### **History**

First adopted in 2003 as WSSPC Policy Recommendation 03-1. Reviewed, revised, and re-adopted as WSSPC Policy Recommendation 06-1 by unanimous vote of the WSSPC membership at the WSSPC Annual Business Meeting April 17, 2006.