

**WESTERN STATES SEISMIC POLICY COUNCIL
POLICY RECOMMENDATION 16-10**

**Joint Policy for the Evaluation and Seismic Remediation
of School Buildings**

Policy Recommendation 16-10

The Western States Seismic Policy Council, with the support of the Earthquake Engineering Research Institute, recommends that each member state, province and territory establish as a goal that all school buildings be seismically resilient. Seismically vulnerable school buildings should be retrofitted or replaced by new earthquake resilient school buildings as an important part of a nationwide school earthquake resiliency goal.

Executive Summary

Our elementary and secondary school buildings contain the future of our country. Parents send their children to school every day with the belief that their children will be safe. However, many of the schools located in WSSPC's states, provinces and territories are older structures vulnerable to severe damage and even collapse in future earthquakes. This policy recommendation provides needed support for efforts to evaluate and remediate these hazards.

Background

The 1933 Long Beach, California M6.4 earthquake is best known for collapsing or severely damaging thousands of unreinforced masonry (URM) buildings, including over 230 school buildings. Fortunately, schools were not in session at the time of the earthquake. Had that been the case, thousands of children would have been injured or killed.

The outcry from this poor performance of school buildings directly led to the State of California passing the Field Act which mandated earthquake resistant construction requirements for future school buildings, and the Garrison Act which established the requirements for the seismic safety of existing school buildings.

Schools are increasingly used to shelter students in place during all hazards, including flood and hurricane as well as earthquakes. In addition, schools are often used as refuge zones for citizens within their communities. Thus school building resilience is a key to protecting the local population under diverse hazardous conditions.

There have been notable efforts by some WSSPC member states, including Idaho, Washington, Oregon, California, Alaska and Utah, to identify at-risk school buildings and to begin the process of addressing the risk they present.