



COMMITTEE ON
SCIENCE, SPACE, & TECHNOLOGY
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Statement by Rep. Dana Rohrabacher (R-Calif.)

Earthquake Mitigation: Reauthorizing the National Earthquake Hazards Reduction Program

Rep. Rohrabacher: Welcome to Huntington Beach. It's my honor to welcome you to California's 48th Congressional District and the world famous "Surf City."

I am glad that two of my colleagues on the Science Committee and fellow Californians, Rep. Mark Takano and Rep. Jerry McNerney, could join me in holding this hearing on a topic of great importance to our state and the nation.

In California, at any moment, we could face the next big earthquake. It's sometimes easy to get complacent, but the risk is real.

According to the U.S. Geological Survey (USGS), California has a 99 percent chance of experiencing a magnitude 6.7 or larger earthquake in the next 30 years. The likelihood of an even larger earthquake, magnitude 7.5 or greater, is 46 percent, and such an earthquake would likely occur in the southern part of the state.

But California is not alone. Close to 75 million people in 39 states face some risk from earthquakes.

For 40 years the National Earthquake Hazards Reduction Program (NEHRP) has supported efforts to assess and monitor earthquake hazards and risk in the United States.

Four federal agencies coordinate their earthquake activities under NEHRP: USGS, National Science Foundation (NSF), Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA) and National Institute of Standards and Technology (NIST).

These agencies assess U.S. earthquake hazards, deliver notifications of seismic events, develop measures to reduce earthquake hazards and conduct research to help reduce overall U.S. vulnerability to earthquakes.

Congress last reviewed and reauthorized the program in 2004, and that law expired in 2009. Although Congress continues to appropriate funds for this important work, we are overdue in reauthorizing the NEHRP law.

We must ensure it is effective and up-to-date with the latest knowledge and science for monitoring and mitigating earthquakes.

I am particularly interested in how we can improve the use of data to advance the deployment of an effective earthquake early warning system.

Such a system would automatically send an alert to areas in danger of potential shaking after the earthquake is initially triggered. The alert would potentially allow components of the lifeline infrastructure, such as electric utilities, railway systems and even hospital operating rooms, to cease activities that could be impaired by violent shaking before the first earthquake-triggered surface waves reach them.

Senators Dianne Feinstein (Calif.) and Lisa Murkowski (Alaska) have introduced a bipartisan NEHRP reauthorization bill in the Senate and I will be working with my Science Committee colleagues to introduce a bill in the House soon.

I thank the witnesses for being here today and I look forward to their expert testimony.

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