

**Nevada Earthquake Safety Council
Recommendation to DEM for a Policy Statement on
Developing Earthquake Risk-Reduction Strategies
Policy Number 2009-03**

Purpose:

The purpose of this policy statement is to establish a commitment by DEM and NESC to continually update a long-term, comprehensive statewide and community-level earthquake risk reduction strategies as part of an all-hazards plan.

Policy Statement:

It is the policy of the State of Nevada, through its Division of Emergency Management (DEM) and the Nevada Earthquake Safety Council (NESC) that the state and local governments should develop and continually update 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.

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 continuing public-education efforts and public/private partnerships to raise awareness of seismically induced threats and build constituent support for earthquake hazard reduction programs.

Legislative Interest:

DEM should include any state law modifications in its legislative recommendations in order to obtain the necessary authorization to effect this policy statement and any needed funds to implement it. To the extent political subdivisions need additional authorization by the legislature to effect this policy statement, DEM should include those authorizations as well in cooperation with the various local government associations.

Fiscal Impact:

NESC has an existing Strategic Plan for Earthquake Safety in Nevada that can be updated by the NESC and DEM staff at relatively minor expense. In addition, NESC

encourages potential outreach activities, mitigation plan development, or construction projects, some of which may be eligible for funding through FEMA's various mitigation program grants. These efforts complement FEMA's Pre-Disaster Mitigation initiatives.

Benefits and Detriments of Implementation:

BENEFITS: The benefits of proper mitigation and planning are highlighted by cost/ benefit studies that show for every FEMA dollar spent on mitigation, four dollars are saved in reduced disaster relief. In addition, FEMA grants to mitigate natural hazards are expected to save lives and injuries in future events (Multihazard Mitigation Council, 2005, *Natural Hazard Mitigation Saves: An Independent Study to Assess the Future Savings from Mitigation Activities*).

DETRIMENTS: Funding sources may not readily be available for implementation of some elements of this policy statement, particularly the retrofit recommendations. Many public buildings will come within the retrofit recommendations and funding sources are quite limited.

Communications:

It is the responsibility and duty of the geological hazards community to organize and disseminate key information concerning proper seismic hazards mitigation. Safe communities and infrastructure can only be accomplished through diligent, informed, and coordinated effort of both regulators and stakeholders. 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). Policymakers' decision to support earthquake risk mitigation and foster partnerships is the key to effective mitigation in the state.

Assessment of Effectiveness:

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. NESC will give public recognition to organizations that successfully implement mitigation efforts.