



Committee on Transportation and Infrastructure
U.S. House of Representatives

Bill Shuster
Chairman

Washington, DC 20515

Peter A. DeFazio
Ranking Member

Christopher P. Bertram, Staff Director

June 12, 2015

Katherine W. Dedrick, Democratic Staff Director

The Honorable W. Craig Fugate
Administrator
Federal Emergency Management Agency
500 C Street Southwest
Washington, DC 20472

Dear Administrator Fugate:

I write to express my concern about the lack of priority that the Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA) has placed on the National Earthquake Hazard Reduction Program (NEHRP).

Earthquakes occur without warning and can cause significant damage to people, infrastructure, and the economy. Most of the United States as a whole is at risk of an earthquake, although the Pacific Northwest is especially vulnerable primarily because of the Cascadia Subduction Zone. More than 75 million Americans live in areas of significant seismic risk. In addition, the U.S. Geological Survey estimates that “42 of the 50 states have a reasonable chance of experiencing damaging ground shaking from an earthquake in 50 years (the typical lifetime of a building).”

According to FEMA’s 2008 Hazus data, the nationwide Annualized Earthquake Loss (AEL), or the amount of direct damage that would occur to the Nation’s building stock if there was an earthquake in any given year, is \$5.3 billion. In Oregon and Washington alone, the estimated AEL is over \$500 million. Moreover, these estimates do not include damage to utilities, roads, or other lifeline infrastructure nor does it include economic losses. If adequate funding is not dedicated to mitigate the risks and to perform NEHRP duties, the estimated damage amounts will only increase.

FEMA plays an important role in earthquake education and awareness as well as promoting the implementation of research results and improving preparedness, which includes promoting better building practices. Yet, in the NEHRP April 2015 program update, FEMA stated that it is not able to perform its statutory duties related to critical infrastructure. Moreover, the same update notes that there are several staff vacancies.

To reduce future disaster costs and losses and to fulfill your statutory duties, it is imperative that FEMA provide increased and adequate funding to perform all of its NEHRP duties. To do this, staff vacancies must be filled as soon as possible. Please provide me with a detailed plan for

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June 9, 2015

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increasing the funding level for the NEHRP program and a staffing plan, including the status of filling existing staff vacancies.

If you need additional information or have questions regarding this letter, please contact me or have your staff contact Janet Erickson of the Committee staff at (202) 225-9961.

Thank you for your consideration.

Sincerely,



PETER DeFAZIO
Ranking Member