



**California
Seismic Safety Commission's
Strategic Plan**

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Mission

To provide decision makers and the general public with cost-effective recommendations to reduce earthquake losses and expedite recovery from damaging earthquakes.

Vision

To provide leadership in implementing and achieving the goals and objectives in the *California Earthquake Loss Reduction Plan*, which are, to advance learning about earthquakes and risk reduction in both the short and long term, advance the earthquake resistant designs of buildings and other important structures, and advance the preparedness and emergency response systems to earthquakes.

Introduction

California is the most seismically active state in the nation. It has experienced some of the most destructive earthquakes in modern history. In 1994, it experienced the most costly natural disaster ever to strike in the United States—the Northridge Earthquake. It is a certainty that more (some even larger) earthquakes will occur in California. The Seismic Safety Commission’s role, as the State’s official advisor on earthquake matters, is to guide the State in preparing to survive and recover from that inevitability.

By statute, the Commission is obligated to prepare and administer a master plan for California setting forth priorities, funding, funding sources, schedules, and other resources needed to reduce statewide earthquake risks and losses. The Commission's publication, the *California Earthquake Loss Reduction Plan*, outlines this master plan for the State of California.

This Strategic Plan is therefore offered as a vital document that will ensure that overall effectiveness of the *California Earthquake Loss Reduction Plan*, in fact, takes place. The Strategic Plan identifies and describes the goals and objectives necessary for the Commission to evaluate, shape, and promote the implementation of the policies and programs stated in the *California Earthquake Loss Reduction Plan*.

The Commission has a significant role in increasing public awareness and to rallying long-term commitments from government agencies, private industry, and reducing losses from earthquakes. As the Commission strives to accomplish the goals contained in this Strategic Plan, California will make significant progress towards surviving the effects of earthquakes and achieving rapid recovery.

Agency Description & History

The California Seismic Safety Commission is the result of two pioneering committees, one established by the Legislature, the other by the Governor. In 1969, the State Legislature created the Joint Committee on Seismic Safety. In 1972, Governor Ronald Reagan created the Governor's Earthquake Council. Both committees assisted in the passage of significant earthquake safety legislation (for example, the requirement mandating seismic safety elements in local general plans, the Hospital Seismic Safety Act, the Strong Motion Instrumentation Program, dam inundation mapping and evacuation planning law, citing requirements for schools, and the Alquist-Priolo Fault Zone Mapping Act). The success of these early initiatives, along with the elevation of earthquake safety policy issues in the state legislative arena, solidified the need for a formally recognized state agency to address earthquake risk.

The California Seismic Safety Commission was established in 1975 by then-Senate Bill 1729 (Chapter 1413, Statutes of 1974) authored by Senator Alfred E. Alquist to advise the Governor, Legislature, state and local agencies, and the public about strategies to reduce earthquake risk. (Government Code Section 8870, et. seq.). It is an independent agency composed of seventeen commissioners chosen for their expertise and experience in earthquake related disciplines. The Governor appoints fifteen commissioners, and one each is appointed by the Senate President Pro Tem and the Assembly Speaker.

The intent of the Seismic Safety Act (Senate Bill 1729) was to create an independent advisory body to the Governor, Legislature, State and local government agencies, and the general public to recommend consistent and coordinated earthquake safety policies and programs. The Commission is not an emergency response agency nor does it have any regulatory authority. Its purpose is to offer advice and encourage the creation and implementation of earthquake risk reduction policies and programs that promote public safety before, during and after earthquakes.

Another major role performed by the Commission is required under the California Earthquake Hazards Reduction Act (Government Code Section 8871, et seq.), which was authored by Senators Alquist and Campbell and signed into law in 1985. That law requires the Commission to prepare and administer a program to reduce statewide earthquake hazards, which is contained in the Commission's periodic publication, *California Earthquake Loss Reduction Plan*.

From its inception, the Commission has maintained a commitment to improve the well being of the people of California through the enactment of earthquake safety policies and programs. The Commission has contributed to the enactment of over 300 earthquake safety laws and continues to provide a voice for the people of California on seismic safety issues.

Goals & Objectives

The following four goals provide guidance for the Commission and help the Commission remain focused on those efforts necessary to attain its vision.

Goal #1

Advise the Governor, Legislature, state agencies, local governments, professional organizations and the general public on strategies, policies and programs intended to reduce earthquake losses to the people of California and expedite recovery using cost effective methods.

The Commission was purposefully established as an *independent agency* with a *broad array of expertise*. Both of these characteristics contribute to the strength of the Commission, making it an objective, reputable, and credible institution. By its expertise and independence, the Commission is able to provide cost-effective advice and leadership on issues it deems essential to improve earthquake safety, and reduce earthquake losses.

Strategy & Objectives

- Assess the seismic safety needs of the state and promote the implementation of policies and programs to meet those needs.
- Inspect damaged areas and conduct investigative hearings following earthquakes to identify program and policy areas that need to be strengthened and/or modified. Develop findings to facilitate policy and program changes to correct those deficiencies.
- Establish and maintain communications with government agencies, professional organizations, researchers, industry, and practitioners to stay abreast of new developments in seismic safety. Solicit presentations from responsible agencies and individuals at Commission meetings to learn more about their activities. Use that information to advise and educate others about emerging technologies, methodologies and strategies.
- Provide leadership and support the efforts of decision makers, and responsible agencies, to incorporate and implement new information and technologies into seismic safety policies and programs designed to protect against the damaging affects of earthquakes.
- Sponsor, evaluate, and recommend changes, if necessary, to seismic safety related laws, regulations, guidelines, advisories, and to improve seismic safety policies and programs in the state.

- Provide information to elected officials, decision makers, and stakeholders at all levels of government about the benefits of implementing the recommendations in the *California Earthquake Loss Reduction Plan* and encourage their support, and implementation of those recommendations.

Process

In order to achieve Goal #1:

- ✓ Hold Commission meetings to review and evaluate the policies and programs that are identified in the *California Earthquake Loss Reduction Plan*.
- ✓ Produce an annual report to the Governor and Legislature providing an overview of the success of seismic policies and programs reviewed by the Commission.
- ✓ Provide recommendations to improve the effectiveness of the policies and programs reviewed by the Commission.
- ✓ Respond to requests for information regarding specific matters related to seismic safety from the Governor, Legislature, State agencies, local governments, professional organizations, and the general public.

Goal #2

Identify and secure new resources to fund earthquake risk reduction efforts in California and recommend, when necessary and appropriate, the redirection of resources to improve the cost-effectiveness and efficiency of existing programs.

The Commission believes that mitigation is, in fact, effective and that loss reduction is possible and practical. This has been proven in many policy areas. With continued commitment and advancement in mitigation, California can be made safer and the disruption of services and economic hardships following earthquakes can be minimized.

The means to manage the state's seismic risk most effectively is through cost-effective funding to specific programs. Toward that end, the Commission reviews existing programs and offers recommendations to ensure the cost-effective expenditure of funds for those programs.

In addition, the Commission actively pursues other revenue sources to further the efforts outlined in the *California Earthquake Loss Reduction Plan*. By providing greater emphasis and leadership in this area, the Commission influences decisions at all levels of government and secures additional resources to help meet the goals and objectives of the *California Earthquake Loss Reduction Plan*.

Strategy & Objectives

- Assist responsible public agencies with identifying and securing funding sources to accelerate the implementation and completion of the recommendations in the *California Earthquake Loss Reduction Plan*. This can be done by cooperating with federal, state, and local government agencies, submitting grant applications, monitoring expenditures for existing seismic safety programs, and identifying funding sources.

Process

In order to achieve Goal #2, the Commission will engage in the following activities:

- ✓ Maintain Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA) certification of the *California Earthquake Loss Reduction Plan* as part of the State's Multi-hazard Mitigation Plan thereby enabling the State of California to be eligible for pre- and post- earthquake federal mitigation funds.
- ✓ Identify and apply for funding from the various groups such as FEMA, Governor's Office of Emergency Services (OES), private industry, other federal state or local governments, when appropriate.
- ✓ Assist agencies and departments that are responsible for implementing specific initiatives in the *California Earthquake Loss Reduction Plan* with identifying and requesting resources to support earthquake loss reduction programs; and, when appropriate, recommend the redirection of funds to increase the cost-effectiveness and efficiency of existing earthquake loss reduction programs.

Goal #3

Provide leadership in the state to increase awareness by the general public of the benefits of earthquake loss reduction strategies, policies and programs.

In the past, the Commission applied much of its efforts and resources toward specific earthquake risk reduction policies and programs pursuant to increasing public awareness of seismic safety issues. The current Commission believes that concerted outreach efforts should be a primary objective in achieving the goal of increasing public awareness of seismic safety issues. Initiating and participating in activities that allow for the sharing of information with targeted groups and institutions will result in more earthquake preparedness and mitigation activities in both the public and private sectors.

Strategy and Objectives

- Collect information about seismic safety awareness efforts in the state and assess the effectiveness of those efforts by establishing and maintaining communication with responsible agencies that develop, distribute, and use earthquake safety information to

emphasize the benefits of seismic safety, and improve avenues of communication and distribution of information.

- Increase the Commission's visibility as a resource and clearinghouse of information providing decision makers, agencies and departments at all levels of government, professional organizations, the media, and the general public accurate information about seismic safety via:
 - ✓ The Commission's web page, press releases, literature, and public service announcements.
- Increase the awareness of the seismic safety activities in the state by:
 - ✓ Periodically conducting meetings in different communities throughout the state. Schedule meetings with local elected officials and make presentations to local governing bodies to educate them about the benefits of and to encourage the implementation of the recommendations in the *California Earthquake Loss Reduction Plan*.
 - ✓ Attending and making presentations at workshops and conferences to gain information about programs and to inform the public about the recommendations in the *California Earthquake Loss Reduction Plan* and solicit feedback. Making the information from those workshops and conferences available to others.

Process

In order to achieve Goal #3, the Commission will:

- ✓ Establish an interactive web page as an educational resource for homeowners, business owners, practitioners, teachers and others.
- ✓ Make presentations to governing bodies regarding the *California Earthquake Loss Reduction Plan*. In addition, invite representatives from governing bodies to make presentations to the Commission regarding their seismic safety programs and their input on the *California Earthquake Loss Reduction Plan*.
- ✓ Develop and disseminate seismic safety continuing education material to building design professionals, contractors and code enforcement officials.

Goal #4

Provide leadership in the state to initiate, develop and coordinate partnerships among organizations, public and private, that have complementary expertise or technological capabilities that can be applied towards earthquake risk reduction efforts.

Most of the changes proposed in the *California Earthquake Loss Reduction Plan* reside in programs or policies under the jurisdiction of other public and private organizations. To effectively facilitate changes in those arenas, the Commission believes it should partner with key groups and promote changes through existing channels and existing authority whenever possible.

Strategy & Objectives

- Encourage decision makers, and responsible public and private agencies to make long-term commitments and share the responsibilities of making seismic safety improvements in the state.
- Facilitate the transfer of knowledge to decision makers and practitioners, by taking the lead to organize, coordinate, co-host and encourage organizations to conduct workshops, seminars, community events, and produce education and training materials on earthquake risk reduction information, techniques and methods.

Process

In order to achieve Goal #4, The Commission will:

- ✓ Work closely with decision makers, government agencies, professional organizations, educational institutions, and the private sector to learn more about their goals, specific capabilities, and funding sources.
- ✓ Identify organizations that have similar goals and capabilities to facilitate the transfer of knowledge and the marriage of capabilities and funds among those organizations.
- ✓ Engage in activities to initiate, encourage, and coordinate the formation of partnerships among organizations to work on specific initiatives in the *California Earthquake Loss Reduction Plan*.