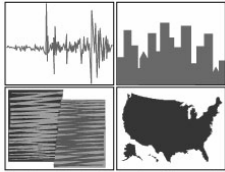


NEHRP Coalition



National Earthquake Hazards
Reduction Program Coalition

American Council of
Engineering Companies
◆ American Geological
Institute ◆ American
Geophysical Union ◆
American Institute of
Architects ◆ American
Public Works Association
◆ American Society of
Civil Engineers ◆
Consortium of Universities
for Research in
Earthquake Engineering ◆
Earthquake Engineering
Research Institute ◆
International Code Council
◆ Manufactured Housing
Association for Regulatory
Reform ◆ National Fire
Protection Association ◆
Portland Cement
Association ◆
Seismological Society of
America

For More Information:
202/789-7850 (ASCE)
510/451-0905 (EERI)
www.nehrp.org



The NEHRP Coalition encourages realistic, comprehensive, and affordable measures to reduce the harmful effects of earthquakes nationwide. The Coalition represents the views of over 250,000 scientists, engineers, architects, and emergency response leaders of the earthquake community.

May 26, 2006

NEHRP Secretariat
Attention: Dr. Jack Hayes
National Institute of Standards and Technology
100 Bureau Drive Stop 8610
Gaithersburg, MD 20899-8610

Statement of the National Earthquake Hazards Reduction Program (NEHRP) Coalition

The NEHRP Coalition is pleased to have an opportunity to make comments on the Strategic Plan for the National Earthquake Hazards Reduction Program (NEHRP). The NEHRP Coalition played a significant role in the 2004 reauthorization process that produced Title I of P.L. 108-360, which reauthorized NEHRP. **We believe that any strategic plan for NEHRP should rely primarily on the public law.**

The Coalition

The NEHRP Coalition encourages comprehensive, realistic, and affordable measures for reducing the harmful effects of earthquakes to acceptable levels nationwide. The Coalition represents the views of over 250,000 earthquake professionals - scientists, engineers, architects, and emergency management leaders of the earthquake community.

The National Earthquake Hazards Reduction Program

Over the past 25 years, NEHRP has provided a wealth of crucial scientific research and structural analysis useful to seismologists, engineers, urban planners, emergency managers and the public. Cost-effective mitigation techniques derived from NEHRP data helps to save lives, reduce infrastructure losses and eliminate unnecessary design costs through more accurate risk assessment. The U.S. Geological Survey (USGS) has developed and published uniform earthquake hazard maps that clearly assess seismic risk throughout the nation. The National Science Foundation (NSF), through its grants to university researchers, has improved our understanding of earthquake processes, identified the level of risk in specific areas, integrated earthquake science and engineering practices, and developed new engineering analysis and design techniques. The Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA) has been able to leverage a small amount of funding into an impressive series of design guidelines, standards and

codes that have spread the experience of a few to engineers, urban planners and emergency managers nationwide. The National Institute of Standards and Technology (NIST) has developed standards for Federal Buildings that have encouraged stakeholders nationwide to recognize the earthquake vulnerabilities of their communities. It has been a successful program with significant results.

Specific comments with regards to the NEHRP Strategic Plan

The NEHRP strategic plan should reflect the integrated nature of the program and should strive to achieve a truly integrated program. We believe that the strategic plan should be a concise document that focuses on the following objectives.

- Implement the provisions of Title 1 of the P. L. 108-360, “National Earthquake Hazards Reduction Reauthorization of 2004” pertaining to the leadership of the NEHRP.
- Develop and conduct programs and projects in basic seismology, seismic engineering, architectural, geologic, and social sciences areas aimed at the development of improved earthquake codes and standards and other seismic risk-reduction measures.
- Prepare guidance and related technical documents for the use by design professionals and of private-sector organizations engaged in the development of building codes and standards.
- Establish programs and projects to encourage state and local governments to adopt and enforce measures aimed at lessening the seismic risks in their respective jurisdictions, to engage in outreach and educational programs to reach the general public and to foster the efforts of private organizations engaged in complementary seismic mitigation efforts.
- Establish programs and projects to lessen both the threat to life safety and the economic losses resulting from seismic damage to buildings and facilities.

The NEHRP Coalition believes that the critical role of the Interagency Coordinating Committee and its leadership should be properly reflected in the strategic plan. The Coalition feels that with the reauthorization, there is a renewed opportunity to realize the full benefits of a truly integrated program. In the past, there has been a great deal of accomplishment, but it has been unnecessarily limited by the lack of full integration of the program elements.

This problem is made worse by the lack of coordination in the budget process. Each lead agency resides in a different federal agency or department, each of which faces its own internal, competing budget priorities. For example, seismic monitoring by USGS, which provides key information to the emergency responders, has to compete with other Department of the Interior programs for funds. The research needed to support improved code provisions under development by FEMA requires strong research support from NSF. The Coalition believes that the strategic plan should address how NEHRP-authorized funds are distributed between agencies and programs that are interrelated, and that NSF should acknowledge projects funded under NEHRP.

The Coalition also feels strongly that the Advisory Committee on Earthquake Hazards Reduction as established by Title I of P.L. 108-360 should receive a prominent role in the new strategic plan for NEHRP. As required by the law, the advisory committee should consist of non-Federal members, including representatives of research and academic institutions, industry, and state and local government, who are qualified to provide advice on earthquake hazard reduction. The role of the Advisory Committee as defined in the Public Law is to assess: trends and developments in the science and engineering of earthquake hazard reduction, including predictive capability; the effectiveness of NEHRP in carrying out its activities; the need to revise the program; and the management, coordination, implementation, and activities of the program are all vital to enhancing the effectiveness of NEHRP.

In general, the Coalition believes that highlighting the roles of the Interagency Coordinating Committee and the Advisory Committee on Earthquake Hazards Reduction are the two most important overarching elements for a meaningful and effective strategic plan. However, the most important element of a NEHRP strategic plan, one that should be emphasized in every goal or objective that is set, is the importance of putting the research results into practice and getting collected data and analysis into the hands of those who need it. The ultimate goal of NEHRP is the protection of life and property during an earthquake. To achieve that, the research conducted and the data collected under NEHRP must be utilized. Successful research needs to become successful practice and the NEHRP strategic plan must make this its overriding priority.

With regards to the existing strategic plan, while the goals may be strategic in outlook, the objectives degenerate into detailed tactical statements, almost definitions of projects, thus making the documents needlessly long. We believe that the first two goals are duplicative in many respects and quite diffuse, but cover what FEMA is doing, while the third and fourth are each directed specifically to NSF and USGS. Thus the strategic plan does not convey the necessary measurable goals and performance objectives that are critical for a coordinated and fully integrated program nor does it foster such a concept. The strategic plan needs to be succinct and explicit, rather than long and diffuse. An implementation plan can be developed after the completion of the strategic plan; such a plan can contain the specific programs needed to carry out the strategic plan.

Comments for the NEHRP Stakeholders Input Forum at the Quake '06 Conference

The NEHRP Coalition also reviewed the list of comments from the NEHRP Stakeholders Input Forum at Quake '06 Conference in San Francisco. The Coalition felt that several of the comments were significant and should receive careful consideration in development of the revised NEHRP strategic plan. Specifically, the Coalition supports the following comments.

- Need to include community-wide resilience, which involves systems approach.
- Need coherence and coordination between NEHRP agencies and state/local partners.
- Need improved program marketing.
- Education is very important aspect of any successful hazard mitigation program. NEHRP must increase efforts to educate both professional and public communities.
- Need measurable goals/performance measures and they should be part of the implementation plan suggested above.

Conclusions

Each of the member organizations of the NEHRP Coalition is encouraging their members to visit the NEHRP.gov website and make their own specific comments on the NEHRP strategic plan.

Thank you for the opportunity to comment. We look forward to continuing to work with the NEHRP member agencies to improve and strengthen the program. If we can be of further assistance, please do not hesitate to let us know.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Brian Pallasch". The signature is fluid and cursive, with a vertical red line to its right.

Brian Pallasch
Co-Chair
NEHRP Coalition

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "T.D. O'Rourke". The signature is bold and cursive, with a horizontal line above the first few letters.

T.D. O'Rourke
Co-Chair
NEHRP Coalition