



State of California

SEISMIC SAFETY COMMISSION

Governor Gavin Newsom



NEWS RELEASE

Seismic Safety Commission Issues Expected Earthquake Performance of Buildings Designed to California Building Code

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The Alfred E. Alquist Seismic Safety Commission (SSC) has released an informational brochure about the expected earthquake performance of buildings designed to the California Building Code. The brochure was developed to raise public awareness with the overarching goal of reducing risk to California buildings posed by earthquakes.

The Commission engaged the Pacific Earthquake Engineering Research Center (PEER) to develop and prepare the brochure to raise awareness and offer guidance on immediate and longer-term actions that can be taken by residents, businesses, and local and State representatives impacted by earthquakes.

The brochure entitled “Expected Earthquake Performance of Buildings Designed to the California Building Code” explains the intent of the California Building Code, the expected performance of code-compliant buildings when they are subjected to moderate and large earthquakes, possible consequences to residents, businesses, and communities, and proactive actions that can be taken.

Shaking from earthquakes is a fact of life. At least half of California’s largest cities are at moderate or high risk of a major earthquake. The recent Ridgecrest Earthquake Sequence near Searles Valley is a wake-up call. The magnitude 6.4 foreshock and magnitude 7.1 main earthquakes produced the strongest shaking California has had in decades.

“The SSC believes it is critical to clarify what California building standards are and are not intended to provide in the way of life safety and building resiliency. California’s standards are intended to reduce building collapse and provide life safety. The codes are not intended to ensure a building will be useable or even repairable after strong shaking. The SSC and its partners are starting this awareness program with buildings and the code, even though earthquake recovery involves many additional considerations,” said Mike Gardner, SSC Chairman.

The brochure is a basic educational tool and is a synthesis of information from numerous sources including the earthquake engineering community, policy and community officials, SSC staff, and PEER. Some of the topics include:

- The California Building Code is a minimum requirement which means that buildings may not be habitable or functional after a moderate or large earthquake.
- Expected performance of code-designed new buildings in earthquakes.
- Recent earthquakes and code improvements.
- Possible Consequences: Myths, Reality & Risks
- Things you can do, with an initial set of resources.

The study is jointly published by SSC Publication 19-01 and PEER (Report No. 2019/05) and can be found at <https://ssc.ca.gov> and at <https://peer.berkeley.edu/publications-products>

The Seismic Safety Commission was established in 1975 to advise the Governor, Legislature, State and local government agencies, and the public on ways of reducing the earthquake risk to the people of California. It is an agency composed of 20 commissioners chosen for their expertise and experience.
