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## House committee examines earthquake early warning system

On June 10, the House Natural Resources, Energy and Mineral Resources Subcommittee held a hearing to examine the development of an earthquake early warning system in the U.S. Witnesses representing academia, government, and local transportation agencies all spoke to the potential benefits of implementing an early warning system.

Dr. Douglas Toomey of the University of Oregon reported that the infrastructure for an expanded, fully implemented system already exists, and that data from preexisting seismic stations could afford communities precious seconds or even minutes of warning, giving people time to halt transportation, stop surgeries, and evacuate buildings. For example, Dr. Toomey estimates that for an earthquake occurring in northern California, sensors could provide up to three minutes of warning to Portland, Oregon and five minutes of warning to Seattle, Washington. Dr. Toomey further explained that placing seabed sensors near the Cascadia Subduction Zone would help safeguard the Pacific Northwest against earthquakes and tsunamis.

ShakeAlert, an early warning system already being tested in California, detects earthquake initiation, estimates the location and magnitude, and provides seconds to minutes of warning to local populations. Many other nations, including Japan, Mexico, and Romania have earthquake alert systems in place to prevent casualties, protect infrastructure and industry, and reduce emergency spending.

In the last decade, federal funding for earthquake early warning has averaged \$1 million dollars per year. Although subcommittee members had differing views on potential funding sources, all expressed interest in strengthening and expanding the program.

Sources: E&E News, House Subcommittee on Energy and Mineral Resources

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