

President Trump approves earthquake hazards bill

December 11, 2018

On December 11, President Donald Trump signed a bill to reauthorize the National Earthquake Hazards Reduction Program (NEHRP) through fiscal year 2023.

NEHRP was created to facilitate research, planning, decision-making, and mitigation efforts related to seismic activity between government agencies. The National Institute of Standards and Technology (NIST) is the lead agency responsible for NEHRP planning and coordination alongside the Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA), the National Science Foundation (NSF), and the United States Geological Survey (USGS).

The National Earthquake Hazards Reduction Program Reauthorization Act of 2018 (S. 1768) provides the first reauthorization of NEHRP since 2004. In addition to authorizing appropriations for the program for five years, the bill clarifies specific agency authorities under NEHRP, revising the responsibilities of NIST as the lead agency and those of FEMA, NSF, and USGS. The legislation explicitly authorizes USGS to issue earthquake warnings and other awareness products and to update its management plan for the Advanced National Seismic System (ANSS). It also calls for a comprehensive assessment of the nation's earthquake risk reduction strategy.

The Senate passed the bill on September 27, followed by the House on November 27, sending the bill to the President's desk for final passage into law, coincidentally just before a magnitude 7.0 earthquake struck Anchorage, Alaska on November 30.

Sources: American Institute of Physics; Library of Congress.
