

Los Angeles Mayor proposes seismic retrofit for riskiest buildings

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Los Angeles Mayor Eric Garcetti released a report on December 8 that proposes new, stricter building codes aimed at the structures mostly likely to collapse in an earthquake. The codes would require seismic retrofits to wooden structures with a “soft-story” first floor, such as a garage, and concrete buildings without enough steel reinforcement, most of which were built before updated safety regulations were applied in 1980. Most earthquake fatalities result from building collapses, so the retrofits are designed to keep buildings standing even if they sustain significant damage. This would greatly reduce casualties for the thousands of people that currently live and work in these types of structures.

Mayor Garcetti stated that although the retrofit would require substantial investments by building owners, inaction could lead to severe economic consequences for Los Angeles and the entire U.S. should an earthquake strike.

According to the Southern California Earthquake Center (SCEC), there is a 67% probability of a magnitude 6.7 or larger earthquake near Los Angeles over the next 30 years. The proposed requirements are more advanced than those instituted in other earthquake-prone cities in the U.S. It remains to be seen if other jurisdictions will follow suit.

Sources: Los Angeles Times, Southern California Earthquake Center
