

Corri A. Feige
Commissioner

www.DNR.Alaska.Gov



Department of
Natural Resources

Anchorage, Alaska

STATE OF ALASKA

PRESS RELEASE

For Immediate Release: February 3, 2022

Commission lauds \$8 million in seismic resilience funding

Grants will reduce risk and impact of future earthquakes in communities

(Fairbanks, AK) – The Alaska Seismic Hazards Safety Commission (ASHSC) recognizes and commends the Alaska Division of Homeland Security & Emergency Management (DHS&EM) for securing and implementing over \$8 million in seismic resilience funding for Alaska communities.

“I am excited to see these funds being used to improve seismic safety for Alaskans,” said Commission Chair Sterling Strait. “The time and effort put in to secure this funding by staff at the Division of Homeland Security & Emergency Management and in each one of the local communities is much appreciated.”

The funds were made available through the Federal Emergency Management Agency’s (FEMA) Hazard Mitigation Grant Program (HMGP) following the magnitude 7.1 Cook Inlet earthquake in 2018 and ensuing presidential disaster declaration. The earthquake caused power outages and gas leaks; damage to roads, railroads, and buildings; and closures of schools, businesses, and government offices throughout Anchorage and the Mat-Su Valley.

Many schools and critical facilities in Alaska were constructed prior to modern seismic codes and include known issues. The HMGP assists communities with assessments and retrofits to reduce the risk and impact of future disasters.

The bulk of the grants came in the form of \$7.7 million for seismic retrofitting to modify existing buildings or infrastructure around the state to make them more resistant to earthquakes. These projects will improve building safety for Alaskans and ensure that utilities continue to function after the next significant earthquake. Retrofitting projects include:

- Improvements to the Port of Alaska (\$4 million).
- An earthquake-resistant water transmission line in Homer (\$2 million).

- Ceiling grid upgrades and gas shut off valves for the Matanuska-Susitna Borough School District (\$1.7 million).
- Gas shut off valves for the Alaska Native Tribal Health Consortium (\$31,000).

In addition, the Anchorage School District was awarded \$320,000 for district-wide seismic evaluations for Anchorage schools to help identify buildings that were damaged in recent earthquakes or were not properly designed to resist earthquakes.

Alaska is the most seismically active region of the United States and is at risk of economic and societal losses due to large, damaging earthquakes. The magnitude 9.2 Great Alaska earthquake of 1964 is the second largest, instrumentally recorded earthquake in the world; the magnitude 7.9 earthquake along Alaska's Denali Fault in 2002 is the largest on-land earthquake in North America in almost 150 years; and the magnitude 8.2 Chignik earthquake in 2021 is the largest earthquake in the United States since 1965.

The 2018 Cook Inlet earthquake hit a densely populated area and is a powerful reminder of the seismic hazards and risk in Alaska. The ASHSC applauds DHS&EM for connecting communities to mitigation and recovery funds following this event and encourages continued seismic hazards risk mitigation efforts throughout Alaska.

The Alaska Seismic Hazards Safety Commission is charged with advising decision-makers at all levels of state government and in the private sector about ways to reduce earthquake risks and disseminate information on earthquake risk mitigation to the public. Learn more about the ASHSC at <http://seismic.alaska.gov/>.

CONTACT: Barrett Salisbury, (907) 451-5974, barrett.salisbury@alaska.gov or Sterling Strait, sterling.strait@alaska-pipeline.com

###