

**PERSPECTIVES AND RECOMMENDATIONS FOR 1991 LEGISLATION  
FROM THE SIXTH ANNUAL WASATCH FRONT EARTHQUAKE CONFERENCE  
(June 11-12, 1990)**

**Governor's Perspective** *(from Mike Christensen)*

- Governor's office supports addressing Utah's earthquake problems
- Actions are a shared responsibility and must involve cooperative programs between state and local governments, school districts, and the private sector
- All costs must be weighed against benefits and other competing needs
- Legislation should address broad needs of the state in a balanced way, yet be practical and realistic

**Legislative Panel** *(Senator Craig Peterson; Representatives Afton Bradshaw, Kim Burningham, Gene Davis, Don LeBaron, Ray Nielsen, and John Valentine)*

- Strong state leadership of the earthquake program is needed
- Commissions tend to be expensive and difficult to fund, and a new commission to provide such leadership is unlikely (may need to rely on ad hoc coordination)
- The legislative package should consist of several individual bills, not a single bill
- Need a comprehensive, unified approach addressing needs for both short-term emergency response and longer-term mitigation (many of these concerns were addressed in earthquake-related bills introduced in 1990 session)
- The cost to make Utah prepared for and protected from earthquakes will be unavoidably high (multi-millions of dollars), but a necessary and good investment; a step-wise, multi-year approach has to be taken
- Legislators react more to their constituents than to state agencies, and an educated constituency with lobbying and letter writing would help passage of legislation (favorable public opinion is insufficient)
- People assume and expect that work is being done to make Utah earthquake safe; public perception that the problem is under control is not true
- The earthquake threat in Utah isn't just a Wasatch Front problem



## *Summary of Working Group Recommendations*

### **Working Group 1—Earthquake instrumentation and seismic vulnerability of buildings and other structures**

- Building codes and new buildings
  - a) Utah's building codes are good, but not perfect
  - b) Building code enforcement is weak; particularly need to ensure reliable plan checks and uniformity between public and private buildings
  - c) Seismic zones—a mechanism already exists to evaluate and revise seismic zones, and no further legislation is needed at this time
- Existing buildings
  - a) An inventory of buildings is needed
  - b) Disclosure of unsafe buildings should be pursued
  - c) Retrofit ordinances/incentives should be pursued
- Instrumentation—Modern instrumentation is needed to meet the state's needs; the engineering community strongly supports the strong-motion program

### **Working Group 2—Earthquake response, recovery, education, and risk management**

The principal problems that need to be addressed in legislation are:

- Resource availability
- Public awareness
- State agency preparedness
- Lack of uniform training for responders
- Getting a higher priority for earthquake preparedness
- Cross-state licensing problems for professionals
- Private industry participation
- Training of school personnel in disaster preparedness and response
- Defining response roles clearly
- State funding (not federal) for the state program



### **Working Group 3—Earthquake hazards and land development**

*(Note: No realtors or elected local government officials were present to provide input)*

- New development—State requirement for hazards ordinances
  - a) Difficult without first strengthening general requirements for land-use planning
  - b) State should set general requirements, with input from local government, for ordinances
  - c) Costs for reviews could be passed to developers through fees, but costs for preparation of ordinances may be a problem, particularly for small cities and rural counties
  - d) Supplying expertise to local governments to enforce ordinances is a potential problem
  - e) Associations of Governments should be involved
- Existing development
  - A state requirement for disclosure of hazards in real estate transactions was favored.
- Siting of critical facilities
  - A state requirement for hazards investigations was favored, although no mechanism exists to ensure compliance

### **Plenary Session—Where do we go from here?**

John Fellows (Legislative General Counsel) outlined the process as follows:

- 1) Need to generate list of policy issues
- 2) Interim study committee will prioritize list
- 3) Write legislation

The economic benefits (cost-benefit analysis), liability, and political ramifications of each issue should be outlined for presentation to Utah Advisory Council on Intergovernmental Relations (ACIR), Interim Study Committee, etc.

A working group should be picked to refine short- and long-term goals and programs. A definitive plan is not immediately necessary, but there has to be a beginning plan for the consensus-building process.