

CAPSS: Community Action Plan for Seismic Safety



A Project of the San Francisco Department of Building Inspection
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Welcome

As San Francisco residents, we live every day with the risk of large earthquakes. We know we must prepare our families by having a family emergency plan and emergency supplies. (*Excellent earthquake tips are available at www.72hours.org.)*

But how do we prepare *our community* to recover after the next big quake?

The 1989 Loma Prieta quake caused as much as \$10 billion of damage and damaged more than 18,000 homes. In a larger or closer earthquake, San Francisco could experience much greater losses that could irrevocably change the character and affordability of our city.

The Community Action Plan for Seismic Safety (CAPSS) is our opportunity to prepare the San Francisco community for the next big earthquake. CAPSS is focused on studying San Francisco's buildings, identifying the building types most likely to be damaged in

future quakes, and recommending ways to strengthen them over time and minimize future damage.

This is a community process and we encourage you to participate in the discussion. At the monthly meetings of the CAPSS Advisory Committee we address these critical issues and provide input to the project. The meetings are open to the public and we welcome you to attend and join in the discussion. To be included on our mailing list, please visit our website at www.sfcapss.org.

Together, we can prepare San Francisco to recover and thrive into the future.

Dr. Mary Lou Zoback, Chair, Advisory Committee

The CAPSS Program - Getting Ahead of Future Earthquakes

San Francisco lies in one of the most seismically active regions in the United States, between two major faults, the San Andreas and the Hayward.

The US Geological Survey estimates there is a 62% chance that a major earthquake will strike the Bay Area within the next thirty years. City leaders launched the Community Action Plan for Seismic Safety in an effort to reduce earthquake risk *before* the next major earthquake strikes.

The purpose of the Community Action Plan for Seismic Safety (CAPSS) project is to provide the San Francisco Department of Building Inspection a plan of action to reduce earthquake risks. This action plan will propose ways to minimize damage in existing buildings regulated by the Department of Building Inspection and to improve post-earthquake repair guidelines to expedite recovery.

The CAPSS program is focused on:

- **Minimizing Damage:** The project will recommend city policies to reduce damage to buildings in future earthquakes and preserve the unique character that makes San Francisco a great city.
- **Rapid Rebuilding and Repair:** The project will develop an updated repair policy so city residents and businesses can get back on their feet rapidly following a major earthquake.

As a community effort, the CAPSS project is guided by a volunteer Advisory Committee, which includes representatives from a number of neighborhood and community groups, earthquake specialists and the City of San Francisco. Final CAPSS recommendations will be given to the Department of Building Inspection over the next two years.

Focus on Soft Story Buildings

In July 2008, Mayor Gavin Newsom issued an Executive Directive asking CAPSS to focus first on ways to reduce risk in wood frame buildings with "soft" or weak first stories. This building type experienced dramatic collapses in the Marina neighborhood during the 1989 Loma Prieta earthquake. Thousands of similar buildings throughout the city could be damaged by a larger or closer earthquake. By the end of January 2009 the project will recommend policies to make these buildings safer. Next, CAPSS will focus on analyzing other building types and policies to reduce their risks and develop improved guidelines for repair and rebuilding after earthquakes. These activities are slated for completion by June 2010.

Currently the CAPSS project team is working to:

- Identify how many multi-family wood frame soft story buildings exist, in which neighborhoods, and how they are used;
- Design prototype structural retrofits and determine how much safer they make these buildings;
- Calculate the costs of suggested seismic retrofits;
- Study social, economic and cultural implications of either retrofitting or not retrofitting these buildings; and
- Identify various policy approaches to make these buildings safer in a major quake.

Since reconvening earlier this year, the CAPSS Advisory Committee has focused its monthly discussions on several critical topics:

- Case studies of seismic retrofit incentives used by other Bay Area cities to encourage building upgrades;
- The level of damage that is acceptable in residential buildings following a major earthquake;
- Paying for seismic retrofits of rent controlled buildings.

The Advisory Committee continues to examine these and other issues and to discuss solutions at its monthly meetings.

Did You Know? Damage from Future Earthquakes

Most of the buildings in San Francisco were built before the 1970's, when modern seismic resistant building codes were adopted. This means that many of San Francisco's buildings could be damaged in future earthquakes.

Preliminary studies indicate that, depending on the location and magnitude of the next major earthquake:

- San Francisco could need to demolish 8,600 - 100,000 housing units
- We could lose between 8% and 29% of our buildings, many of them older buildings that give San Francisco its unique character
- Single or two family homes will account for between 4% and 38% of direct dollar losses
- Housing losses will greatly impact the affordability and availability of housing in San Francisco.
- Post-earthquake fires could increase losses by 20% to 50%

Advisory Committee Meetings

The CAPSS Advisory Committee meets the second Wednesday of every month from 11am to 1pm at the Department of Building Inspection, 1660 Mission Street, Room 2002. Please note that the next Advisory Committee Meeting has been shifted to the first Wednesday of the month: November 5, 2008 from 11am to 1pm.

Advisory Committee meetings are open to the public. For more information about meeting times and locations, please visit the website at www.sfcapss.org .

Contact Us

For further information on the CAPSS program, please visit our website at www.sfcapss.org .

If you have a question or would like to contact a CAPSS team member, please email info@sfcapss.org