

**MOTION BY SUPERVISORS HOLLY J. MITCHELL
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Equitable Earthquake Resilience in Los Angeles County

This month’s tragic earthquake in Turkey and Syria, the Kahramanmaras Earthquake, has claimed 41,000 lives so far and the death toll is expected to grow. The Los Angeles County (County) Fire Department and Department of Public Works immediately stepped up to send emergency responders to Turkey to aid in search and rescue efforts. Task force members conducted more than 6,000 building assessments to determine signs of life in the severely damaged structures. In some cases, this meant meeting with devastated family members to tell them whether they could safely return to their homes. In other cases, it was to determine whether a structure was safe enough for search and rescue teams to engage in life-saving operations. The County appreciates their service and will continue to support the international aid community to help Turkey and Syria recover from this horrific devastation.

The Kahramanmaras Earthquake reminds us of Southern California’s own vulnerability. Earthquakes nearing a magnitude 8.0 are not only possible along the San Andres Fault – but expected. In 1875, a 7.9 magnitude earthquake struck Southern California just outside of Santa Barbara. While the County building standards have been updated to ensure new construction can withstand seismic activity, the most vulnerable buildings are non-ductile concrete high rises, which are prone to brittle behavior during

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an earthquake. These buildings which were constructed prior to 1976 (when California adopted the 1976 uniform building code), were constructed with a limited amount of reinforcing steel at the columns, joints, and walls of these structures, which make them particularly vulnerable to damage and collapse.

A United States Geological Survey simulation of a magnitude 7.8 earthquake in Southern California predicted such an event could result in nearly 1,800 deaths and 50,000 injuries. While there are only a handful of non-ductile concrete buildings in unincorporated areas or owned by the County, the County must insist on renewed urgency to retrofit and repair vulnerable structures to prevent as much loss of life as possible in the event of major seismic activity. The County should follow the example of surrounding jurisdictions, which have enacted aggressive timelines to require seismic retrofits of the most vulnerable buildings.

Wood frame soft-story structures or structures where one or more floors of a building have large unobstructed spaces that lack additional stabilization (e.g., dingbat architecture) are similarly vulnerable to large-scale seismic activity. Updated building standards have slowly phased out the construction of these buildings, but only for new construction. Neighborhoods with older building stock, including soft story structures, are more likely to be concentrated in low-income communities of color. The County currently lacks an updated building index to assess the volume of vulnerable soft-story structures, and to assess where those buildings might be more concentrated. This assessment must become the County's priority to prevent disproportionate casualties in Black and Brown communities.

To further ensure that all property owners of soft-story structures can take on the cost of seismic retrofits, the Los Angeles County Development Authority (LACDA) should identify financial assistance that can be implemented prior to the adoption of soft-story retrofit ordinance language.

Finally, it is imperative that the County continues to focus on ensuring all Angelenos, including non-English speaking families and families in underrepresented communities, have access to earthquake early warning information and preparedness trainings.

WE THEREFORE MOVE THAT THE BOARD OF SUPERVISORS:

1. Direct the Director of the Department of Public Works (DPW), in collaboration with the Interim County Counsel, to prepare proposed updates to the Los Angeles County (County) Building Code to require that all high-rise non-ductile concrete buildings, in the unincorporated areas of the County or owned by the County, be retrofitted within 10 years from the date the updated ordinance goes into effect.
 - a. DPW shall report back to the Board in writing with updated language for adoption within 6 months.
 - b. The ordinance shall include requirements that building owners submit structural evaluation reports within 3 years, including plans to retrofit or demolish buildings within 5 years, and complete retrofit construction within 10 years.
2. Direct the Director of DPW, in collaboration with the Executive Director of the Los Angeles County Development Authority (LACDA) and the Chief Executive Officer (CEO), to report back to the Board with an inventory analysis of all soft story residential structures in County unincorporated areas and/or owned or overseen by the County or LACDA that have not been seismically retrofitted, including the number of units within each structure. The Director of DPW shall also work with the Chief Executive Office (CEO) to obtain additional consultant support to conduct the inventory analysis and report back to the Board within 90 days on a plan to conduct the inventory analysis, including a timeline for completion.
3. Direct the Executive Director of LACDA to work with the Director of DPW and the Director of the Department of Consumer and Business Affairs (DCBA) within 60 days with recommendations on a pilot and permanent programs to support property owners with the expense of seismic retrofits, which may include but shall not be limited to a zero-interest loan program and construction subsidies for low-income residential property owners and structures in vulnerable areas. This report shall also include an assessment of anticipated costs for such programs and potential funding sources.

4. Direct the Director of the CEO's Office of Emergency Management, in collaboration with the Director of DPW, the Executive Director of LACDA, and the Director of DCBA, to report back to the Board in writing in 90 days on ways to expand existing emergency notification systems and preparedness resources to ensure all County residents have access to emergency notification information, including currently available resources to retrofit residential structures, and education on earthquake preparedness. Information shall be shared in multiple languages, be made available particularly in hardly reached communities, and include partnerships with community and faith-based organizations for education and training.

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