

October 29, 2018

Jay Raskin, Chair
Oregon Seismic Safety Policy Advisory Committee
Oregon Office of Emergency Management
3225 State St, Room 115
Salem, OR 97301
[Sent electronically to: chair.ossprac@state.or.us]



Dear Chair Raskin, Vice Chair Soulages, and OSSPAC Members,

The Steering Committee of the Regional Disaster Preparedness Organization (RDPO) would like to thank and commend OSSPAC for its impressive work, in close collaboration with stakeholders around Oregon, in producing the S.B. 850 report: *Mass Care and Mass Displacement After a Cascadia Subduction Zone Earthquake*. It is a strategic priority of the RDPO to increase preparedness for a mass care/displacement event while simultaneously building resilience to mitigate risks for such a disruption, including impacts to infrastructure, the economy, and communities following a CSZ earthquake. This priority has driven our support of and participation in OSSPAC's work on this important new chapter to the Oregon Resilience Plan.

We want to acknowledge OSSPAC's excellent report on earthquake insurance but have decided not to comment on it in this letter.

It was a great undertaking to produce this report, given the complexity of the subject and the short timeframe in which you had to complete it. Many RDPO members and staff enthusiastically participated in some form or another during the process. Because the recommendations were still evolving during the summer months, it is only now that we – a complex organization of public, private, and non-profit sector partners working together on disaster preparedness and resilience in the five-county Portland metropolitan region – are positioned to provide formal written feedback.

We offer the following comments, suggestions and support on the report's recommendations – specifically, where our committee has reached consensus.

Making government whole: (Rec. 1, 2, 4, 7, 8, 10, 23 and 26) We appreciate that several of the report's recommendations focus on increased funding and/or other support to empower state and local government agencies to better fulfill their roles and responsibilities in mass care/displacement preparedness, response, and recovery. These include planning and coordination internally and across the state with local jurisdictions, the private sector, non-profits, schools, and communities. Chronic underfunding (i.e., from State sources), combined with over-dependence on federal grants, leaves State agencies at high risk for not having the capacity and readiness to coordinate and deliver, together with these partners, effective post-earthquake response and recovery operations, which in turn will exacerbate displacement, suffering, fatalities, and even flight from Oregon.

The lift many local jurisdictions, non-profit agencies, schools, hospitals, businesses, individuals, and communities still need to make to prepare for a CSZ earthquake is also very great. As such, we are pleased to see recommendations that call for more direct funding and other support to these stakeholders from the state.

Facilitating the Post-Earthquake Return to Safe Structures: (Rec. 11, 12, and 13) The creation and maintenance of a robust post-earthquake State Assessment Program (SAP), along with a Building Occupancy Resumption Program (BORP), *are long overdue* (i.e., low-hanging fruit that are low-cost, high-impact, and need to get moving). Several RDPO partner jurisdictions offer limited amounts of ATC-20/45 training to qualified architects, engineers, and building officials. But it doesn't make sense for each local jurisdiction to maintain its own roster, and the RDPO does not have the resources to maintain a comprehensive regional program and roster.

A building assessment program needs to be developed and maintained at the state level, in coordination with local partners, to ensure statewide cohesiveness and coverage. California has a well-established and successful SAP, which Oregon could adapt to fast-track the development of its own. Establishing such an SAP, along with a BORP to pre-certify private post-earthquake inspectors, will help facilitate a more rapid return of people back into structures that are deemed safe to re-occupy following a CSZ earthquake and aftershocks, as well as help reduce flight from the region.

Associated with these programs must come clear criteria from the state to help emergency managers and building officials guide the public on re-occupying lightly damaged buildings in the post-CSZ recovery period. Inconsistencies in this area can inhibit re-occupancy and waste resources (e.g., on temporary sheltering).

Assisting Schools with Their Roles Pre- and Post-CSZ Earthquake: (Rec. 14) We recognize the importance of schools in preparing students and their families for disasters, as well as playing key roles following an earthquake, such as family reunification, mass care distribution, community information-sharing, and sheltering. Concerning their post-disaster roles, we stress the importance of schools having a transition plan from those functions so that they can resume regular or amended educational services as expediently as practical to keep kids occupied with learning and other life-affirming activities. This also enables their parents to focus on resuming work or business, resolving housing issues, contributing to community re-building, etc.

Removing Barriers to Volunteerism: (Rec. 5 and 24) Following a CSZ earthquake, all partners in response and recovery will rely heavily on local cadres of trained volunteers to support relief and recovery operations, including light search and rescue, disaster assessment, first aid, mass care delivery, debris removal, etc. Currently, a Medical Reserve Corps (MRC) volunteer who gets injured while working in a disaster event or even a formal disaster preparedness exercise knows that they will likely be covered under workers' compensation through the SERV-OR system. Last year, the RDPO's Citizen Corps Work Group identified the lack of a similar state-level program for Community Emergency Response Team (CERT) volunteers as their #1 barrier to volunteer recruitment and retention.

In 2009, Legislature passed ORS 401.368, which requires Oregon Emergency Management (OEM) to provide workers' compensation coverage for qualified emergency service volunteers who are injured in the course and scope of performing emergency service activities under the direction of a public body. Unfortunately, OEM was never given funding to make this happen and has never written administrative rules to implement the law.

We also see merit in an OEM-led CERT Program yielding a statewide integrated volunteer deployment strategy to maximize the use of these volunteers in emergencies outside their home jurisdiction. Therefore, we wholeheartedly support recommendation #5 and will work collaboratively with Oregon Emergency Management to do our part in making it a success. And we also know there are not enough MRC volunteers to serve a catastrophic event, so we also support recommendation #24.

Special Mention on Best Practices Highlighted in the Report: We are humbled and honored by OSSPAC's inclusion in the report of a host of best practices from our own region, including those specific to the RDPO and partners around the region. We would like OSSPAC, State Resilience Officer Mike Harryman, ESF/RSF state agencies, and other local jurisdictions working on CSZ earthquake planning to know that we are happy to share these best practices and what we have learned. They include the RDPO-DOGAMI Earthquake Impacts Analysis (final two county assessment due in 2019); the Portland Metropolitan Region Economic Impacts Study (also due in 2019); the Multnomah County Mass Shelter Plan; the Portland BEECN Program; the RDPO Emergency Toilet Project; and the RDPO Regional Recovery Framework (due Spring 2019).

Another Recommendation for Consideration: We realize the OSSPAC Mass Care/Mass Displacement Task Force had a lot to consider when compiling best practices and recommendations for its report and had to draw the line somewhere. One recommendation we would add to your list is a disaster service worker (DSW) program, like the program California has in place. This program covers all persons employed by any county, city, state agency or public district in the state and declares them disaster service workers. Public employees who take the oath to serve as a DSW can be called upon during a declared emergency to assist in the execution of emergency response activities authorized and carried out pursuant to the California Emergency Services Act.

A DSW program in Oregon would help expand the human resources that state and local public-sector agencies across the state will need to support a range of response efforts following a CSZ earthquake or other major emergency/disaster, including those related with mass displacement and mass care operations. Additional details can be found in California Government Code Section 3100-3109. The RDPO would consider being a partner with OSSPAC and/or the SRO in making the case for this during Legislative Days in December 2018.

In closing, we want to thank OSSPAC again for its report. Thank you for reviewing our input and for all you do to help advance earthquake resilience in Oregon.

Sincerely yours,

The RDPO Steering Committee
[Member Roster Attached]

cc: RDPO Policy Committee
Mike Harryman, SRO