Partnerships for Seismic Safety

Do not try to “go it alone.” Successful seismic safety advocacy garners the support of other constituencies within the community. Emphasize the benefits from enacting seismic safety measures while building coalitions and networks capable of sustaining interest and action.

Understand How Different Stakeholders View Seismic Safety

Some stakeholders are active proponents of earthquake safety, but others are indifferent or actively oppose enhanced safety measures. Understand what motivates both supporters and opponents. Devise strategies for keeping supporters on board over the long run, neutralizing opposition to earthquake safety, and motivating those who are indifferent. Be willing to compromise and engage in political tradeoffs. Rather than holding out for ideal programs that have little chance of gaining support, gauge which seismic safety options have the best chance of being adopted and implemented under different circumstances.

Provide Incentives

Carrots and sticks make things happen. Incentives can include direct economic rewards, relief from regulation, subsidies of various kinds, low-interest loans, technical assistance, tax breaks, transfers of development rights, and public recognition and awards for those who support seismic safety. Worries about legal liability may also be a powerful motivating force for some stakeholders. Stress how measures taken to enhance earthquake safety help reduce other risks or provide secondary benefits. Champions and partners are important for moving policies and programs forward, but they also like to receive rewards and recognition for their support.

Link Seismic Safety to Issues People Already Care About

Earthquake safety shouldn’t be only about earthquakes. Link it to other issues such as homeland security, economic sustainability, environmental protection, quality of life, livability, school safety, and historic preservation. Many of these issues already have organized constituencies that can be “co-opted” into supporting earthquake loss reduction. Sell earthquake safety to these groups by showing how seismic loss reduction yields benefits such as more open space, a charming historic downtown, or better preparedness for terrorism and bioterrorism.

Build Networks That Can Last

Strategies for enhancing earthquake safety must go beyond one-time educational campaigns and single ballot efforts to create long-term networks of seismic safety supporters. Build on existing networks—consisting both of the “already converted” and of groups that can be persuaded to put seismic safety on their agendas. Many groups have already identified themselves as advocates. Other potential candidates for membership in earthquake safety coalitions include structural engineers’ associations, groups representing the design professions, building and safety officials, citizens’ emergency preparedness groups, neighborhood watch groups, coalitions focused on neighborhood safety, improvement, and quality-of-life issues, victim advocacy groups.
formed in the aftermath of other disasters, community colleges, and colleges and universities.

**Get Experts in Your Group**
Get to know university-based experts in the earth sciences, the social sciences, and engineering, as well as your local emergency management agency, other key governmental agencies, and important non-profit organizations like the American Red Cross. These ongoing partnerships will help bolster your case for enhancing seismic safety and lend credibility to your efforts.

**Use Other Communities as Examples**
Learn about and publicize what other communities are doing to address earthquake risks, and use their success stories to obtain support for the measures you are advocating. Get to know the champions in those communities; they can teach you about what to do and what not to do. Frequently, a mayor, city manager, or council member from a community that has adopted seismic safety measures can influence counterparts in a community that has yet to commit to seismic safety. Arrange talks or lunches during which the already converted officials can share their experiences.