

## WSSPC Awards in Excellence 2009

### Mitigation

Kodiak Island Borough School Seismic Hazard Mitigation Program

Kodiak Island Borough

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The Kodiak Island Borough (KIB) is a regional government in Alaska with a jurisdictional area of 12,024 square miles (31,141 km<sup>2</sup>), of which 6,560 square miles (16,990 km<sup>2</sup>) of it is land and 5,464 square miles (14,151 km<sup>2</sup>) of it (45.44%) is water, encompassing the entire Kodiak Island Archipelago and a portion of the Alaska Peninsula. All recognized communities are located in the Kodiak Island Archipelago and, as such, these communities are geographically isolated from the rest of the state, including the road system connecting Anchorage, Fairbanks, the Matanuska-Susitna Borough and the Kenai Peninsula Borough where the bulk of the state's population resides.

In 2004, the KIB established a seismic risk assessment program (see attachments) specifically to investigate and analyze existing school structures. This initial focus of the seismic risk assessment program was in recognition of the substantial public interest in school facilities which are used daily by hundreds of borough students, their teachers, administrators and because these same structures are also designated community disaster shelters in most borough communities. The question of school building survival concerned the community both from the standpoint of potential injury and damage that might occur during an earthquake event, but also whether those same facilities would still be safe to occupy after an earthquake event as a community disaster shelter.

Concurrent with the school building seismic risk assessment program, the borough applied for and was awarded a FEMA PDM planning grant to develop and adopt a multi-jurisdictional (boroughwide) hazard mitigation plan. Early on the borough staff recognized the twofold necessity of having a plan in place for the benefit of the community. Foremost, it ensured the borough communities would be eligible for future PDM and HMGP grants, but secondly, it required an educational and outreach component to ensure its success.

While KIB initially thought a borough-wide hazard mitigation plan could be developed within a year's time, the grant award was not received in time for the proposed planning timeframe. At the time of grant award, the borough had only three months to complete the plan in order to be eligible for the next cycle of FEMA project grants. Through the innovative flexibility of DHS&EM staff and with FEMA approval, the borough was able to deviate from the grant proposal timeframe and was also able to separate the grant into two phases; a borough-wide plan phase, and the multi-jurisdictional (city by city) plan phase. In this way the borough completed the borough-wide hazard mitigation plan and had it ready for review by FEMA concurrent with the borough's first (and so far only) FEMA PDM-C project grant request.

Upon completing the initial plan phase, the KIB also benefited greatly from the HMGP grant

eligibility. The seismic risk assessment of all borough school buildings, coupled with the borough-wide hazard mitigation plan, demonstrated the borough's unique standing to the State of Alaska Hazard Mitigation Office. Their projects were properly prioritized to meet FEMA grant criteria and ready for funding. As a result of this recognition, the borough successfully met the requirements for additional HMGP grants, allowing a substantial number of school seismic retrofit priorities to be met in a relatively short time frame.

The collaborative effort by borough citizens, borough staff, consultants and state hazard mitigation officials has not only allowed the borough to seismically upgrade a significant number of school facilities in the region, but it has also had the benefit of raising public awareness of the seismic risk facing all borough residents. The program also raised the level of awareness of the potential resources available through FEMA and the State of Alaska Hazard Mitigation Office. When all this is considered, it appears likely that this model may be further replicated by the other communities within the borough on a more general basis that considers other critical facilities once the multi-jurisdictional plan is completed and approved.