

AB 300 SEISMIC MITIGATION

CONFUSION AND CONCERN ABOUT FOR SCHOOL DISTRICTS

The recent 8.9-magnitude earthquake in Japan moved seismic safety concerns to the forefront for California schools. Recent mass media coverage has resulted in parents' concern for their children's safety in public schools. Seismic safety for California schools is not a new concern, but it is a growing concern. In fact, our schools are built to more stringent codes as a direct result of the Long Beach earthquake in 1933, which resulted in the "Field Act." Over the years, seismic reinforcement and design requirements have been constantly increasing leading to some of the safest buildings in the nation, where older buildings are not as seismically resistant as newer buildings. In response to public concerns, legislators passed AB 300 in 1999 requiring the Department of General Services (DGS) to conduct an inventory of California's public school buildings (Kindergarten through grade 12) for seismic safety assessments.

DSA'S SEISMIC EVALUATION OVERSIMPLIFIED?



With over 9,300 public schools in California, DGS tasked the Division of the State Architect (DSA) to develop the criteria and evaluate the facilities for seismic safety - a daunting task with limited resources and funding. With many variables affecting a structure's performance in a seismic event and not all industry experts agreeing on the evaluation criteria, DSA developed a simplified screening approach to evaluate the approximate 224,000 school buildings reviewing only non-wood framed buildings approved before July of 1978 (1976 UBC effective date). Similarly, DSA reviewed only plans on file for specific projects that met the general criteria eliminating field investigations and detailed structural analysis.

As a result, the AB 300 list (originally released in 2002) has been under scrutiny for being overly simplified and inaccurate, and not truly identifying the school buildings that are most at risk.



The Seismic Safety Inventory of California Public Schools, commonly referred to as the "AB 300 Report," indicated that over 7,500 buildings (65 million square feet) were not likely to perform well in an earthquake and a detailed structural evaluation was recommended. Representing 14 percent of the current total square footage of California public schools, this original report omitted individual school site names as required by the legislature. However, in response to inquiries from the public, and in compliance with the Public Records Act requests over the years, the entire original AB 300 survey has become public.

In 2008, DSA attempted to update the survey with more current, accurate information from each district, adding buildings that were previously missed, removing buildings that had been sold or demolished, and further correcting errors that had originally been created. Currently, DSA is regularly updating and correcting the list, which is available at:

http://www.documents.dgs.ca.gov/dsa/ab300/AB_300_List_rev09-16-11.pdf

WHERE DO YOU BEGIN?

If you're responsible for one of the schools on the AB 300 List, common questions are:

- "How do we evaluate the status of our buildings on the list?"
- "How much should the evaluation cost?"
- "Who is qualified to perform the evaluation?"
- "How am I going to pay for it?"
- "How will the new funding changes affect my project?"

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NEXT STEPS TO TAKE

If you're wondering what to do next, contact CPM to assist with addressing your community's seismic safety concerns. The next steps are to validate if your building even should be listed on the AB 300 report, meets the criteria, and hasn't already been modernized or rehabilitated since the list was created. We have already successfully helped other school districts remove their buildings from the list due to incorrect and out-dated information. If a building has been confirmed as meeting the criteria and therefore appropriate for the AB 300 list, we can develop cost effective strategies to protect the school district's interests. Our approach as an owner's representative is to help with the first steps of having an independent structural engineer determine that a building is structurally deficient to not withstand a seismic event and then obtain affirmation from DSA. Most importantly, we can help you with public relations to address community concerns and provide education on real risks verses perceived risks.

WHERE WILL THE FUNDING COME FROM?

Proposition 1D has set aside \$199.5 million specifically for seismic repair, reconstruction, or replacement of the most vulnerable school facilities. To date, only four schools have received a total of \$19 million. However, recent funding criteria changes are being made by the Seismic Sub-Committee meetings of the State Allocation Board (SAB) to make the current Seismic Mitigation Program (SMP) more accessible, such as eliminating the spectral acceleration (seismic shaking) requirement. With these new, less restrictive requirements, the remaining funding will not last long. The rules continue to change on qualification for funding causing confusion. CPM can help you figure out if your buildings qualify for the limited State seismic mitigation funding and explore other funding options.

WHAT IS THE APPROPRIATE SCOPE AND REAL COSTS?

CPM can help you plan what the appropriate scope should be and develop a comprehensive budget. Districts have multiple choices when scoping a seismic retrofit project:

- Does your district want only "life safety" retrofits or the more comprehensive "damage control"?
- Which option to retrofit makes the most sense for your specific needs?
- What scope will DSA require be added to accommodate Accessibility and Fire and Life Safety?
- Should other building deficiencies be addressed while the building is undergoing retrofit?
- What other options do you have?
- How long will the retrofit take?
- Is there a need for interim housing?
- Are there hazardous materials that require abatement?

CPM can help you sort out all of these questions and more. Most importantly, we bring expertise in a variety of subjects and can leverage our experiences from other school districts. We will provide you with options and recommendations in a non-biased manner to look after your best interests.

WHO WILL MANAGE THE COMPLEX CONSTRUCTION PROGRAMS?

The three major challenges school districts face in a building program are: funding, management, and budgeting, which are all components of a seismic retrofit. Many districts may not have the staff with the skills and capabilities needed to manage a program over an extended period of time. Other districts may have some internal staff and just need a little expert advice. CPM can help build a successful team. A team can consist of an owner's representative, program manager, design professionals, contractors, a funding expert and bond counsel, a bond campaign consultant, and an internal project team.

If you're preparing for a seismic retrofit, contact Michael Flores, Principal, at michaelf@capitalpm.com or 916.553.4400 to help you plan your building program and deal with the confusing seismic mitigation issues.