

## OPENING STATEMENT

Ranking Member Dan Lipinski (D-IL)  
Subcommittee on Research & Technology  
Committee on Science, Space, and Technology

Subcommittee on Research & Technology Hearing  
*“A Review of the National Earthquake Hazards Reduction Program”*

July 29, 2014

Thank you Chairman Bucshon for holding this hearing on reviewing the National Earthquake Hazards Reduction Program or NEHRP. I want to thank the witnesses on both panels for being here today. I look forward to hearing your testimony.

When we think of earthquake risks in the United States, we tend to think about the West coast where some of the most powerful earthquakes have occurred. Indeed, Americans living in California and western Washington State face the highest risk from earthquakes. But Americans in most states have a reasonable chance of experiencing ground shaking in the next 50 years from an earthquake that would be damaging.

Illinois has earthquake risks because it is affected by the New Madrid Seismic Zone, where large earthquakes occurred in the early 1800s. These earthquakes—which measured from 7.5 to 7.7 on the Richter scale—remain the most powerful earthquakes to hit the United States east of the Rocky Mountains. There are reports that the earthquakes were felt as far away as Washington, D.C., produced huge waves on the Mississippi River, caused structural damage, and led to the formation of new lakes. Although the death toll is unknown, it is not believed to be high because the area was sparsely populated. But that is no longer the case. Today, more than 15 million people live in the area.

In 2011, on the two hundredth anniversary of the New Madrid earthquakes, the federal government simulated what would happen if another large earthquake hit this region. And the results of the simulation were striking. Around 100,000 people could die, over 7 million people could be displaced from their homes, and the direct economic losses alone could total almost \$300 billion. Of additional concern since the Fukushima disaster, 15 nuclear power plants are located in the New Madrid Seismic Zone.

We must reauthorize NEHRP so we can continue to address the large challenges that remain: retrofitting existing structures, improving the performance of critical infrastructure, and encouraging the adoption of mitigation measures by households, businesses, and communities. Additionally, we must ensure that social science research remains a key part of the NEHRP program. Understanding how people—including state and local officials, business owners, and individuals—make decisions and respond to warnings is essential to designing effective strategies to prepare for, respond to, and recover from a disaster.

Thank you again, Mr. Chairman, for holding this important hearing. I look forward to all of the witness testimony and the Q&A, and I thank you all for being here today. I yield back the balance of my time.