

ASHSC Alaska Seismic Hazards Safety Commission

Strategic Plan, v4



Turnagain Heights slide, Anchorage, 1964

v1 Adopted October 2012
v2 Adopted November 2013
v3 Adopted July 2019
v4 Adopted April 2025

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Abbreviations for State, Federal, and Private Entities

AEC	Alaska Earthquake Center
AHFC	Alaska Housing Finance Corporation
APDC	Alaska Professional Design Council
ASHSC	Alaska Seismic Hazards Safety Commission
DGGS	Alaska Division of Geological & Geophysical Surveys
DHS&EM	Alaska Division of Homeland Security & Emergency Management
DMVA	Alaska Department of Military and Veteran’s Affairs
DNR	Alaska Department of Natural Resources
DOT&PF	Alaska Department of Transportation & Public Facilities
EERI	Earthquake Engineering Research Institute
FEMA	Federal Emergency Management Agency
NWS	National Weather Service
SOA	State of Alaska
UA	University of Alaska
USGS	U.S. Geological Survey

Executive Summary

The Alaska Seismic Hazards Safety Commission is charged with increasing resilience to seismic hazards in Alaska. This is accomplished by implementing seismic safety studies, drafting policy recommendations for the Governor and State Legislature, and promoting coordination between public and private entities.

Commissioners include members from the public and private sector representing a broad cross-section of public safety, engineering, and scientific voices. This diversity in viewpoints provides a unique understanding of the current state of seismic safety in Alaska.

The commission leverages this strength to identify gaps and to recommend policies and programs to mitigate seismic risks, thereby improving the resilience of the State of Alaska.

This strategic plan has been developed to guide the commission for the next one to three years in their efforts to address seismic risk mitigation issues.

Introduction

The ASHSC is charged by Alaska Statute (AS 44.37.067) to recommend goals and priorities for seismic hazard (e.g., strong ground shaking, landslide/ground failure, avalanche, liquefaction, tsunami inundation, fault displacement, and regional uplift/subsidence) mitigation to the public and private sectors; recommend policies to the governor and the legislature, including needed research, mapping, and monitoring programs; review the practices for recovery and reconstruction after a major earthquake; recommend improvements to mitigate losses from similar future events; and to gather, analyze, and disseminate information of general interest on seismic hazard mitigation, among other duties, to reduce the state's vulnerability to earthquakes. The ASHSC is administered by the Alaska DNR-DGGS.

The ASHSC consists of eleven members appointed by the Governor for three-year terms. ASHSC members include: a representative from the UA; three representatives from local governments; a representative from the DNR; a representative of the DMVA; a representative from an appropriate federal agency; a representative of the insurance industry; and three members of the public who are experts in the fields of geology, seismology, hydrology, geotechnical engineering, structural engineering, emergency services, or planning. The ASHSC has no executive director, although DGGS provides administrative, travel, and publication support services.

The ASHSC developed this *Strategic Plan v4* to guide its efforts for the next one to three years to address seismic risk mitigation issues. While some of the strategies identified in the plan can be addressed and solved quickly, others will take many years to resolve. Therefore, the plan is dynamic and will be reviewed, modified, and updated every few years as experience is gained and additional information is obtained. The ultimate goals of the ASHSC are to provide advice that will result in the development of an earthquake-resilient society—one that can recover relatively quickly after a damaging seismic event.

Time is required to introduce and educate the public and decision-makers about the benefits of a seismic safety advocacy. Repeated efforts are necessary to make the case that earthquakes are truly a threat and that cost-effective actions can be taken to mitigate risk. The ASHSC is committed to assuring policy makers that effective steps should be taken to reduce exposure to risk because additional damaging earthquakes are inevitable. The ASHSC believes that many of these solutions can be relatively easy to implement and should therefore become high-priority initiatives.

Strategic Objectives

The ASHSC has identified several strategic objectives through which we will fulfill our mission. These objectives focus efforts where the commission has identified a need and where our activities can bring about improvement.

Additional tasks may be taken on over time and this plan will be updated periodically to reflect the direction of the commission.

The current strategic objectives of the ASHSC are:

Objective #1: School, Public, and Private Building Safety

Long-Term Goals for Alaska:

- State to identify, prioritize, and retrofit at-risk structures
- Statewide building inventory identifying seismic risk levels
- Establish state grant for seismic retrofits

Commission Actions:

- Develop specific funding requests to the Governor and State Legislature
- Coordinate with the APDC and other relevant and applicable organizations and councils
- Collaborate with contacts in the State Legislature, including chairs and members of the Resources and Labor & Commerce Committees
- Provide information to the media
- Research and connect with hazard mitigation grant programs
- Research state-funded grant programs in CA, WA, OR, etc.
- Follow up with communities where rapid visual screenings (RVSs) have occurred and inform about mitigation grant opportunities

Charter Mission Objectives Addressed:

- Act in an advisory capacity
- Provide information and technical guidance
- Encourage seismic hazards risk mitigation efforts

Objective #2: Building Code Adoption, Inspection, & Enforcement

Long-Term Goals for Alaska

- Increase awareness of the benefits of code adoption, inspection, and enforcement
- State Fire Marshal: structural plan review and inspections

Commission Actions

- Discuss with the Fire Marshal's Office what is required to include structural plan review in their operations
- Discuss with the banking industry and the AHFC their role in enforcing residential building codes in Alaska or adopting a statewide residential building code
- Collect and distribute findings from other organizations (e.g., FEMA, EERI, University) that have researched building code adoption and enforcement in Alaska or other states

Charter Mission Objectives Addressed

- Act in an advisory capacity
- Provide information and technical guidance
- Encourage seismic hazards risk mitigation efforts

Objective #3: Support local, state, and federal improvements to the identification, monitoring, and addressing of seismic hazards

Long-Term Goals for Alaska

- Increase awareness of the diversity of seismic hazards in Alaska
- Implementation of an Alaska earthquake early warning system

Commission Actions

- Publish policy recommendation encouraging SOA support for an Earthquake Early Warning System
- Support development of a landslides database and reporting system
- Publicize existing capabilities of the National Tsunami Warning Center and support continuation of the NWS National Tsunami Hazard Mitigation Program

Charter Mission Objectives Addressed

- Act in an advisory capacity
- Encourage seismic hazards risk mitigation efforts

Objective #4: Enhance post-event inspection efficiency

Long-Term Goals for Alaska

- Local jurisdictions create and maintain lists of trained individuals for post-event rapid assessment of buildings
- Local emergency managers develop a plan for initiating inspections post-event, not limited to earthquakes
- Increase the number and distribution of ATC-20 trained individuals available for post-event inspections

Commission Actions

- Publish policy recommendation encouraging local agencies to train and maintain a list of qualified individuals for post-event inspections
- Establish regular information sharing between SOA agencies and professional organizations regarding ATC-20 training opportunities

Charter Mission Objectives Addressed

- Act in an advisory capacity
- Provide information and technical guidance
- Recommend educational programs

Objective #5: Promote post-earthquake information from the AEC

Long-Term Goals for Alaska

- Connect the public and provide access to information on significant earthquakes in Alaska and worldwide

Commission Actions

- Publish official talking points and provide links to AEC or USGS seismic event descriptions
- Encourage distribution of post-event information via social media channels and listservs

Charter Mission Objectives Addressed

- Provide information and technical guidance