

OVERVIEW

OPUC-DOGAMI Leadership Forum and Seismic Critical Energy Infrastructures Workshop held on April 2, 2008 in Salem, Oregon

Yumei Wang and J.R. Gonzalez

The goals of this event were to bring together executives and senior engineers' decision makers from critical energy and telecommunication infrastructure organizations to:

- Share evidence that earthquake preparedness is needed to minimize disaster
- Encourage conduct of seismic vulnerability assessments of utility systems
- Encourage development of mitigation plans and implementation of mitigation plans

Three top state officials presented their viewpoints. First, Oregon Public Utilities Commission (PUC) Commissioner Ray Baum welcomed all the participants. He emphasized that the PUC is concerned about the state's earthquake preparedness, specifically utilities critical infrastructure due to their importance. The damage from the December 2007 severe storm served to demonstrate that the Oregonians are vulnerable. Understanding how vulnerable our utilities critical infrastructures are in relation to a major seismic event is very important for our State's Emergency Preparedness and Response. Equally important is the proactive impact mitigation of such a catastrophic event.

Mark Ellsworth, the Governor's spokesperson, expressed the Governor's concern about the state's disaster readiness, including business continuity that relies on critical infrastructure. He recommended a higher level of preparedness ranging from individuals (3-7 days or longer), to businesses, to communities, to utilities. He provided examples learned from the December 2007 severe storm with regard to response and recovery hampered by downed electricity and telecommunication systems.

Senate President Peter Courtney emphasized that the Legislature is concerned about the state's earthquake preparedness. He has championed 10 successful bills that have focused on preparing schools and emergency facilities for "Q9" –a magnitude 9 earthquake on the Cascadia subduction zone. The laws have led to work that has identified high risk buildings and promote mitigation. President Courtney outlined four points that are needed: 1) The Force, 2) Political Will, 3) Public Demand, and 4) Finish, the Close. He is concerned about communities, including coastal towns and transportation systems, and families.

Seven nationally recognized experts, including four TCLEE members, presented overviews of 1) Cascadia earthquake hazards and risk; 2) infrastructure vulnerability to earthquake damage; 3) state-of-practice lifeline seismic vulnerability studies and application; and 4) case studies of vulnerability studies by Bonneville Power Administration and Pacific Gas & Electric. ASCE TCLEE members are identified in the photograph (below). The talks were followed by a discussion session that included active audience participation. Participants expressed an interest to conduct seismic vulnerability assessments, and collaborate to reach the common goal of improved earthquake readiness in Oregon.

The sponsors for this event were: Oregon Public Utilities Commission (OPUC), Oregon Department of Geology and Mineral Industries (DOGAMI), American Society of Civil Engineers: Technical Council on Lifeline Earthquake Engineering (ASCE TCLEE), and Oregon Seismic Safety Policy Advisory Commission (OSSPAC). The corporate sponsors included: NW Natural, PacifiCorp, and Portland General Electric.



Speakers and Organizers (left to right): John Eiding, Governor's spokesperson Mark Ellsworth, Alex Tang (TCLEE), Stu Nishenko, PUC Commissioner Ray Baum, Senate President Peter Courtney, Yumei Wang (TCLEE), Leon Kempner (TCLEE), Anshel Schiff (TCLEE), Pete McDonough (TCLEE), Ivan Wong, J.R. Gonzalez. Photo by Irv Emmons.