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CALIFORNIA EARTHQUAKE EARLY WARNING BILL CLEARS FIRST HURDLE - SENATE GOVERNMENTAL ORGANIZATION COMMITTEE APPROVES BILL BY SENATOR PADILLA

April 09, 2013

Sacramento—The Senate Governmental Organization Committee today approved SB 135 by Senator Alex Padilla (D-Pacoima). The vote was 10 – 0. The bill would require the development of a comprehensive statewide earthquake early warning system in California. The measure now goes to the Senate Natural Resources Committee for consideration.

“A fully developed earthquake early warning system would provide Californians critical seconds to take cover, assist loved ones, or pull over safely to the side of the road. It could allow time to stop a train and power down other critical infrastructure,” said Senator Alex Padilla.

“An earthquake early warning would speed the response of critical public safety personnel by quickly identifying areas hardest hit by the quake,” Padilla said. **“California is going to have an earthquake early warning system, the question is whether we have one before or after the next big quake,”** added Padilla.

In January, the California Institute of Technology and the Japan Agency for Marine-Earth Science and Technology published a [study](#) concluding for the first time that a statewide California earthquake involving both the Los Angeles and San Francisco metropolitan areas may be possible. The Uniform California Earthquake Rupture Forecast released in 2008 predicted a 99.7 percent likelihood of a magnitude 6.7 earthquake in California in the next 30 years and a 94% chance of a magnitude 7.0.

Specifically, SB 135 would direct the Office of Emergency Services, in collaboration with the California Institute of Technology (Caltech), the California Geological Survey, the University of California Berkeley, the United States Geological Survey, and others, to develop a comprehensive statewide earthquake early warning system in California. The initial cost estimate for the system is \$80 million.

California presently has a demonstration earthquake early warning system called the California Integrated Seismic Network (CISN). SB 135 would fully develop this system, which would process data from an array of sensors throughout the state, detect the strength and the progression of an earthquake, alert the public within seconds and provide up to 60 seconds advanced warning before potentially damaging ground shaking is felt. The beta-system worked successfully several weeks ago, providing a 30-second warning to seismologists of a 4.7-magnitude temblor centered in the Riverside County desert.

“About 90% of the world's earthquakes and over 80% of the world's strongest quakes occur along the Pacific Ring of Fire. The Ring of Fire includes the very active San Andreas Fault zone here in California. We all know a big quake will hit again in the future. We should be smart and use our advanced science and technology to detect seismic activity and alert people in advance of destructive shaking,” Padilla said.

Japan, Taiwan, Mexico, Turkey, Romania, Italy and China either have or are working on earthquake early warning systems.

Japan's earthquake early warning system provided the public with critical advanced warning of the 9.0 magnitude Tohoku earthquake in March 2011. Earthquake warnings were automatically broadcast on television and radio, and 52 million people received the warning on their smartphones. Millions more downloaded the early warning app after the quake to receive warnings in advance of large aftershocks. The system brought bullet trains to a stop, and triggered the automatic shutdown of operations at critical companies. A professor at the University of Sendai received a text message of the warning and was able to warn his students to duck for cover before the shaking began and the light fixtures fell from the ceiling.



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