

NEHRP ACEHR Meeting
19 – 20 November 2012
NIST, Gaithersburg, MD

Jim Cagley Comments for Panel Discussion: Engineering Needs for Existing Buildings

Our office believes that the criteria for evaluation of existing buildings in the new “RP-8 – Standards for Existing Federally Owned and Leased Buildings” should be used by the “General public” for evaluation of buildings specifically in areas of low seismicity. This procedure eliminates the need for evaluation of those buildings assigned to Seismic Design Categories A and B as well as substantial number of those in Seismic Design Category C if certain criteria are met.

In the recent 2011 earthquake in Virginia our experience indicated that the major damage and problem was with Unreinforced Masonry Buildings (URM) and with falling hazards such as masonry parapets. These items are relatively easy to recognize and don’t require major academic exercises. We did not see damage or failures of structures that were designed with a rational method of tying things together.

When the Virginia earthquake occurred, our biggest problem was that we could not get to our client’s buildings because of the traffic chaos. We were asked to come to the US Capitol and a normal 20 to 30 minute trip took several hours. We had a hospital client that was concerned about what they thought were cracks in their emergency room facility. It turned out not to be a problem but it took us several hours to get there because of the traffic issues.

It is quite possibly a “major” task but some type of limited education for building managers and facilities folks giving them some idea of what to look for might be helpful in eliminating panic. If I knew how to do that, I would say so. Maybe it is just not possible or a least not practical. It might be worth discussing, though.

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