



Josha
Program Analyst,
Office of Infrastructure
Protection



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Home Counterterrorism Border Security Preparedness, Response, Recovery Immigration Cybersecurity News

News

Press Releases
Speeches
Testimony
Multimedia
Contacts
En Español

Secretaries Napolitano, Duncan Call on School and Colleges to Participate in April Earthquake Drill

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Washington – Department of Homeland Security Secretary Janet Napolitano and U.S. Education Secretary Arne Duncan today called on K-12 schools, colleges and universities across the central U.S. – and throughout the country – to help their students, faculty and communities prepare for earthquakes by participating in a public earthquake drill on Thursday, April 28, 2011. Eleven states in the New Madrid Seismic Zone are participating in the drill, the "Great Central U.S. ShakeOut," which takes place at 10:15 a.m. Central time. Anyone can register to participate, whether at school, at work, or at home; to date, over 2 million Americans have signed up.

While similar "ShakeOut" earthquake drills are frequently conducted by California and other states on an individual basis, this is the first multistate earthquake drill, and the first drill in the central U.S., where many states would be impacted if a major earthquake hit the New Madrid Seismic Zone. Secretaries Duncan and Napolitano made their call to K-12 schools, colleges and universities in a letter sent earlier today.

"As the recent earthquakes in American Samoa, Haiti, New Zealand, Chile and now Japan remind us, earthquakes can strike at any time," said Secretary Napolitano. "It's critical that all members of the nation's emergency management team – including the federal government, state, local and tribal officials, the private sector and the public – are prepared. Learning how to protect yourself and your loved ones in the event of an earthquake or other disaster is a vital life skill – and we look forward to working with schools, colleges and our other partners to strengthen the resiliency of communities across the central United States."

"As adults, it's our responsibility to make sure students are prepared, both at home and in school, for a possible emergency," said Secretary Duncan. "The ShakeOut drill is an important exercise for parents, students, teachers and schools leaders across the country, and I hope it encourages more schools to develop, implement and evaluate emergency plans."

As the Secretaries highlight in their letter, participating in the ShakeOut drill is simple – and anyone can participate. Schools and colleges can sign up at <http://www.shakeout.org/centralus/index.html>, which has instructions and resources to support educators, community groups and individuals interested in conducting the ShakeOut.

In addition, the Department of Education's [Readiness and Emergency Management for Schools Technical Assistance Center](#) provides guidance to help schools and communities plan for, respond to, and recover from a disaster such as an earthquake. For more information, visit: <http://rems.ed.gov>.

Participating states include Alabama, Arkansas, Georgia, Illinois, Indiana, Kentucky, Mississippi, Missouri, Oklahoma, South Carolina, and Tennessee. Indiana conducted its ShakeOut drill today.

The full text of the Secretaries' letter to K-12 schools, colleges and universities is below.

Dear Colleagues:

Recent events throughout the world - a powerful earthquake in Japan, the fifth largest in recorded history, as well as devastating earthquakes in New Zealand and Haiti - serve as a reminder that earthquakes can happen at any time and can have disastrous and far-reaching effects. The 2011 Great Central U.S. ShakeOut on April 28, 2011, provides a timely and relevant opportunity for us all to put this reminder into practice by exercising what to do when an earthquake strikes. The first ShakeOut in the central U.S. also coincides with the bicentennial anniversary of the great New Madrid earthquakes of 1811-1812. For this drill, the federal government and the New Madrid Seismic Zone (NMSZ) states and local governments

will hold a coordinated exercise to prepare for a major NMSZ earthquake.

We would like to encourage you and your schools to join more than one million participants across 11 states and hundreds of schools in this first-of-its-kind, multistate earthquake drill. The drill is now less than a month away, and to date, more than 2.3 million people are registered to participate. With 40 million residents in the NMSZ region, we encourage as many schools as possible to join the ShakeOut.

The "Great Central U.S. ShakeOut" drill will be conducted at 10:15 a.m. CT on April 28, 2011. Alabama, Arkansas, Georgia, Illinois, Indiana, Kentucky, Mississippi, Missouri, Oklahoma, South Carolina, and Tennessee would be impacted directly or indirectly by a New Madrid seismic event, and thus are participating in the event.

We recently sat down to discuss the importance of events like the ShakeOut, and how critical this is for school preparedness. The ShakeOut has been organized to increase awareness of the "Drop, Cover, Hold On" method of protecting ourselves during an earthquake. A major NMSZ earthquake would have a devastating impact on much of the Midwest. The purpose of the ShakeOut is to help individuals and organizations be better prepared for major earthquakes and to practice how to protect ourselves when they happen.

To make participation in the ShakeOut drill as simple as possible, the Central United States Earthquake Consortium, along with its partners, has put together a Web page focused on the drill, <http://www.shakeout.org/centralus/index.html>, with instructions on participating as well as resources to support you through the ShakeOut. In addition, the Department of Education's [Readiness and Emergency Management for Schools Technical Assistance Center](#) provides and disseminates information about emergency management to help schools, school districts, and institutions of higher education learn more about developing, implementing, and evaluating crisis plans. Additional information regarding how schools and communities can plan for, respond to and recover from a disaster, such as an earthquake can be found online at <http://rems.ed.gov>.

All of our citizens, and especially our students, can play a critical role in helping our nation become well-prepared. Giving our next generation of leaders the tools to help teach their friends, families, and peers how to be ready for earthquakes will help our entire country become more resilient in the face of a disaster.

If you have any questions regarding the ShakeOut, please contact Brian Blake, Program Coordinator for the Central U.S. Earthquake Consortium, at bblake@cusec.org or Regina Moran at regina.moran@dhs.gov.

Sincerely,

Janet Napolitano
U.S. Secretary of Homeland Security

and

Arne Duncan
U.S. Secretary of Education

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This page was last reviewed/modified on April 19, 2011.

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