

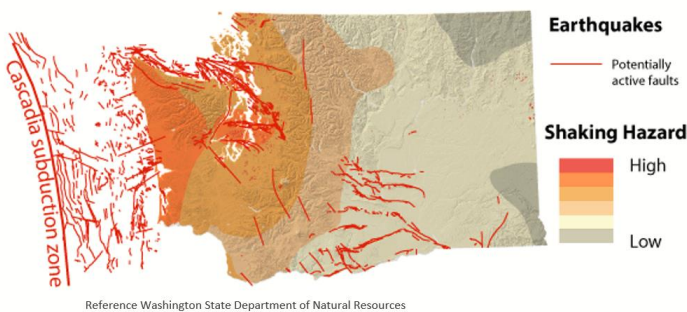
WSPTA recognizes that ALL students must have access to a safe and healthy learning environment.

Background

There is an 83% chance of a magnitude 6.5 or larger earthquake in Washington state in the next 50 years.⁽¹⁾ Yet in a recent study, 93% of schools in a sample of 561 school buildings are likely to collapse during an earthquake, leading to death, injury and entrapment of students and staff.⁽²⁾⁽³⁾

Earthquakes and tsunamis are not the only safety, health and environmental hazards facing our children and staff at schools. Other necessary school building reforms include emergency planning, and addressing indoor air quality and lead in drinking water.⁽⁴⁾⁽⁵⁾⁽⁶⁾⁽⁷⁾⁽⁸⁾⁽⁹⁾⁽¹⁰⁾ Districts and communities must be aware of the current conditions of our school buildings, from seismic safety status to environmental considerations, so that improvements to school buildings can be made.

It is not acceptable to mandate our kids to attend school in older, unsafe, and unhealthy buildings.



Earthquakes

Buildings built:

- Before 1976- No state building codes
- Before 2006- Did not consider all local faults and local ground conditions.

There is no requirement in our state to retrofit older buildings to these newer codes. Many districts do not voluntarily retrofit their older buildings because of lack of funding including not being able to pass bonds/capital levies. We also need to consider tools such as ShakeAlert Earthquake Early Warning for seismic safety.



Environmental Hazards

Along with eliminating lead in water, schools in our state need help with indoor air quality. Poor indoor quality affects school performance and causes illness and absenteeism.



Emergency Planning

Many school districts in Washington State do not have adequate emergency plans, equipment and supplies. Plans may not be communicated properly.

Inclusive Safety Planning

We must consider our school population with disabilities in our emergency planning along roles, responsibilities and communication including signage during emergencies.

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For More Information

WSPTA Advocacy Director
ptaadvocacydir@wastatepta.org

Marie Sullivan, WSPTA Legislative Consultant
legconsultant@wastatepta.org

For more information on the WSPTA advocacy program, please visit our website.

Washington State PTA shall advocate for legislation or policies that support safe and healthy school facilities through:

- Funding school safety changes, including emergency signs, improving indoor air quality and other environmental hazards, seismic upgrades, and an earthquake early warning system in all schools.
- Requiring safety plans to include persons with disabilities and all people in school buildings, and to conduct annual emergency reunification training.
- Increasing the transparency of the condition of school facilities to allow public review.

Citations

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- (3) Jim Buck and Pacific Northwest Seismic Network, “Washington’s Unsafe Schools”, September 20, 2021, <https://pnsn.org/blog/2021/09/20/washington-s-unsafe-schools>
- (4) King5 News, “Hundreds of Washington School Buildings have ‘Poor’ Ventilation Ratings, Data Show”, September 20, 2021. <https://www.king5.com/article/news/investigations/washington-school-buildings-ventilation-ratings/281-a7b0c6e3-588b-4820-985f-82ce4ac06f9d>
- (5) U.S. Environmental Protection Agency, “Why Indoor Air Quality is Important to Schools”, December 2021, <https://www.epa.gov/iaq-schools/why-indoor-air-quality-important-schools>
- (6) U.S. Environmental Protection Agency, “Student Health and Academic Performance Quick Reference Guide”, November 2012, https://www.epa.gov/sites/default/files/2014-08/documents/student_performance_findings.pdf
- (7) Simons et al., “The impact of school building conditions on student absenteeism in Upstate New York”, American Journal of Public Health, <https://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pmc/articles/PMC2920982/>
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- (9) Haverinen-Shaughnessy et al, “Association between substandard classroom ventilation rates and students’ academic achievement”, Indoor Air, 24 August 2010, <https://onlinelibrary.wiley.com/doi/10.1111/j.1600-0668.2010.00686.x>
- (10) Seattle Times, “Lead Found in Water at 97 Percent of Schools Voluntarily Tested by Washington State”, February 22, 2019, <https://www.seattletimes.com/education/lab/as-tests-reveal-more-lead-in-water-at-washington-schools-bill-to-limit-the-toxin-stalls-in-olympia/>