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The Department of Education and Early Development (DEED) began working with the Alaska Seismic Hazard Safety Commission in January 2009.

As the department's appointed representative on the Schools Committee, I have participated in teleconferences and have occasionally been able to participate in the Commission's face-to-face meetings. During the time that I have been working with the Commission, they have assisted the department in our efforts to address seismic safety of schools in the state.

As you are aware, in many communities in Alaska the school buildings are designated as emergency shelters, and where they are not specifically designated, many schools end up serving that function due to their size and location. Because of these reasons, it is vitally important for the schools to be constructed in such a manner as to make them useful during emergencies.

As you are also aware, DEED administers the School Construction and Major Maintenance grant and Bond Debt reimbursement programs. Through these programs, the department prioritizes school capital projects for construction, addition, renovation and repair of school buildings in the state.

The Commission has provided valuable insight and productive comments as the department developed revisions to the Capital Improvement Project Application. These changes allow districts to separately include costs for seismic investigation and design in a project request and provide districts with guidance on the types of costs to include in the seismic hazard budget category.

The commission also developed a ground acceleration listing of school facilities for the department that is currently posted on the DEED School Facilities website along with a map produced by the Commission that graphically shows the expected peak ground acceleration for the various areas of the state. This information can be combined with other information such as building age and construction type to help school districts determine the relative risk of their facilities to seismic events. This information could not have been developed by department staff because we lack the necessary expertise.

In summary, the Department of Education and Early Development has benefitted from the existence of the Alaska Seismic Hazard Safety Commission, and supports extension of the Commission.