Earthquake monitoring to protect Alaskans

Road damage in the MatSu Valley from the Nov. 30 earthquake, one of the largest in Alaska history. Photo by Jonathan Lettow via AP

Investing in Alaska's seismic network FY20 $5 million General Fund

The USArray Initiative helps safeguard Alaska through seismic data and advanced technology. This project will improve forecasting for natural disasters and provide substantial benefits to communities and industry. The Alaska Earthquake Center at the University of Alaska provides real-time seismic monitoring through a statewide network of specialized monitoring stations, known as "arrays." These multi-faceted instruments have unprecedented capabilities.

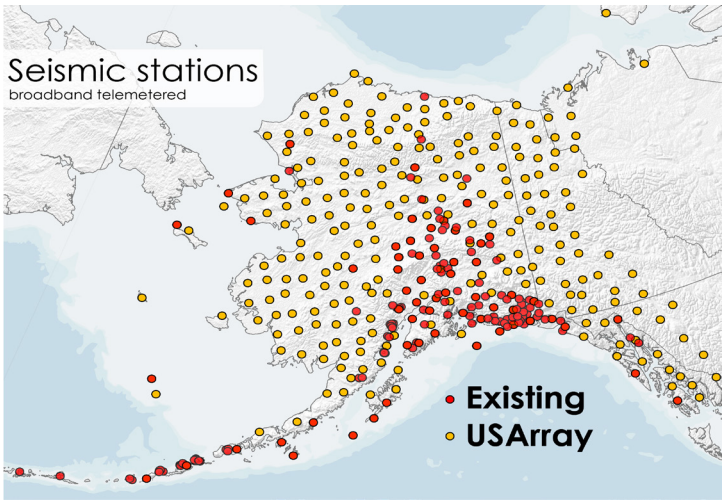
More than just seismic, the network of arrays measures weather, infrasound, and soil temperature. It monitors critical infrastructure such as the Trans-Alaska Pipeline, and collects data for many state and federal agencies including the U.S. Air Force, NASA, and Department of Homeland Security.

Building Alaska safely

Accurate information about seismic activity allows resource development and infrastructure projects to be designed to match natural hazards. It secures construction of pipelines, roads, drill sites, ports and mines. Data collected from the USArray informs building codes and environmental permits. It guides safe construction of houses and schools, while avoiding overbuilding and costly retrofits.

Address real world hazards

According to the U.S. Geological Survey, Alaska is the only region of the United States where earthquakes that are large enough to be felt by humans cannot be reliably recorded. FEMA estimates Alaska annualized earthquake risk at well over $50 million annually. The USArray delivers tools to reduce that risk.



The USArray project has added critical monitoring stations where no earthquake detection existed previously.

Sustaining the array

The USArray partnership with the National Science Foundation will end in 2019 at which time the network will be decommissioned and, without intervening action, the 80 arrays will be removed. The University of Alaska is requesting $5 million in one-time state investment to integrate part of the USArray into Alaska's seismic monitoring network. Seizing this short-lived opportunity will enhance safety and earthquake monitoring in Alaska long into the future.

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