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Seismic Hazards Safety Commission chair receives significant award

(Anchorage, AK) - Dr. John Aho, chairman of the Alaska Seismic Hazards Safety Commission, has been selected to receive the 2012 lifetime achievement award in seismic risk reduction from the Western States Seismic Policy Council. In announcing the award, the council noted Dr. Aho's 35 years of public- and private-sector leadership in earthquake engineering and seismic risk reduction.

"I'd like to congratulate Dr. Aho and recognize his many years of public service and excellent work on behalf of all Alaskans," said DNR Commissioner Dan Sullivan.

Dr. Aho was instrumental in the formation of the Alaska Seismic Hazards Safety Commission, created by the Alaska Legislature in 2002, and has served as its chairman since 2005. The commission consists of eleven members from the public and private sectors and is administered by the Department of Natural Resources' Division of Geological and Geophysical Surveys (DGGS). It provides annual reports on its work to the Legislature and the Governor.

Under Dr. Aho's leadership, the Alaska Seismic Hazards Safety Commission has guided efforts to identify and communicate reasonable and cost-effective approaches for making Alaska infrastructure and citizens safer from earthquakes. The commission's recent work includes assisting the Department of Education and Early Development with new procedures to use capital funds for safety evaluation, prioritization and rehabilitation of schools with the highest earthquake risks. The commission is also partnering with the Kodiak Island Borough on an effort to develop an earthquake planning scenario for the Kodiak area.

The Division of Geological and Geological Surveys has a significant role in hazard analysis in that it identifies and maps active faults in Alaska. However, the agency's scientific work is only part of the picture for reducing earthquake risks, according to DGGS deputy director Rod Combellick.

"Dr. Aho is a strong advocate for putting into practice the best science and engineering knowledge for building earthquake-resilient facilities," Combellick said.

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